

Walk-in pollution domes to be built at Somerset House

By [Elizabeth Hopkirk](#) | 29 March 2018

Installation will allow people to experience atmosphere in different cities



1/14

[SHOW CAPTION](#)

Artist Michael Pinsky is to erect a series of geodesic domes outside Somerset House which will allow visitors to experience pollution levels in different cities around the world.

They will be built in a ring in the institution's courtyard to coincide with Earth Day next month and will recreate the atmosphere in London, Beijing, São Paulo, New Delhi and Tautra, a remote peninsula near Trondheim in Norway.

Visitors will walk through the domes and experience the air quality, smell and temperature of each place.

Pinsky wants to test whether art can change people's perceptions and behaviour around climate change. He hopes to make people think about how the west's consumerism has far-reaching consequences for the east.



Source: Thor Nielsen / NTNU

Inside the New Delhi Pollution Pod

New Delhi's air quality is the worst of the five locations, cutting short an average resident's life by four years. London exceeds the World Health Organisation's standards but Londoners' lives are shortened by an average of 16 months.

Airlabs technology will remove all potentially harmful gases from the Tautra pod to allow visitors to experience what it is like to breathe truly clean air.

"In the Pollution Pods, I have tried to distil the whole bodily sense of being in each place," said Pinsky, who [commissioned the King's Cross Pond from Rotterdam's Ooze Architects](#).

"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, while Tautra is unlike any air you'll have ever breathed before, it is so pure."



Source: Michael Pinsky

Pollution Pods at sundown

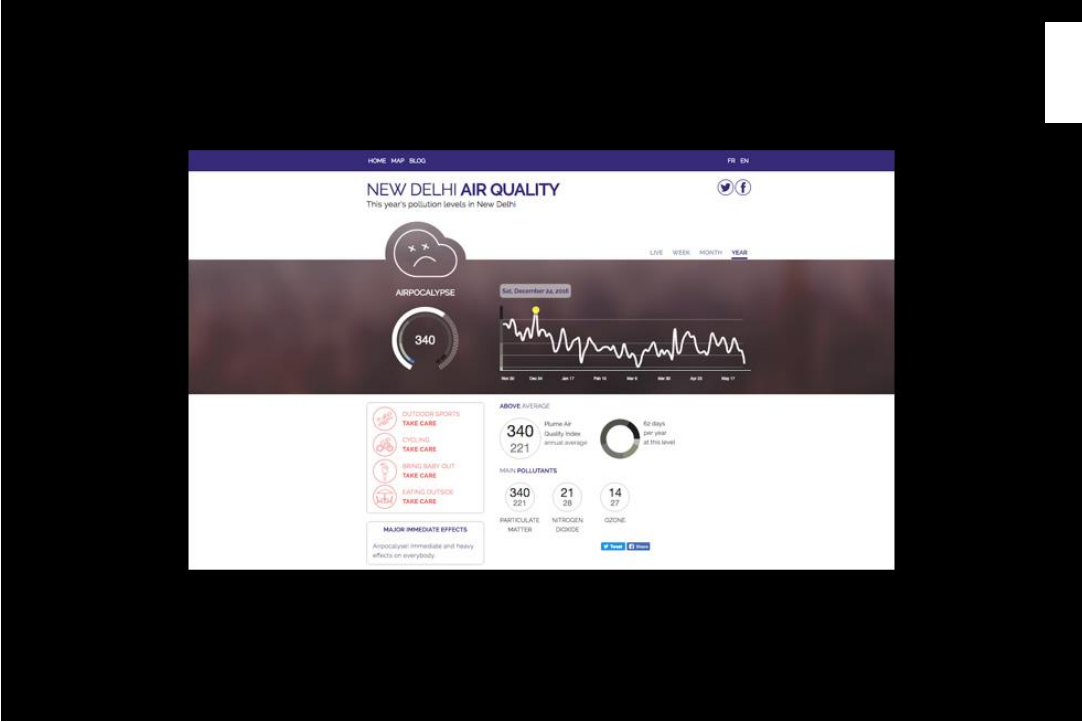
The pollution will be pumped into geodesic domes constructed using “snap-together” ball and socket joints from Build With Hubs.

The installation is part of a wider project commissioned by the Norwegian University of Science and Technology for Climart, an ongoing research programme that examines the underlying psychological mechanisms involved in the production and reception of visual art.

For the London installation, Pinsky has worked with specialists who create olfactory experiences to reproduce some of the crucial scents in the pollution mix.

Lizzie Ostrom, better known as Odette Toilette who co-curated Somerset House’s Perfume exhibition last year, has identified a manufacturer of combusted diesel scent and will engineer its dissipation into the atmosphere, while Netherlands-based I Scent has helped generate the smells of burnt plastic, burnt grass, burnt coal and burnt wood.

Pollution Pods is part of a celebration of Earth Day, the world’s largest environmental event, at Somerset House on Sunday April 22. Other commissions at Somerset House include a flag that will change in colour from red, white and blue to grey as it reacts to London’s air.



1/4

Postscript

The domes will be open at Somerset House from April 18-24.