

KANUKA TEA FOR ART

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Gwen van den Bout
Creative Octopus and Pioneer

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What happens when tea and art meet? What happens when artists start using tea in their works? Can tea act as a medium to appreciate things we forget exist? Gwen van den Bout, London and Rotterdam based conceptual artist and designer offers some of the answers in her installation – Sanctuary of Serenity: A Contemporary Ceremony. We visited the Central Saint Martins Degree Show Two: Design, where our interest was focused on MA Narrative Environments course and Gwen’s work. Kanuka Tea had the honour to participate in the conceptual installation by providing the loose leaf tea.

Of course, we jumped at the chance to talk to Gwen and ask her a few questions about her project and the role of tea in her work.

Tea for Art: Sanctuary of Serenity

Gwen, your project is called “Sanctuary of Serenity”. What is it?

Gwen: Sanctuary of Serenity is a site-specific installation that creates a contemplative space while, at the same time, experimenting with potential alternative uses of redundant churches in the City of London. The project responds, in a contemporary interpretation, to the need to revitalise vacant churches in London’s financial and commercial district, with the aim of instilling a renewed appreciation of the City’s churches. Participants make an appointment with themselves to partake in a ceremony in which they are invited to explore and discover the installation while making and drinking their own tea blend. This process encourages participants to take a moment for introspection and reflection, and to experience its therapeutic and unwinding effect on their minds. After this process the participants are encouraged to write and send a postcard to themselves, together with their own tea blend, to relive their experience in the Sanctuary of Serenity in the future.

What is the role of tea in the “Sanctuary of Serenity”?

Gwen: The visitors will be provided with a range of loose tea with which they can compose their own blends depending on their needs. They will be guided through the process. This is a therapeutic experience as having the option of making their own tea blends prepares them for a reflective appointment with themselves, before they enter the installation where they will make and drink their tea. The ceremony and ritual of tea making is calming, relaxing and mindful in itself. This engenders relaxation and receptiveness so that the self-reflection is approachable. UK tea council states that different tea blends do have specific medicinal effects on our bodies. By getting the opportunity to compose their own tea blends visitors can interact with the installation in a personal and immersive way.

And, how about you, do you drink tea?

Gwen: Personally, I am a huge tea drinker and think it has beneficial effect on our health and wellbeing and choose to adopt the process of the tea making in this project.

Thank you Gwen for sharing your answers with us and incorporating Kanuka Tea in your project.

Gwen: Thank you.

About Gwen van den Bout

Gwen van den Bout was born in 1992, in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. She now lives and works in London, United Kingdom. Gwen is a conceptual artist and designer, currently studying a Masters in Narrative Environments at Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London. The course responds to a growing need in the cultural and commercial industries for practitioners who transcend the boundaries of disciplines and are capable of integrative thinking and participatory experiences.

Sanctuary of Serenity

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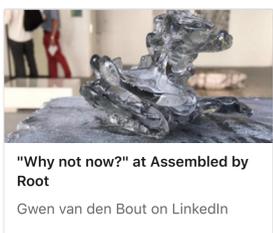
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