



Team: EmpoGreen

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School: Universidad Autónoma de Ciudad Juárez

Full of Microplastics

Inspiration

My piece, "Full of Microplastics," is a direct reflection of a critical paradox in our modern era: the collision between rapid technological advancement and environmental sustainability. Specifically, I was deeply inspired (and frankly, alarmed) by the exponential rise of 3D printing and its contribution to plastic waste.

As a STEM student, I find 3D printing incredible and empowering. However, the realization that we are simply printing, printing, and printing with materials that are not yet widely recyclable in countries like Mexico, was a profound source of inspiration. This constant cycle of production and disposal leads to a massive amount of failed prints, obsolete parts, and material scraps that instantly become unrecyclable, non-reusable trash. My artwork is a stark visualization of how quickly we are filling our ecosystems, and ultimately, ourselves, with microplastics through this unchecked consumption.

Material Selection

The materials for this work were chosen out of necessity and as a core part of the message. The entire piece is constructed solely from the 3D printing waste I generated in just the last two months. This includes failed prints, support structures, filament scraps, and test pieces. I deliberately used these actual residues to create a tangible, physical representation of my own footprint. By repurposing this single-use plastic waste into a visually impactful piece, I turned my personal trash into a commentary on collective consumption. It was a shocking exercise to see how much truly disposable, non-recyclable garbage a single, environmentally-conscious individual could produce in such a short period.

Message on Waste and Sustainability

The central message of "Full of Microplastics" is a call for conscious consumption in the digital age. My work aims to raise awareness about two things: the alarming volume of plastic waste generated by seemingly clean, modern technology, and the urgent need for mindful use of resources. If even a small-scale user like myself can generate so much microplastic material that will eventually enter our systems, the global impact of this technology is immense.

The piece urges viewers to adopt a principle of conscious making: Before you press "print" ask yourself: Do I truly need this? Just as we strive for conscious purchasing, we must also embrace conscious fabrication. My art serves as a warning that without immediate and wise action (both in how we use these technologies and in developing truly sustainable materials) our incredible progress will come at the devastating cost of our own health and the planet's vitality.



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