Reflecting The Issue Of Water Pollution In Landscape Photography

Water pollution has become an increasing problem which affects all aspects of life and is a leading main issue around the world. More recently has water pollution become severe and it is due to the increase in plastics and other rubbish that is dumped in the worlds rivers and oceans. Some excellent examples of water pollution come from photography and the way photographers can capture and shed light on pollution with a single picture. Ansel Adams is a historical photographer and environmentalist. He is well known for his landscape photography and iconic black and white imagery, his photographs highlight the beauty of the world at that time. Peter Essick is an international photographer who in 2011 created an album of photographs called ‘fertilised world’ which captures the effect that pollution has on different parts of the world. One in particular called ‘algae bloom’ shows Lake Erie in Ohio covered in a layer of algae with a boat driving through the lake and parting the algae to reveal the water underneath. All the photographers share an interest and focus on the environment, showing and displaying it through photography.

Ansel Adams is a well known environmentalist photographer who specialises in landscape photography. He would photograph famous landscapes around the world, the photos would be taken in black and white as this is what was available at the time (coloured images were rarely used at this time, they were much more difficult to make and cost a lot more).

Ansel Adams was inspired by an American photographer he met in 1933 called Alfred Stieglitz who shared his passion for environmentalist photography and nature. The photograph I have chosen of his work is called ‘Storm’. It is part of a collection of photographs from different photographer called ‘Fragile Waters’ which was created to portray the beauty of water It was taken at Point Sur, Monterey in 1946. The photograph was taken to raise awareness around the historic beach. Although during his lifetime he was not successful, there is now a large area of protected land around the beach. This photograph carries over Ansel Adams common use of black and white filters of landscapes. Having the photograph in black and white allows depth to be shown, the shadows are much easier to distinguish and we can see the variations in light and dark. The photograph has a large depth of field as we can see that most of the image is sharp and focused, this allows us to see very fine details such as the ripples in the water and breaking of the waves. Natural lighting has been used for the photograph, most likely just before or during sunset. We can tell this as there are sharp shadows that appear to be from a low angle of light, this is easily seen from the small isolated rock in the mid left-hand side of the image, it has a shadow that is cast towards the camera showing the direction of sunlight. There is also a repetition of patterns throughout the waves which is a very common theme throughout his photographs. He likes to use these patterns and repeating shapes to create landscapes within the photo. Unlike the other photographers that I have chosen Ansel Adams does not demonstrate an example of pollution. This is because pollution wasn't a prominent issue during his time, instead he focused on pure landscape photography. Pollution only started becoming a major issue during the late 1900’s with the advances of technology in society.

Peter Essick is an Atlanta-based contemporary photographer who is well known throughout the photography industry. He specialises in nature and environmental topics and has photographed

stories on issues such as climate change, nuclear trash, drought, and water pollution. He was even named one of the top 40 most influential nature photographers in the world by the Outdoor Photography magazine. Peter Essick draws inspiration from Ansel Adams and similarly is a heavy environmentalist and landscape photographer, they both have a very similar style of photography and like to use the same techniques although since Peter Essick is a modern day photographer he has access to a much wider variety of enhancements such as the drone he used for this photograph. Peter Essick has used a very high birds eye view shot that looks directly down on a vast lake covered in algae. This photograph is called ‘Algae Bloom’ and was one of many images in a collection called ‘fertilised world which focused on pollution on the environment. It was taken in 2011, Lake Erie, Ohio. The algae bloom in lake erie occured due to the increase in temperature which is caused by climate change. The algae and bacteria expand or ‘bloom’ reducing the lake to toxic, unusable water. The photograph includes a small boat trekking across the vast expanse of algae covered water and is even clearing a path showing the water underneath. This is useful in showing how the pollution has affected the water, underneath all the algae there is a beautiful lake that goes unseen due to the state of the water. The photograph has a large depth of field. It is all focused and sharp as we can see very fine details such as the algaes texture and colour variations. Scale has been created by having the boat moving across the lake, without it the vast expanse of water would seem much smaller as we cannot compare it to a direct source. Having the boat in frame makes the pollution of Lake Erie seem like much more of a problem and creates awareness around the subject. The photograph consists of many varying shades and tones of green that build up to create depth in the image. The contrast between dark and light green is very effective and shows the sheer amount of pollution that has affected the lake. Similarly to Ansel Adams there is a clear sense of repeating shapes and patterns. The white highlight that runs along the lake in a way creates its own landscape, moving throughout the image. Peter Essick is a well established photographer and his photography around pollution helps to raise awareness around the subject.