

Pollution Pods at COP25

Visitors to be immersed in choking smog as part of a drive to urge world leaders to take action on air pollution



Greta Thunberg with artist Michael Pinsky inside the Pollution Pods at the UN Climate Summit, September 2019
© David Buckland / Cape Farewell

Madrid, 2-13 December, 2019

One or two minutes inside artist Michael Pinsky's [Pollution Pods](#) and visitors might begin experiencing shortness of breath, but there's nothing dangerous in the air in the pods. Safe perfume blends and fog machines imitate the air quality of some of the world's most polluted cities – London, Beijing, São Paulo, New Delhi – as well as one of the most pristine environments on earth, Tautra in Norway.

Outside the pods, however, air pollution has been declared a public health priority by the World Health Organization (WHO). Largely caused by the same burning of fossil fuels that is driving climate change, polluted air is poisoning [nine out of ten of us and killing over seven million of us prematurely every year](#). Children are especially vulnerable: [600,000 children die prematurely](#) every year from air pollution related diseases.

As part of the [BreatheLife Campaign](#), which mobilizes governments and communities to reduce the impact of air pollution on our health & climate, this viscerally powerful art installation will be installed at the COP25 climate summit. Negotiators, observers and world leaders attending the summit will be encouraged to walk through the pods, which are being brought to Madrid by Cape Farewell, WHO, Clean Air Fund and Ministry of Ecological Transition, Spain.

Pinsky, said: *"In the Pollution Pods, I have tried to distil the whole bodily sense of being in each place. For instance, being in São Paulo seems like a sanctuary compared to New Delhi, until your eyes start to water from the sensation of ethanol, whilst Tautra is unlike any air you'll have ever breathed before, it is so pure."*

Visitors to the Pollution Pods at COP25 will experience the sensation of air pollution for a few minutes, but breathing toxic air is the reality for millions of people every day of their lives.

Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of WHO said: *“We need to agree unequivocally on the need for a world free of air pollution. We need all countries and cities to commit to meeting WHO standards for air quality.”*

Throughout the life course, exposure to air pollution is a major risk for chronic heart and respiratory disease and can inhibit proper brain and lung development in children. [A study by the Lancet showed that four million cases of childhood asthma every year,](#) including 240,000 in the United States, could be caused by air pollution resulting from traffic fumes.

“The true cost of climate change is felt in our hospitals and in our lungs. The health burden of polluting energy sources is now so high, that moving to cleaner and more sustainable choices for energy supply, transport and food systems effectively pays for itself,” said Dr Maria Neira, WHO Director of Public Health, Environmental and Social Determinants of Health. *“When health is taken into account, climate change mitigation is an opportunity, not a cost”*.

Teresa Ribera, Minister for the Ecological Transition of Spain, said: *“Air pollution and climate change are the two sides of the same coin. The symbolic installation of the Pollution Pods at COP25 should remind everybody that we are negotiating for cleaner environments, cutting emissions and gaining better health for all.”*

Jane Burston, Executive Director, Clean Air Fund, said: *“The Clean Air Fund has projects in all four of the cities represented in the Pollution Pods. Air pollution has a terrible impact on people’s health in these cities and many more around the world – but the positive side is that reducing pollution can simultaneously tackle climate change and will save millions of dollars in healthcare costs and increase productivity.”*

The Pollution Pods have been experienced by over 30,000 people since their launch at the Starmus Festival in Norway in June 2018. Cape Farewell, an international not-for-profit programme based in the UK to raise awareness about climate change through the arts, has managed a tour with locations including: London’s Somerset House for Earth Day (April 2018); Place des Nations - at the UN building in Geneva - for the first WHO Global Conference on Air Pollution and Health (October 2018); TED’s annual flagship conference in Vancouver (April 2019) and the UN Climate Summit in New York (September 2019).

- Ends -

For more information on the pollution pods and artist Michael Pinsky please contact: Theresa at Theresa Simon & Partners // theresa@theresasimon.com // + 44 (0)7976 766221 or visit: <https://capefarewell.com/pollution-pods/overview.html>

For more information on COP25

Arthur Wyns // wynsa@who.int // + 49 1516 311 3879

Marina Maiero // maierom@who.int // +41 79 2134304

For more information on the clean air initiative visit:

<https://www.who.int/globalchange/commit/en/>



Notes for Editors:

Pollution Pods will be accessible from the Green Zone at COP25, IFEMA, Madrid
2-13 December 2019
<https://capefarewell.com/pollution-pods/overview.html>

Twitter @PinskyMichael @capefarewell @WHO @DrMariaNeira @DrTedros

Hashtags #COP25 #BreatheLife #pollutionpods #CleanAirInitiative #EveryBreathMatters #michaelpinsky

About Michael Pinsky

Michael Pinsky is a British artist whose international projects have created innovative and challenging works in galleries and public spaces. He has undertaken many residencies exploring issues that shape and influence the use of our public realm. Taking the combined roles of artist, urban planner, activist, researcher, and resident, he starts residencies and commissions without a specified agenda, working with local people and resources, allowing the physical, social and political environment to define his working methodology.

His work has been shown at: TATE Britain; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chengdu; Saatchi Gallery; Victoria and Albert Museum; Institute for Contemporary Art, London; La Villette, Paris; BALTIC, Gateshead; Centre for Contemporary Art, Glasgow; Modern Art Oxford, Milton Keynes Gallery, Cornerhouse, Manchester; Liverpool Biennial, Centre de Création Contemporaine, Tours; Armory Center of the Arts, Los Angeles and the Rotterdam International Architectural Biennial.

Dr Michael Pinsky graduated from the Royal College of Art. He has received awards from the RSA, Arts Council England, British Council, Arts and Business, the Wellcome Trust and his exhibition Pontis was shortlisted for the prestigious Gulbenkian Museums Award.

Cape Farewell <https://capefarewell.com/>

The Cape Farewell project was created by the artist David Buckland in 2001. His position is that climate scientists have proven the dangers of climate change, but addressing the causes of climate change is a cultural responsibility – we need to evolve a new, cleaner, sustainable society – and ‘creatives’ are key to narrating and inspiring this transformation. Over 360 international artists and 60 climate scientists have worked directly with Cape Farewell producing: books, such as Ian McEwan’s *SOLAR*; exhibitions *High Arctic* and *U-n-f-o-l-d*, which have toured worldwide; the opera *Wave* by Jonathan Dove; and the films *Art from the Arctic*, for the BBC and *Burning Ice*, for Sundance TV. Buckland was on the selection panel responsible for commissioning Pinsky to create *Pollution Pods* and Cape Farewell has produced the international tour for the Pods, post its initial showing in Norway.

About Pollution Pods

The hardest aspect of communicating the facts of climate change is affecting decision-making and behavioural change. Although researchers have explored visualizing climate change (Nicholson- Cole, 2005; Sheppard, 2005, 2012), research about the contribution of contemporary art to the topic has been scarce. Climart is a four-year, multi-disciplinary research project run by a team of international researchers in psychology, natural science and the arts. The project is led by and housed at the Institute of Psychology at NTNU, Trondheim, Norway. Launched in 2014, the research is looking at the impact that emotive visual art may have on bridging the divide between scientific information and personal responsibility. This type of artwork is effective in changing those who are already concerned about the issue and those who are not.

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