

BLUE TREES: An Eco-Visualization

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Our project seeks to visualize the predicted rise in sea levels due to global warming on a time scale from the years 2025 to 2200. Rather than depicting actual flooding heights in various cities, we decided to focus on the amount of sea level rise overall. We chose to highlight five international cities in order to have a global representation of climate change on a campus that has students from all over the world. We wrapped blue fabric and LED lights around trees on Cornell University's campus showing these predicted rises over time in order to create a physical representation of flooding on a human scale. The installation ran during November and December 2007.

We wrapped blue fabric around each of the 20 trees on Cornell University's main pedestrian thoroughfare to provide students, staff, faculty and visitors with an intimate experience with predicted sea level rise in New York City as caused by global climate change. We chose New York City due to its global prominence as an urban center, as well as its proximity to Cornell University. The blue bands created a graphical representation of sea level rise from 2025 to 2200. As people walked along the colonnade, the bands grew higher on opposite trees as they neared the central campus. There were signs near the trees explaining the visualization, as well as the address of our website. We wrapped other trees at strategic places on the campus with blue LED lights, making them highly visible at night. On these trees we placed the lights at 3 different levels, indicating the number of inches of predicted sea level rise for the years 2100, 2150 and 2200.

We chose a data set that predicts these rises because it will be a clear result of global warming that is more palpable than other changes such as shifting ecological zones or species extinction. We believe that the extent to which people think about global warming on a day to day basis may in reality be quite minimal, despite the extensive news coverage of late. This project confronts people with the reality that global warming will bring to our international coastal communities. Our main goal was to raise awareness, not to create a solution to global warming per se. We created a website and a group on Facebook so that people could extend their experience of the project by learning more about our sources of information, ways of reducing our effects on the environment that contribute to global warming, and discussing the project on a blog. We also hope to inspire others to repeat this project in their own towns and cities.



<http://blue-trees.com>