

MarineArt: a partnership between art educators and marine scientists

Fockedeey Nancy¹, Annelies Goffin¹, Evy Copejans¹, Jacques Van Bruane², Marie-Ange Demuysere², Teun De Dobbelaere², David De Wolf³, Céline Van Rijckeghem³, Ines Tavernier⁴, Colin R. Janssen & Marine@UGent consortium⁴

¹ Flanders Marine Institute (VLIZ), InnovOcean site, Wandelaarkaai 7, 8400 Oostende, Belgium
E-mail: Nancy.Fockedeey@vliz.be

² Academie voor Beeldende Kunst van Gent, Offerlaan 3, 9000 Gent, Belgium
E-mail: acbk.projecten@Gent.be

³ Science Communication UGent, Onderbergen 1, 9000 Gent, Belgium
E-mail: Celine.VanRijckeghem@UGent.be

⁴ Interfaculty Research Consortium Marine@UGent. Secretariat: Laboratory of Environmental Toxicology and Aquatic Ecology, J. Plateastraat, 22, 9000 Ghent, Belgium
E-mail: Ines.Tavernier@UGent.be

Learning about the ocean is certainly not limited to formal education. Also, extramural activities can enhance ocean literacy. In the 'Marine Art' project three partners go into a unique co-operation to enhance ocean knowledge, observation and curiosity by a creative process:

- *Marine science & knowledge:* At the University of Ghent 24 research units are involved in marine research. Recently they united in the interfaculty research consortium Marine@UGent.
- *Creativity, art:* The Academy for Visual Arts of Ghent organises art education for children, youngsters and adults in the extramural circuit (on evenings and in weekends) to enhance creative skills and learn several techniques in the disciplines drawing, painting, printmaking, sculpture, mixed media, ceramics, illustration & cartoon, photo art or animated film.
- *Co-ordination:* The Flanders Marine Institute (VLIZ) is the coordination and information platform for marine scientific research in Flanders. Among others, it promotes the visibility of marine science and ocean knowledge to the public at large by means of popularisation and science communication.

During the first semester of the academic year 2012-2013, the students and teachers of the Art Academy are brought into contact with scientists of the Marine@UGent consortium. The students are introduced into the different marine research topics practised at the University of Ghent – by means of a presentation, a dialogue or a visit to the lab. Aim was to 'infect' the art students with curiosity in the sea and coastal processes, and give inspiration for work of art created by the artists in-spe. At last, 30 scientists, 25 art teachers (with their 65 classes) and 100 individual artists participated in the project and were inspired by the sea and ocean sciences. A total of 1200 persons was directly reached.

End-point of the project was a 5 days lasting exposition for the public at large (2-6 February 2013) where the art work was displayed in confrontation with the science that gave the initial inspiration. For the exhibition an informative brochure and a nicely documented project report were elaborated. In parallel to the exposition, the university organised a 'Childrens's University' on marine sciences for children between 5 and 12 years old.

Objectives of the project:

- make ocean sciences and marine knowledge approachable to people previously disconnected to it
- enhance new perspectives to look at the marine environment
- engage experimental learning through creative interaction with the scientific process and content
- by giving a personal meaning to scientific information art students become ocean literate participants
- build bridges between marine researchers and art students, who both need good observation, curiosity, creativity and intuition
- attract an even wider audience to marine research by means of the art exhibition

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