

Communicating science through art

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Engaging society to evolve into a "knowledge" society was one of the prime targets of the PERSEUS research project in its effort to achieve Clean Seas in Mediterranean and Black Sea by 2020. Citizen-science campaigns like the Jellyfish Spotting Campaign, Marine LitterWatch App, and PERSEUS@Sailing were launched, aiming to increase the general public's awareness and to promote volunteer engagement on environmental protection actions and advocate ocean literacy.

One of the more innovative and appealing actions, was the PERSEUS@Art initiative, which was an effort to captivate the interest of the general public, using Art as the means to inspire, involve, educate the artists and the general public through a modern art exhibition and competition. With artists being more sensitive and perceptive, it was hoped that in unique ways of expression, they would capture and target the important messages that PERSEUS wanted to convey to the public through a means of expression that would reach out to society at many different levels.

Working towards this goal, the PERSEUS Management Office, together with the Careers Office of the Athens School of Fine Arts (ASFA) decided to hold an Art Competition in order to introduce the dimension of Art in the Science world and vice versa; a peculiar "marriage" between science and art, where the inspiration and captured feelings walked alongside towards the exploration of our seas.

As a result, 140 artworks inspired by the research of PERSEUS on the Clean Seas concept were presented in a 20-day long art exhibition entitled "Images of the Sea", open to the public, which ended with an exclusive Awards Ceremony. The event was attended by the General Assembly of PERSEUS, which was held in Athens during the last week of the exhibition, where scientists and artists exchanged ideas and views on how they can collaborate to pass on to society the message of uniting effort towards Clean Seas.

The Exhibition also served the pedagogical purposes of PERSEUS. Schools of the PERSEUS@School Network, an international environmental education school network approved by the Greek Ministry of Education aiming to enhance environmental education and focusing on clean sea stewardship in schools, visited the exhibition and participated in an art workshop where school children used the works to create their own message: the new myth of PERSEUS facing the odds of environmental deterioration.

The 3 winning art works and 3 distinctions awarded are exhibited today at the entrance of the Hellenic Centre for Marine Research, and along with the exhibition catalogue, they highlight the contribution of PERSEUS@Art, showcasing to visitors a new approach towards communicating science.