

# THE ART NEWSPAPER

NEWS → ENVIRONMENT

## Jeppe Hein's 'breathwork' is headed to the United Nations headquarters

The project will be launched on the heels of the UN Climate Action Summit in New York

GABRIELLA ANGELETI

*6th September 2019 14:31 GMT*



Jeppe Hein painting Breathing Watercolours on a wall Photo: Hendrik Hähner/Studio Jeppe Hein and courtesy of Jeppe Hein

As politicians descend in New York on 21 September for the United Nations Climate Action Summit, the Danish artist Jeppe Hein will launch *Breathe With Me*, a week-long project in the UN headquarters that will invite delegates to “paint their breath” as a symbolic statement on climate policy.

The work, in which participants inhale and then exhale while painting a blue line on a life-size canvas, aims to “remind people that they are alive by visualising the wave of their breath”, the artist says. “We have to change ourselves to change where the world is headed, but you can’t demand change from others—you can only try to inspire people.”



Rendering of Breathe with Me at the UN Headquarters, New York Rendering by Studio Jeppe Hein and courtesy of Jeppe Hein and ART2030

The project concludes on 24 September, the day of the opening of the Un General Assembly, then moves from 25-27 September to Central Park, where the public will be invited to participate (watercolours and brushes are provided). In the park, the canvas will stretch almost 600 ft. The Global Citizen music festival will also screen a film about the project on 28 September.

The work stems from a ritual practiced by Hein, who is best known for his meditative works. After suffering a physical and mental breakdown around ten years ago, the artist says, he began painting small watercolours, and would attempt to control his breath by

painting one line as he exhaled and inhaled. “I felt concentrated and started to feel well,” he says. “We’re somehow aware of our breath when we’re painting although we’re doing something invisible.”

The artist also has created a downloadable manual for the project to encourage individuals, schools, families and public institutions to participate. Past “breathers” include Max Hollein, the director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art; Christine Macel, the chief curator of the Centre Pompidou; the artists Tomás Saraceno and Pipilotti Rist, and others.

The work “creates a connection and empathy between people”, the artist says. “We’re all inhaling the same world, so maybe taking two seconds to sit and think can inspire you and change your thoughts and perhaps change the world.”

The project has been organised with the non-profit art group Art 2030 in collaboration with various partners including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the environmental organisation Parley for Oceans, Global Citizen and other organisations.