

Disturbing symbol (Justin Hofman)

Justin Hofman's award-winning photograph shows a small orange seahorse clutching a cotton bud with its tail. Its tail around a cotton bud, moving through the current of the blue ocean off the Indonesian island of off the Indonesian island of Sumbawa.

The seahorse is only half the size of the pink foreign body it is clutching, which it probably mistakes for seaweed or a coral on which it can rest. The problem the photographer is drawing attention to is the pollution of the sea by plastic and other harmful substances. According to estimates 150 million tonnes of plastic waste pollute the world's oceans, and every minute plastic the size of a rubbish truckload is added [1].

Indonesia, off whose beaches the photograph would be taken, is the second largest of global plastic pollution behind China, because the country has no functioning waste system, and the mentality of its people is not averse to the cheap and versatile material [2]. In addition, there is also the rubbish from abroad, which, as in the case of Germany, is often exported to Asia and incinerated there or finally ends up in landfills or the sea.

The reason for the rapidly increasing amount of plastic in the sea is primarily disposable products and packaging, such as plastic bottles and plastic bags, as well as sanitary products and disposable cups, since they all are intended for single use only. A large proportion of all plastic products are used for less than five minutes and about half end up in the trash after less than a month [1]. This is out of all proportion to the damage that is done, as even a simple yoghurt pot takes 450 years to dissolve.

However, it does not really dissolve or even rot, but disintegrates into smaller and smaller pieces, so-called microplastics, which are even more dangerous as they are eaten or accidentally swallowed by animals and is responsible for the constipation or starvation of thousands of animals. However, the effects of microplastics are not limited to the animal kingdom, because it also enters the human food chain through fish, for example, and thus human body, so that microplastics have already been detected in human blood [3].

For me personally, this photograph was the most memorable of the exhibition, because it the life and behaviour of marine life has already been altered and affected by human by the rubbish produced by humans.

[1] Plastic in the sea [Greenpeace

[2] Indonesia sinks in plastic waste | FAIRconomics (fair-economics.de)

[3] Microplastics detected in human blood for the first time - DER SPIEGEL

The fragile paradise – Essays on issues of selected photographs

