

# Ocean of Plastics – Gwen van den Bout

February 12, 2018 Gwen van den Bout

*Ocean of Plastics* is an atmospheric installation work by Gwen van den Bout. Gwen's conceptual artworks seek to immerse the viewer in the narratives, places and sensory qualities of our natural environment. *Ocean of Plastics* addresses and communicates the issue of oceanic plastic pollution and its impact on water quality, one of the key challenges of the Anthropocene.

## Artist Statement

Oceanic plastic pollution is a diffuse, complex phenomenon to which everybody contributes and is a stakeholder in solving, but for which nobody feels individually responsible. It is a so-called 'wicked problem', which is a multi-causal problem with multiple solutions that involves changing behaviour. For Gwen, as an artist and designer, addressing this problem requires bridging the gap between the 'hard' empirical data of the amount of plastic in the sea, and people's 'soft' personal experience of this issue. She aims to create artworks that re-make abstract measurements of plastic pollution as narrative experiences, thus rendering scientific knowledge poetically meaningful for individuals.

## The Artwork

*Ocean of Plastics* focuses on the abundance of plastic now polluting the world's oceans. Once in the water, debris plastic shreds rapidly into microplastics that spread into the most remote areas of the planet. *Ocean of Plastics* aims to transform our knowledge of this phenomenon, usually expressed as numbers, data and words, into a physical, atmospheric experience. As visitors enter the installation, they are immersed in an ocean of light and phonetic sound. Projections onto floating sheets of transparent plastic foil present speculative visualisations of water quality, the cycle of plastic's afterlife and its effect on marine organisms. It involves a sensory experience of wading through the slowly moving plastic sheets as well as finding their way through this maze and its' projections. Visitors then follow a poetic journey, developing an embodied understanding of the effects of pollution on our universal sea.

## Public Engagement

*Ocean of Plastics* goes hand-in-hand with a series of interactive educational experiences that invite visitors to connect with the installation's evocation of oceanic pollution and explore possible responses. This public engagement component of the work includes three events: a workshop for families with children inviting them to create an animal that feeds on plastic debris, a guided walking tour for adults and an interactive workshop with secondary school children exploring the recycling of plastic into new materials. Ultimately, these experiences aim to inspire their audiences to embrace more sustainable lifestyles including the reduction of plastic use, recognising the persistence of plastic in their lives or re-using plastics.



**Ocean of Plastics**  
Visitor Experience  
The visitors wade through the installation consisting out of hanging plastic sheets

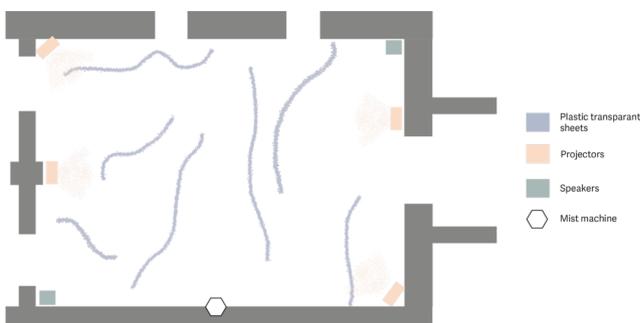
## Relation to the Universal Sea

Gwen's artwork addresses ecological crises affecting the world's oceans through exploring new, immersive methods of communicating scientific evidence of local and global systems of water pollution. *Ocean of Plastics* focuses on plastic, and particularly microplastic, pollution as a key aspect of human degradation of oceanic environments. The installation creates a speculative world that aims to sensitize visitors at an emotional level to this shared problem, inviting them to reflect on their own lifestyle choices and the impact of contemporary consumerism on the Earth.

## About the artist

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.



**Ocean of Plastics**  
Overview of the installation  
Mist, sound and projection are used in a scenographic way to create a sequence in the visitors' journey

Gwen previously studied concurrently at two universities in the Netherlands, completing a BA in Leisure and Tourism and a BA in Lifestyle and Design. She gained industry experience at several museums, cultural festivals and retail companies, including working as a Visual Merchandiser for de Bijenkorf, the largest department store in the Netherlands.

Gwen won an open call from the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam to exhibit her contemporary installation artwork. Looking to the future, Gwen is focused on working in multi-disciplinary environments where she can communicate stories. Gwen has exhibited widely, including group exhibitions at e-games town, Shangyu China (2017), LVMH, Paris (2017), Camden Living Centre, London (2017), Urban Crafts, Brussels (2016), Assembled by Root, Rotterdam (2016), Showroom MAMA, Rotterdam (2016), and Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (2015-16). Her participation in the MA Narrative Environments course is supported through scholarships from VSB funds and the Vrijvrouwe van Renswoude foundation.

[Website](#)

[Instagram](#)

Share this:



Artwork, Inspirations #plasticpollution#zerowaste #marinedebris #oceanplastic#saveourseas #sustainability

← PREVIOUS  
WORLD'S LARGEST BEACH CLEAN-UP

NEXT →  
DELTA – BY NEDILL

## FILTER INSPIRATIONS

- ALL
- ARTWORK
- BUSINESS
- INITIATIVE
- KNOWLEDGE

## TAGS

- art
- art and innovation
- artandinnovation
- ART INSTALLATION
- artist
- art moments
- budapest
- clean
- Environment
- exhibition
- Festival
- installation
- ocean
- performance
- plastic
- plastic pollution
- plastics
- plastic waste
- pollution
- pure
- pure or plastic
- research
- Sculpture
- sea
- TheUniversalSea
- The Universal Sea
- Universal
- water
- weekly excerpts
- Workshop

## RECENT INSPIRATIONS

- The Universal Sea at EU@SXSW**  
3 months ago  
We'll showcase our EU co-funded project The Universal Sea that we started in 2017 at the world-renowned festival SXSW in ...[Read More...](#)
- Perception of Contemporaneity – The Universal Sea at Museum of Contemporary Art, Novi Sad**  
9 months ago  
'Danube Dialogues' Festival in collaboration with The Museum of Contemporary Art of Vojvodina are pleased to present the central exhibition ...[Read More...](#)
- The Universal Sea at 48h Neukölln Festival – Prinzessinnengarten**  
12 months ago  
We are proud to share our missions and visions, and facilitate workshops regarding solutions for the future in a conscious, mindful ...[Read More...](#)
- Sansevieria, Clean Air, and Everything in Between**  
12 months ago  
Eva Bula's project uses the Sansevieria plant as the main element of its objects and installations. Designated Breathing Zone invites ...[Read More...](#)
- National Maritime Conference Germany**  
1 year ago  
Based on the topic: 'Into the Future: For our oceans and waters' missions and visions on the subject of marine ...[Read More...](#)

## GET INVOLVED

- Our Actions
- Donate
- Calendar
- Inspirations
- Contribute
- Community
- THE UNIVERSAL SEA NETWORK

## MORE FACTS

- About
- TUS Press Kit and Media Gallery
- 'The Universal Sea' Guidebook
- Documentation
- FAQ
- Imprint
- Privacy Policy

## LOGIN

Username or E-mail

Password

Keep me signed in

Login

Register

[Forgot your password?](#)

## FOLLOW US

