



PHOTO BY: MASKBOOK

## Unmasking Pollution with Climate Art *Join Workshop at COP23* **#Art4Climate**

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*This article is the latest in our series #Art4Climate, a joint initiative by the secretariat of UN Climate Change and Julie's Bicycle on the work of artists who make the issue of climate change more accessible and understandable by featuring it in their work. It was inspired by a session at the [Salzburg Global Seminar](#) in early 2017.*

Dust masks that hold off air pollution have become a symbol of extreme air pollution in many countries of the world – and the need to act on it. An art project called “Maskbook,” by the association Art of Change 21, is designed to raise awareness about air pollution and climate change, by getting people to design their own masks from recycled waste and transform dust masks as symbols of pollution into symbols of solutions.

Maskbook was launched in 2015, ahead of the UN Climate Change Conference COP21 in Paris, where the Paris Climate Change Agreement was clinched. Since then, workshops in which the masks are made have been organized all around the world, mobilizing more than 2,500 participants from over 50 countries in more than 70 events. Another workshop will be held to coincide with the UN Climate Change Conference COP23 in November in Bonn (see the details below).

“The goal of Maskbook is not only to create a beautiful mask, but one with a strong message and one that offers a solution to the environmental crisis,” says Marguerite Courtel, Secretary General of Art of Change 21, the association behind the Maskbook project.

# ART OF CHANGE 21 •

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*"2 Degrees Celsius" by Jonathan Ouaret (Paris, France). 2°C alludes to the upper limit of the maximum global average temperature rise agreed by countries at COP21 in Paris*

#### Tapping into Universal Symbols through Mask Art

People have gathered for the workshops in countries ranging from Morocco to South Korea, and from China to Ecuador to create their masks.

Each participant tells a different story through their portraits and through the materials they use, ranging from recycled Bhutanese prayer flags to Berber tribal patterns and colours.

Explaining the attraction of Maskbook worldwide, Maskbook Project Director Erica Johnson says: "People understand that masks are simultaneously universal and focused on the individual."

Some participants have created masks that reflect the urgent need to shift towards renewable energy. Others question consumption habits and waste production, and many demonstrate a profound respect for nature and the environment.

And yet, when viewing the portraits, people can find many similarities between masks and visualize connections between people across the world, which shows to what extent pollution and climate change are global issues.



*For COP22, Art of Change 21 and UN Environment organized Maskbook workshops and exhibitions in Marrakech, Morocco*

Supported by UN Environment, the Maskbook project explicitly aims to improve public understanding of environmental issues. Each workshop starts with a talk on climate change, air pollution and health, so that participants can better understand the impact of these phenomena on their daily lives.

"Participants of the project, through actively creating and participating in the dialogue about the environmental crisis, can reverse their role from victim of climate change to actor of change," says Art of Change 21's Founder and President Alice Audouin.

#### Join Maskbook Workshop at COP23

During the upcoming UN Climate Change Conference COP23, taking place in Bonn between 6-17 November, Maskbook is inviting the public to participate in a large-scale workshop to create their own masks.

The event, organized on Sunday 12 November on the Township/MS Beethoven boat on the river Rhine, will happen in the heart of Bonn, and will also feature exhibitions of Maskbook portraits, which will then be displayed at the Bonn Institut Français.

"Art and creation are real stakeholders in the ecological transition," says Alice Audouin. "We must bring together art, youth and entrepreneurs in order to encourage sustainable lifestyles. Mobilizing everyone's creativity is essential to creating a better future."

Visit the Maskbook online portrait gallery [here](#).

*#Art4Climate is a joint initiative by the UNFCCC and Julie's Bicycle to spot and propose super recent and new works in this broad field, but we also want to hear from you! Please send any proposals for showcasing to [newsroom@unfccc.int](mailto:newsroom@unfccc.int) or [Chiara@juliesbicycle.com](mailto:Chiara@juliesbicycle.com). Please amplify our web posts with Twitter hashtag #Art4Climate and #COP23!*