Dominion Over the Earth

2020 NEA Big Read Lakeshore Program Virtual Focus Exhibition

Hope College Kruizenga Art Museum

September 18–November 21, 2020

Dominion Over the Earth

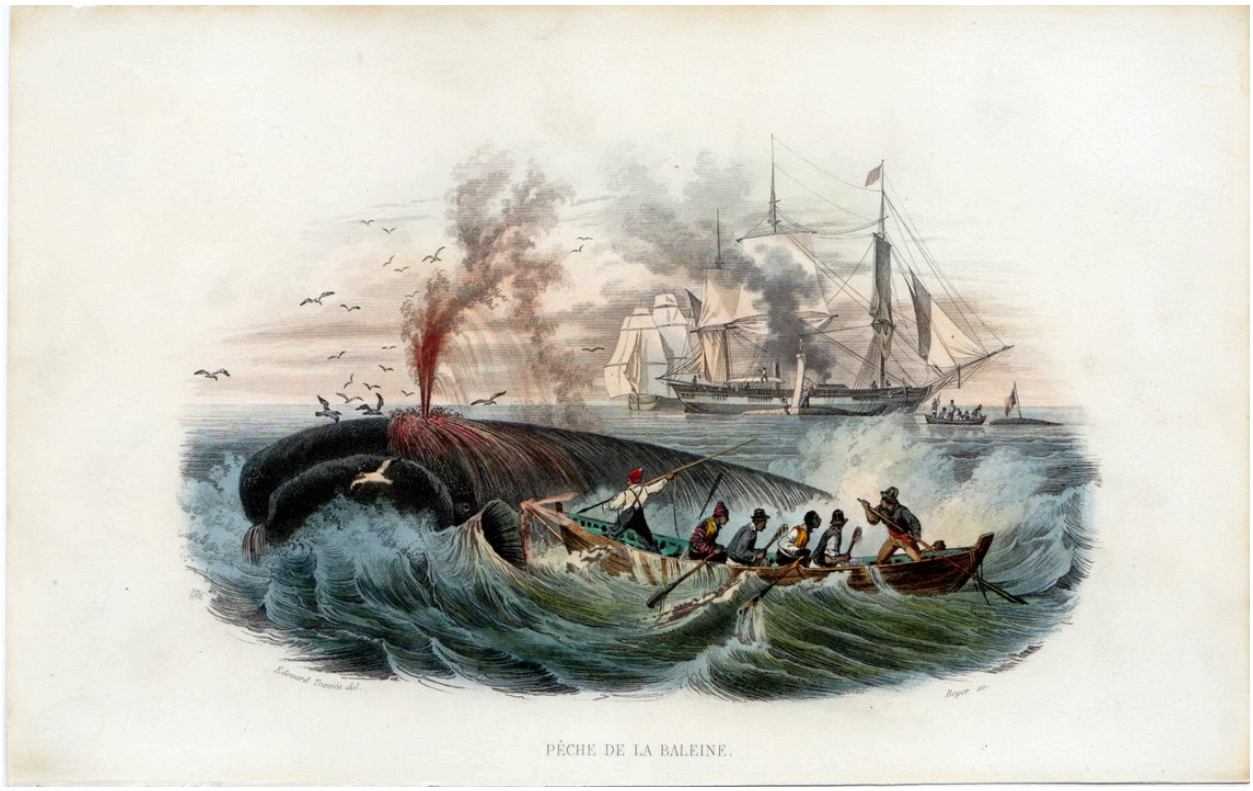
Dominion Over the Earth is an online exhibition featuring a selection of artworks from the Kruizenga Art Museum collection that explore changing attitudes toward the natural environment in Europe and America from the 18th century to the present.

The exhibition's title derives from the New King James Bible's translation of Genesis 1:26-28, in which God gives humankind "dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth." For centuries, many Christians in Europe and America interpreted these passages to mean that the resources of the natural world exist for humans to consume and use for their own benefit. The "dominion mandate," as the Genesis passages came to be known, fueled European and American exploration and colonization efforts during the 17th and 18th centuries, and spurred the rapacious consumption of natural resources that occurred during the industrial revolutions of the 19th and early 20th centuries. But as it became clear that such unchecked consumption of resources was harming the planet's health, some people began to reconsider the dominion mandate and to interpret it more as an obligation to nurture and protect the natural environment. This revised Christian understanding of what it means for humans to exercise "dominion over the earth" contributed to the rise of various nature conservation movements during the 20th century and continues to inform the green movement today.

Dominion Over the Earth was organized by the Kruizenga Art Museum in conjunction with the Hope College 2020 NEA Big Read Lakeshore program. The 2020 Big Read book, Nathaniel Philbrick's *In the Heart of the Sea*, recounts the story of the crew of an early 19th-century American ship that sank in the middle of the Pacific Ocean while hunting whales.

The Greenland or Whale Fishery
Elisha Kirkhall (English, 1682-1742) after a painting by Thomas Baston (English, fl. ca. 1696-1730)
First printed ca. 1725; this impression ca. 1770
Engraving with hand coloring
Hope College Collection, 2020.87

The world's first oil boom was centered not around petroleum oil, but whale oil. Whale oil was obtained by boiling strips of whale blubber to produce a yellow-brown liquid that could be used to make lamp fuel, machine lubricant, soap and various other products. In the 18th and 19th centuries, European and American whaling ships scoured the globe hunting whales in the Atlantic, Pacific, Indian and Arctic oceans. Those ships killed so many whales that multiple species of whale were in danger of becoming extinct by the beginning of the 20th century. Hunting quotas and other conservation efforts have allowed some whale populations to recover in recent decades, but several species are still endangered and others will face new challenges as plastic pollution and water temperatures in the world's oceans increase throughout the 21st century. This 18th-century print of English ships slaughtering whales in the seas off Greenland gives a sense of the almost industrial scale of European whale hunting at that time.

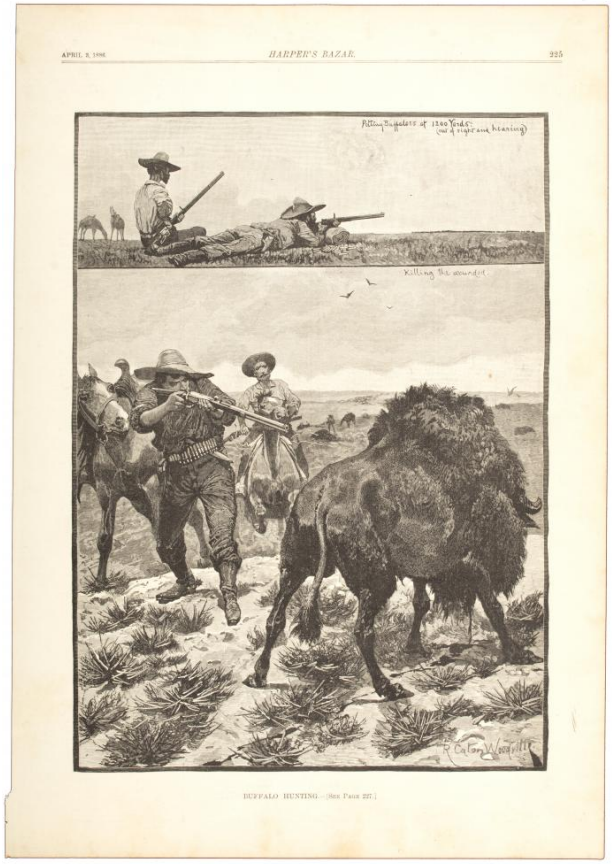


Baleen Whale Hunting (Pêche de la Baleine)
Edouard Traviès (French, 1809-1876)) after a painting by Ambroise Louis Garneray (French, 1783-1857)
Original design ca. 1835; this print ca. 1860
Engraving
Hope College Collection, 2020.74

The various species of baleen whale—including right whales, bowhead whales, fin whales, gray whales and blue whales—were especially prized by European and American whale hunters during the 18th and 19th centuries. Baleen whales are named for the sieve-like baleen plates in their mouths that the animals use to filter food from the water as they swim through the sea. Combining strength and flexibility, baleen was used to make baskets, corset stays and parasol ribs, among other goods. Killing a baleen whale was thus doubly profitable for a whale hunter, yielding both oil and baleen. This gruesome image of a French whaling crew attacking a baleen whale effectively conveys the extreme violence and danger of 19th-century whale hunting. The image was originally painted by sailor-turned-artist Ambroise Louis Garneray in the 1830s, and was later re-worked in the 1860s by naturalist and illustrator Edouard Traviès for publication in books and broadside prints.

Passenger Pigeons
Theodore Jasper (American, born Prussia 1814-1897)
1878
Chromolithograph
Hope College Collection, 2020.72

The passenger pigeon was a species of wild pigeon native to North America that is now extinct. It is estimated that when European colonists first arrived in North America there may have been between three and five billion passenger pigeons living on the continent. The birds were so numerous that migrating flocks would darken the skies and could take more than a day to pass over a given spot. As the number of white settlers in America increased during the 18th and 19th centuries, passenger pigeons were hunted for their meat, which was used as food; for their feathers, which were used in bedding; and for their blood and organs, which were used in medicines. At the same time, the settlers also cut down the old-growth forests where the passenger pigeons nested and lived. The twin forces of hunting and habitat loss caused the population of passenger pigeons to decline precipitously. The last wild passenger pigeon was killed in 1901 and the last captive passenger pigeon died in 1914. This image of passenger pigeons roosting in a tree was created by painter Theodore Jasper and published in the 1878 first edition of *Studer's Popular Ornithology: Birds of North America*.



Buffalo Hunting
Richard Caton Woodville, Jr. (British, 1856-1927)
1886
Electrotype engraving
Hope College Collection, 2020.65

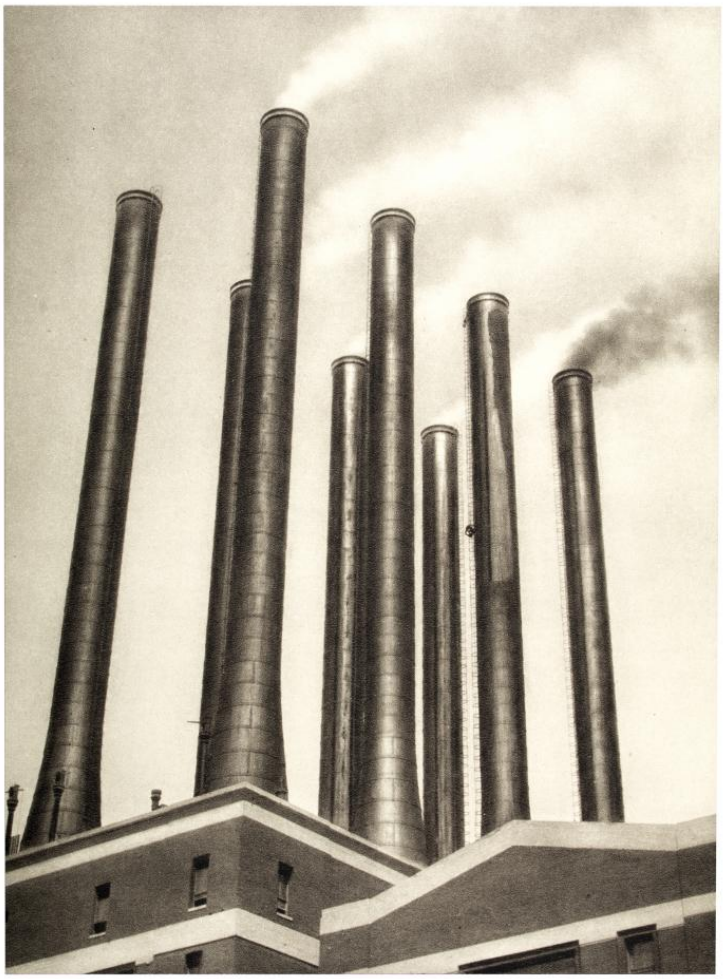
The largest land animal native to North America, the American bison—sometimes mistakenly called a buffalo—was once widely distributed across the eastern and central portions of the United States, southern Canada and parts of northern Mexico. Biologists estimate that in 1600 there were as many as 50 million bison in North America. By 1900, fewer than 100 remained in the wild. Most of the bison were killed by professional hunters during the second half of the 19th century; in the winter of 1872-73 alone more than 1.5 million bison were killed in the United States. Bison were commercially hunted primarily for their hides, which were used to make robes, coats, boots and industrial machine belts. There was also a market for dried bison bones, which were used in the manufacture of glue, fertilizer and printing ink. As this print shows, professional bison hunters often worked in teams composed of shooters, reloaders, skinners and packers. This division of labor made the hunting teams lethally efficient and allowed them sometimes to kill more than 100 bison in a single day. As it became clear that bison were in danger of becoming extinct, conservationists began efforts to preserve herds of the animals in national parks and on private ranches. Today there are approximately 500,000 bison in the United States, only 15,000 of which are considered to be truly wild.

Logging in Northern Wisconsin
Thure de Thulstrup (American, born Sweden 1848-1930)
1885
Electrotype engraving
Hope College Collection, 2020.78

Before 1820, most of the upper midwestern United States was covered with old-growth forests that supported a rich variety of birds, animals and other wildlife. As white settlers moved into the area and displaced the original Native American inhabitants, they began to cut down the trees for their own use and to sell for use in other markets. Most commercial tree cutting occurred during the winter so that the logs could be pulled more easily over the snow to a riverbank or railway line. When spring came, the logs were floated down the river or taken on a train to sawmills where they were dried, aged and cut into boards. By the second half of the 19th century, lumbering had become a major industry in Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota. Initially, loggers cut trees selectively, leaving smaller trees to continue growing so that the forest habitats were not completely destroyed. But as demand for lumber and paper increased in the years after the Civil War, loggers began clearcutting the trees and by the 1920s most of the original forests—and the natural habitats they supported—were gone. The forests that exist in the upper Midwest today consist primarily of second- and third-growth trees that were planted or naturally seeded on a patchwork of public and private lands from the early decades of the 20th century onward.

Two Shovels
Gerrit Beneker (American, 1882-1934)
1912
Oil on canvas
Hope College Collection, 1987.1.3

Unlike traditional underground mining, strip mining involves removing layers of earth and rock from the surface of a mining site to expose the targeted metals or minerals for easier extraction. This technique requires more investment of time and money at the outset of the mining operation, but can vastly increase the yield and therefore the profits. Because strip mining destroys all of the natural habitat around the mining site, it is also far more environmentally destructive than traditional mining. The invention of large mechanical excavators allowed strip mining to become commonplace across the US during the 20th century. This painting from 1912 by Grand Rapids native Gerrit Beneker reflects a period of transition between the old ways of mining by hand and the new ways of mining by machine. It depicts an open-pit mine with tiered sides leading down to a railway where a train is waiting to haul away the excavated material. The enormity of the environmental damage depicted in this image is softened by its cheerful pastel color scheme.



Smokestacks at the Ford River Rouge Complex
Emil Otto Hoppé (British, 1878-1972)
Original photograph 1926; this print 1927
Photogravure
Hope College Collection, 2020.70

The industrial revolutions that occurred in Europe and America during the 19th and 20th centuries were powered by burning massive quantities of fossil fuels, mainly coal and oil. Burning these fuels caused terrible air pollution, including choking smog, acid rain and elevated levels of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gasses that have led to global warming today. This image depicts the iconic smokestacks of the Power House at the Ford River Rouge Complex in Dearborn, Michigan. Designed by Albert Kahn and constructed between 1917 and 1928, the Ford River Rouge Complex was the largest integrated factory in the world at that time and for many years afterward.

Akron
André Kertész (Hungarian, 1894-1985)
Original photograph 1947; this print 1972
Photogravure
Hope College Collection, 2020.71

Throughout the 19th and most of the 20th centuries, many European and American industrial factories used nearby rivers, lakes and oceans as convenient dumping grounds for the unwanted byproducts of their manufacturing operations. These byproducts often contained long-lasting toxic chemicals that polluted the water and contaminated the sediments at the bottom of the waterways. This image is a photogravure print based on a photograph taken in 1947 by the Hungarian-born photographer André Kertész of a factory in Akron, Ohio. In the middle decades of the 20th century, Akron was known as “The Rubber Capital of the World” for its extensive tire manufacturing industry. Today few tires are made in Akron but water and soil pollution caused by that industry remain an ongoing problem.

Bazaar: Fight Air Pollution
George Stowe, Jr. (American, active 1970s)
1970
Offset lithograph
Hope College Collection, 2020.73

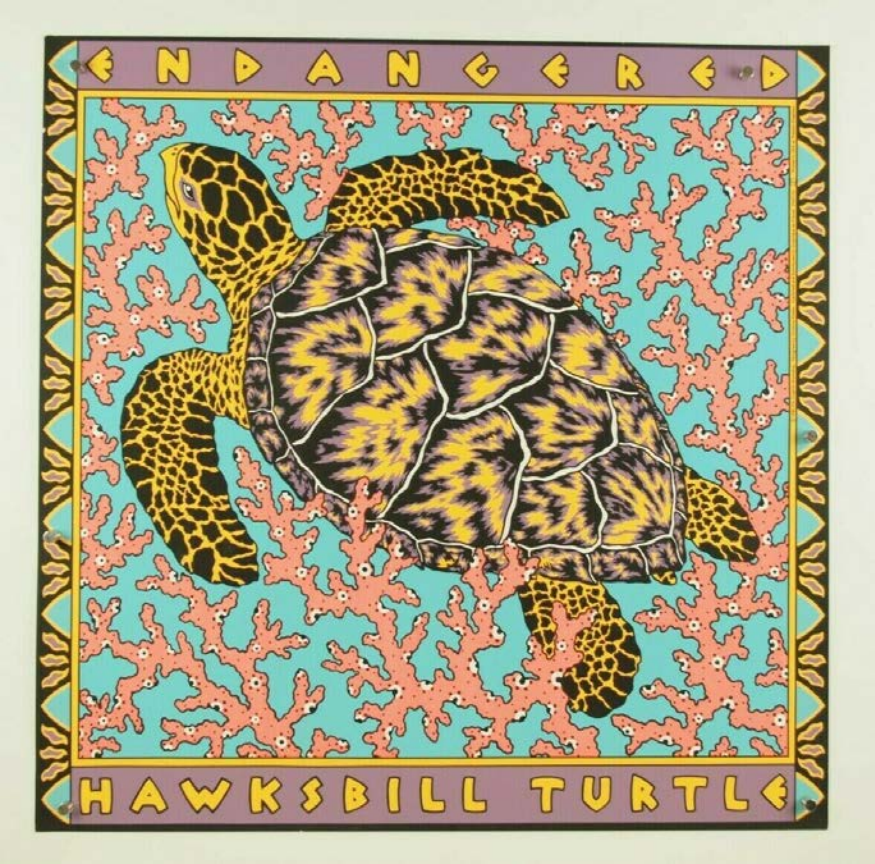
Air pollution was a serious problem in Europe and America during the middle decades of the 20th century. In October 1948, an unusual weather pattern concentrated the air pollution from several factories in Donora, Pennsylvania, killing 20 people and sickening more than 7000. Four years later in December 1952, the city of London in England was engulfed by a thick coal smog that killed at least 8000 people over a five-day period. The United States government responded to the growing pollution crisis by passing the Air Pollution Control Act of 1955, the Clean Air Act of 1963 and the Air Quality Act of 1967, all of which provided federal funding to study the problem of air pollution and recommend solutions for reducing it. Those efforts culminated in 1970 with the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency and passage of the Clean Air Act of 1970, which authorized federal and state regulations designed to limit air pollution and mitigate its effects on both human and natural environments. This 1970 print by artist George Stowe, Jr., coincided with the passage of that momentous legislation. It parodies a fashion magazine cover set five years in the future when, the artist imagines, gas masks will have become the newest fashion accessories.

Pollution Warning on Lake Pontchartrain
Bevil Knapp (American, born 1949)
1982
Photograph
Hope College Collection, 2020.81.1

Lake Pontchartrain is a shallow, brackish estuary in Southern Louisiana that is fed fresh water by seven rivers and bayous, and connects to the Gulf of Mexico between the cities of New Orleans and Slidell. Covering an area of 630 square miles, it is one of the largest wetlands along the Gulf Coast and is an essential habitat for many species of birds and marine life. Between the 1930s and 1970s, Lake Pontchartrain was subjected to increasing levels of pollution from nearby oil and gas wells, chemical manufacturing plants, and urban sewage and wastewater discharges. The lake's water quality became so poor by the early 1980s that it was no longer safe for humans to swim in or eat fish from it. This 1982 photograph of a warning sign at a Lake Pontchartrain beach was taken by Bevil Knapp when she was a staff photographer for the New Orleans *Times-Picayune* newspaper. Knapp is a member of the Society of Environmental Journalists and now runs her own photography studio specializing in images of Southern Louisiana's people, wildlife and landscapes.

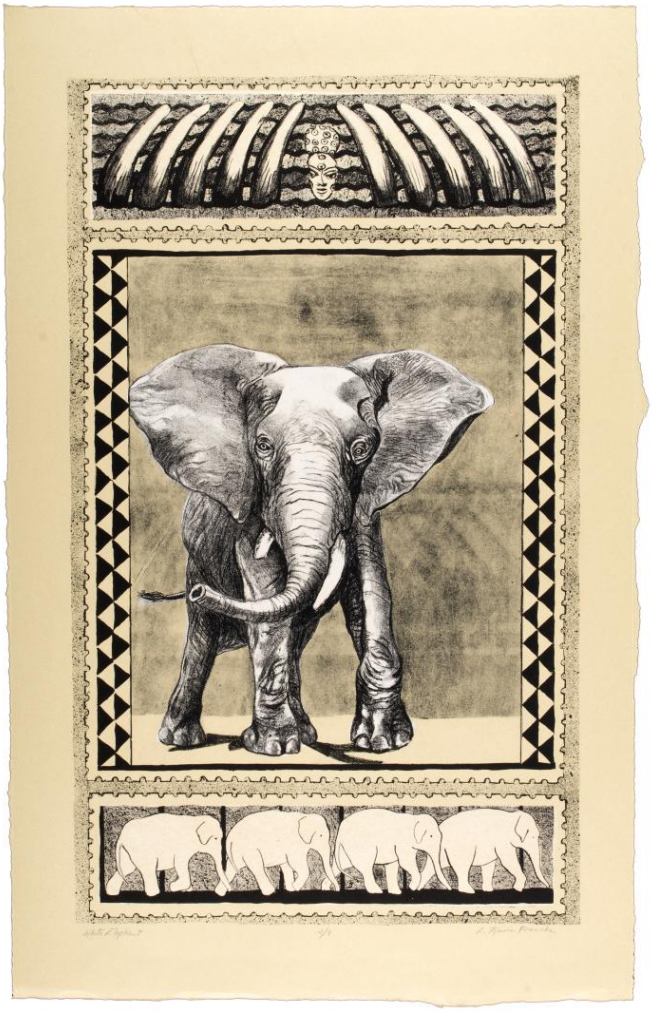
Deadly Drums
AP Newsfeatures
1985
Photograph
Hope College Collection, 2020.77

Love Canal is a neighborhood of Niagara Falls, New York that was originally developed by William T. Love as a planned residential community with a waterway that would allow boats from Lake Ontario to bypass Niagara Falls. When Love's development efforts failed, the property was acquired by the City of Niagara Falls and used as a garbage dump during the 1920s and 30s. From 1942 to 1952, Hooker Chemical Company used the site to dispose of the waste from its various manufacturing operations. Hooker Chemical sealed the dump site with a clay cap in 1952 and sold the property to the Niagara Falls School Board in 1953. The school board built schools on several parcels of the property and sold other parcels to private developers who built more than 1000 family homes and apartments around the schools. Tragically, however, toxins soon began to leak from the supposedly sealed dump site into the surrounding soil and groundwater, and by the mid-1970s local residents were experiencing elevated incidences of miscarriages, birth defects, cancers and other health problems. Investigative journalists from the *Niagara Falls Gazette* exposed these health problems and connected them to the neighborhood's checkered history as a waste dump. As public outrage grew, Love Canal was declared a federal disaster area in 1978 and efforts began to demolish the contaminated buildings and clean up the site. This 1985 photograph documents part of that clean-up effort, depicting rows of 55-gallon barrels filled with contaminated soil and sludge that await burial in a specially-prepared landfill.



Endangered Hawksbill Turtle
Christine Kidder (American, active 1980s-90s)
1990
Screenprint
Hope College Collection, 2020.84

In 1973, the United States government passed the Endangered Species Act to help protect and restore numerous species of land animals, birds, and marine creatures that were threatened with extinction because of hunting, pollution and habitat loss. The legislation was groundbreaking in that it protected not only the species, but also their habitats; and in that its regulations applied to species not only within the Unites States, but also in other countries around the world that did business in or with the United States. The Hawksbill Turtle is one of the species that was designated for protection in the first version of the Endangered Species Act. Hawksbill Turtles are sea turtles whose natural range includes the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian oceans. For centuries the turtles were hunted for their shells, which were used to make combs, jewelry boxes, cigarette cases and other luxury consumer goods. But the most dangerous factors still pushing Hawksbill Turtles toward extinction are pollution and habitat loss due to human expansion and global warming. Scientists estimate that the global population of Hawksbill Turtles has declined by more than 75% over the past century and the turtles are now listed as critically endangered.



White Elephant
Louise Zjawin Francke (American, born 1941)
1995
Lithograph with chine collé
Gift of the artist, 2017.66.1

Once numbering in the millions, the population of African elephants is now estimated to be around 400,000. Most of that decline occurred during the 20th century and was caused by a combination of hunting and habitat loss. Elephants are hunted primarily for their tusks, which historically were used to make a wide variety of ivory objects ranging from piano keys and billiard balls to hair brush handles and decorative sculptures. Despite the efforts of numerous countries to outlaw the sale and use of ivory, African elephants continue to be killed illegally at an alarming rate and the species is currently listed as “vulnerable” by the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the World Wildlife Fund and other organizations that monitor endangered species around the world.

Shipbreaking #10, Chittagong, Bangladesh
Edward Burtynsky (Canadian, born 1955)
2001
C-print
Hope College Collection, 2015.43.2

The son of a factory worker, Edward Burtynsky has spent much of his life as an artist exploring the impact of industry on the natural environment. This haunting image belongs to a series of photographs Burtynsky took in Bangladesh, where he documented the often-dangerous work of disassembling de-commissioned container ships. Using rudimentary tools and little safety gear, the people of Bangladeshi coastal towns like Chittagong break down huge ocean-going vessels into their constituent materials that are then recycled, burned or discarded in nearby landfills. While the recycling part of this process is generally positive, many older ships contain large quantities of asbestos, lead paint and other toxic substances that may persist and cause harm to the environment for decades or even centuries after the ships are dismantled.

Duplication 3
Xing Danwen (Chinese, born 1967)
2003
Photograph
Hope College Collection, 2019.88

Plastic is a generic term for synthetic polymers composed of long molecular chains that do not otherwise exist in nature. The first fully synthetic plastic was invented by Leo Baekeland in 1907. That first plastic—known as Bakelite—won immediate acclaim for its low cost, durability and multifunctionality. Subsequent inventors created many additional types of plastic and the material became an increasingly common part of modern culture around the world during the second half of the 20th century. Although plastics offer some practical and commercial advantages over other materials, their strong molecular compositions also mean that plastics do not easily break down and can endure in the environment for hundreds or even thousands of years. Plastic pollution poses an especially grave danger to the world's rivers, lakes and oceans and is impacting natural ecosystems in ways we do not fully understand. Yet, as long as there is demand for cheap consumer goods, the plastic problem will not be easily solved. This photograph of mass-produced plastic doll arms from a factory in China is a disturbing reminder of how much plastic we unthinkingly use and discard in our everyday lives.

Core Sample
Linda Cross (American, born 1936)
2003
Mixed Media
Hope College Collection, 2017.19

For several decades, New York artist Linda Cross has created illusionistic representations of both natural and man-made geologic features. Combining elements of painting and sculpture, Cross's images encourage contemplation of humankind's place in and effect on the planet. This particular piece suggests a cross-section taken from a landfill and makes us think about the long-term impact of our throw-away consumer culture.

Through the Wire, Lowveld Fire II
Kim Berman (South African, born 1960)
2004
Lithograph
Hope College Collection, 2020.1.1

Lowveld is the South African term for the large wilderness areas composed of grasslands, scrub brush and isolated trees that make up much of the interior of South Africa. Fire is a natural part of the lowveld ecosystem and helps maintain a healthy balance of plant and animal species. However, as the global climate warms and rainfall patterns change, wildfires in the lowveld—and in other wilderness ecosystems around the world—are becoming more frequent and more intense. This print by Kim Berman reminds us that wildfires will occur wherever there is fuel, regardless of any manmade boundaries or settlements.

Bee Pile
Sonia Romero (American, born 1980)
2010
Screen print
Hope College Collection, 2017.25.1

California artist Sonia Romero created this image in 2010 in response to news stories about colony collapse disorder, a phenomenon in which the disappearance of worker bees leads to the demise of entire bee hives. Because much of the world's food chain relies on crops that are pollinated by bees, colony collapse disorder poses a grave environmental threat not only to humans but to many species of animals and birds as well. The occurrence of colony collapse disorder has been steadily increasing since the early 2000s and scientists do not yet fully understand how to combat the problem.

Jackson Glacier 2
Ian Van Coller (American, born South Africa 1970)
2013
Archival pigment print
Hope College Collection, 2017.24.1

Global warming is causing glaciers around the world to melt at an alarmingly rapid rate. Melting glaciers will eventually lead to a dramatic rise in sea levels, and will threaten the fresh water supplies of many countries. This photograph by artist Ian Van Coller belongs to a series that documents the disappearing glaciers in Glacier National Park in northern Montana. In 1880 there are estimated to have been approximately 150 glaciers within the area encompassed by the park. Because of global warming there are now only 25 glaciers remaining in the park, and by the middle of the 21st century there may be none. Melt water from the glaciers plays a critical role in the ecology of Montana and other western states, so the disappearance of the glaciers poses a severe ecological threat to the region.

Earth on Fire
Cleon Peterson (American, born 1973)
2020
Screen print
Hope College Collection, 2020.83

According to Greek mythology, Atlas was a Titan who, together with his brothers, waged war against the Olympian gods. After the Titans were defeated, Atlas was punished by being forced to support the sky upon his shoulders. Artists in the ancient world and later in Renaissance Europe often depicted this story by showing Atlas as a kneeling figure holding a celestial sphere on his shoulders. Inevitably, some artists mistook the celestial sphere for a terrestrial globe, which is the image used in this print by Los Angeles-based artist Cleon Peterson to warn about the dangers of global warming.