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Temporary 'Trash' Artworks Put Our Oceans' Waste In Perspective

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Alejandro Duran could not believe how many shoes washed up on the shores of Sian Ka'an, a nature reserve located along the east coast of Mexico's Yucatan peninsula, near Tulum.

The landscape consists of jungle, wetlands and a coral reef that is home to myriad species of flora and fauna, some of which are endangered. Its shores, however, are still vulnerable to the plastic garbage that washes up from the ocean, having reached the sandy beaches from around the globe.

"When I came to the Sian Ka'an reserve in 2010, I walked along the beach and saw it was covered with waste," he said in a Vimeo video shared with The Huffington Post. "I asked myself, 'How can there be this much waste in a protected reserve?' What amazed the most was the amount of shoes and sandals. I began playing the products trying to find a way to document this and create something."

Duran and his team collected trash from 50 countries on six continents. They sorted it by color and shape to create the "Washed Up" project, a series of temporary installations meant to bring awareness to the affect waste has on the environment. In a description emailed to HuffPost, he details the purpose further:

The resulting photo series depicts a new form of colonization by consumerism, where even undeveloped land is not safe from the far-reaching impact of our disposable culture. Although inspired by the work of Andy Goldsworthy and Robert Smithson, Washed Up speaks to the environmental concerns of our time and its vast quantity of discarded materials. The alchemy of Washed Up lies not only in transforming a trashed landscape, but in the project's potential to raise awareness and change our relationship to consumption and waste.

Because the Earth -- just like the garbage -- is not one person's responsibility. It belongs to everyone.