

CHILDREN'S PLAYBOOK #TURNOFFTHEPLASTICTAP BENJAMIN VON WONG



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#TURNOFFTHEPLASTICTAP

BENJAMIN VON WONG

From October 7 to November 19 at the Canadian Cultural Centre

If you visit our exhibition at the Canadian Cultural Centre in Paris between October 7 and November 19, 2021, you'll discover a strange giant tap suspended in the air, spilling streams and streams of plastic bottles and containers onto the floor...

Impressive, isn't it?

This giant tap is a monumental installation by **Canadian artist, photographer and activist Benjamin Von Wong!**

Do you know what the word "activist" means?

An activist is a person who supports a cause and acts to defend that cause, such as peace, justice, human rights, animals...

Benjamin Von Wong is committed to the protection of the environment and our planet and way of taking action is art!

He builds large installations, takes photos and shoots videos which he posts on the internet and social networks like Instagram, to show the effects of pollution on the planet.

With his installation at the Canadian Cultural Centre, Benjamin Von Wong is tackling **a major global problem: single-use plastic pollution**. He has given his work a title in English: **"Turn Off The Plastic Tap"**.



WHO'S BENJAMIN VON WONG?

Benjamin Von Wong was born on November 14, 1986 in Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

His parents are Sing Wong & Jeanette Kho, both Malaysians of Chinese descent who immigrated to Canada. Benjamin Von Wong studied at 13 different schools before becoming an engineer.

In 2012, he quit his job to become a photographer: his true passion!

Since then, he has worked with many brands such as Starbucks, Greepeace, Dell... and produces **large photo and video projects** on environmental preservation, **to raise awareness and alert on the urgency to protect our planet!**

Among his most famous photos, there is the one of the mermaid lying on a beach, in the middle of 10,000 plastic bottles!

In 2019, Benjamin Von Wong was in the "**Guinness Book of Records**" for the largest installation in the world made from plastic straws: a work to denounce plastic pollution in the oceans...



“

“WHEN I MAKE AN EXHIBITION, I HOPE TO TELL A STORY THAT SPEAKS TO PEOPLE AND MAKES THEM ACT OR RETHINK THE CONSEQUENCES OF THEIR ACTIONS WHEN THEY GET HOME.”

Benjamin Von Wong





But you may be wondering...
Why are single-use plastics a problem?
And why is Benjamin Von Wong asking us to
turn off the plastic tap?

PLASTIC IS EVERYWHERE

The next time you go to a supermarket, do this little experiment: open your eyes and look around carefully.

You will see... **all the shelves are full of plastic!** Vegetables and fruit are protected in **plastic packaging**, water comes in **plastic bottles**, shampoo and soap too! In the fresh food aisle, salads and takeaways are in **plastic containers**, with **plastic cutlery**, and your favourite drinks are usually sold in small cups with... **plastic straws!**

Many of these items are intended to be used only once: this is called "single-use plastic"!

Today, these plastics are so common that it is almost difficult to imagine our lives without them.

But first, what is plastic?





A SHORT HISTORY OF PLASTICS



Plastics have a long history: researchers have discovered that in 1600 BC the people of Central America developed a method of making plastic from natural materials such as rubber, which was then imported to Europe!

However, plastics became especially popular in the 20th century with the development of "new plastics". In 1938, **toothbrushes were made with polyamide bristles**: a synthetic material that is sometimes also called "**Nylon**". In 1940, nylon was used to make clothes like **tights** possible. It was also at this time that the first rolls of "**scotch tape**" appeared on every desk!

Plastic is not expensive to manufacture. What's more, it has a very practical feature: **it can be given any shape**, to make all kinds of everyday objects and packaging!

This is why, as early as the 1950s, **factories started to mass-produce everyday plastic objects** like bottles, flasks, packaging, etc., to gradually replace other older, more expensive materials.

Since the 1950s, it is estimated that **over 8.3 billion tons of plastic have been produced***. This is more than any other material in the history of the world!





WHY ARE SINGLE-USE PLASTICS A PROBLEM?



Here are at least 3 reasons:

- ✳ *Because single-use plastic objects, such as cups, straws, cutlery and cotton buds, are mass-produced!*
- ✳ *Because they are designed and manufactured to be used only once before being thrown away. For example, 1 billion plastic straws are thrown away every day in the world*.*
- ✳ *Because these single-use plastic objects are very often "forgotten" or "abandoned" in nature, on beaches, on roadsides... and as plastic has a very long life span, they take a long time to degrade, and end up polluting our planet.*



* Source: FranceInfo, Environnement : un milliard de pailles en plastique jetées chaque jour dans le monde <https://www.greenpeace.org/canada/fr/qr/4299/faits-saillants-et-informations-sur-le-plastique/>



THE 8TH CONTINENT

Today, 8 million* tonnes of plastic end up in the oceans every year, and that's a real problem. Scientists estimate that **89%* of plastic waste in the oceans comes from single-use plastic objects.**

All this plastic in the oceans forms what is called... the 8th continent!

In 1997, Captain Charles Moore discovered a huge floating waste dump in the Pacific Ocean between Hawaii and California. It was almost 3.4 million km², and it's made up mainly of single-use plastic waste, which was in the process of degrading*.

This waste, produced by human activity, enters the oceans via rivers, beaches and boats.

It floats on the surface and accumulates due to swirling marine currents called "**gyres**". There are several of these on the planet, in the North and South Pacific Ocean, the North and South Atlantic Ocean and the Indian Ocean.

Do you know what these giant clumps floating in the middle of the oceans are called?

- ☐ Plastic soups
- ☐ Plastic puddles
- ☐ Plastic broths

Good answer: Plastic soups





THE IMPACT ON THE PLANET, ANIMALS AND HUMANS

All this plastic in the oceans is a real danger for the planet, for animals but also for humans...

In nature, plastic breaks down very, very, very slowly... and breaks into tiny pieces of plastic in the sea. **These bits of plastic are called "microparticles", which fish, shellfish and other marine animals mistake for food.** The worst part is that we then eat these fish! The plastic microparticles then end up in our stomachs...

Sea turtles are also victims of plastic, because the microparticles they swallow block their digestive system. **Dolphins and albatrosses** get stuck in the mountains of plastic waste floating in the oceans...

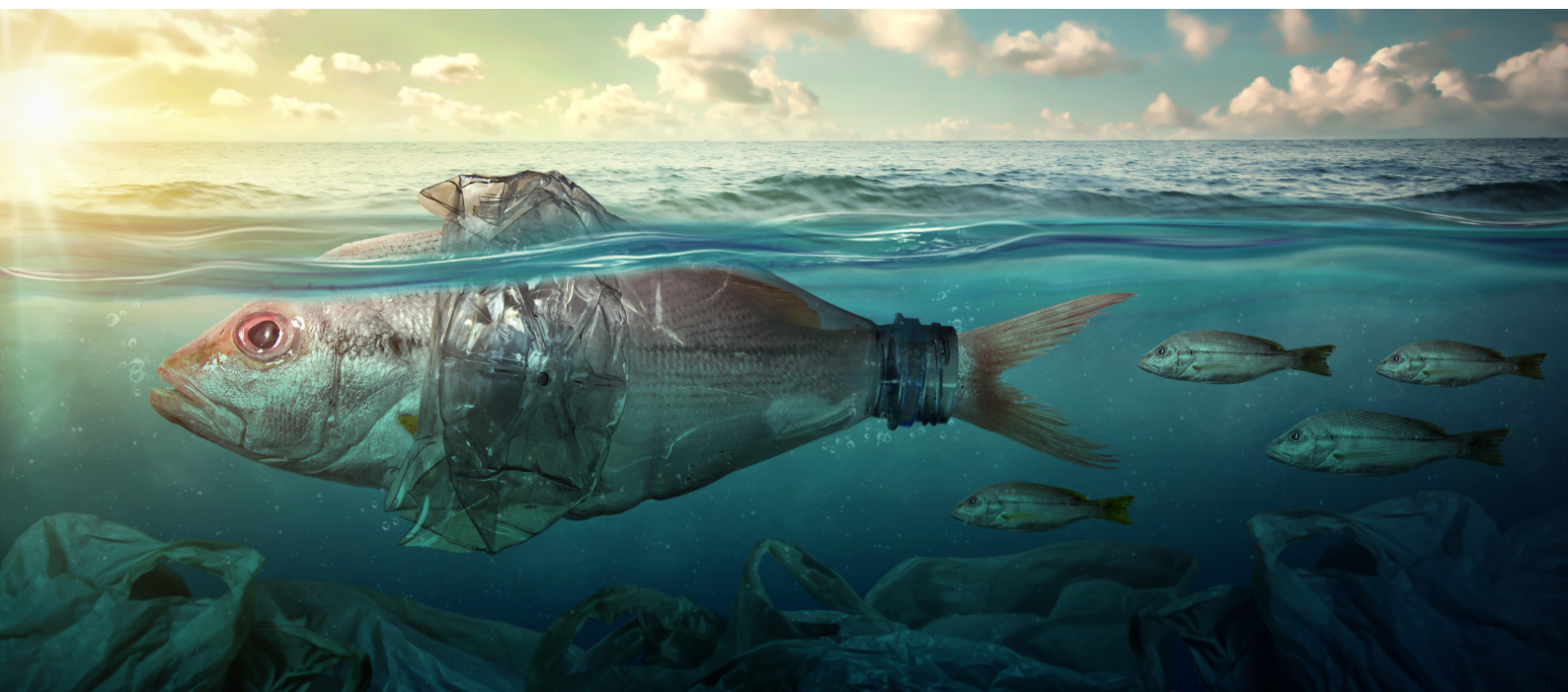
Scientists estimate that the scourge of plastic in the oceans causes the death of 100,000 animals from protected species around the world each year*.

Can you see why Canadian artist and activist Benjamin Von Wong set out to build this giant tap?

Do you know how many marine mammals die each year from plastic pollution in the oceans?

- ☐ 10 000
- ☐ 100 000
- ☐ 250 000

Good answer: 100 000





WHAT CAN WE DO? EVERYDAY ACTIONS!

Canada has the longest coastline in the world and represents a quarter of the world's fresh water; yet over 3 million tonnes of plastic waste is thrown away each year, **of which only 9% is recycled***.

In France, out of 4.5 million tonnes of plastic waste produced in 2016, **only 22% was recycled***.

The remaining plastic waste ends up in landfills or directly in nature, in lakes and oceans...

Faced with these figures, Canada and France have set themselves the challenge of truly reducing their plastic waste and the pollution it produces! Their goal? To achieve "zero plastic waste" by 2030 for Canada, and 2040 for France.

Both countries have already been active since 2020 to ban certain single-use plastics such as bags, straws, disposable tableware and cotton swabs.

You may be wondering what you can do to help turn off the plastic tap? Here are some tips!

To change your habits, think about "The four R's ":

- **Recycle:** that is, **learn how to sort your plastic waste** so that it can be transformed into new objects.
- **Reuse:** This means **keeping a plastic product or object for as long as possible**, without giving in to the temptation to throw it away after one use. Many everyday items can be reused, such as plastic bags and bottles.
- **Reduce:** this means **buying fewer single-use plastic items**, such as straws, bags, cups, packaging... and cutting down on waste!
- **Refuse:** **don't be afraid to say "No, thank you!"** when someone offers you a drink with a plastic straw, or a plastic bag to carry your groceries. **There is always a way to avoid plastic products!**

*Source : 10000Changes.ca <https://10000changes.ca/fr/les-donnees-sur-le-plastique/>

*Source : WWF France - <https://www.wwf.fr/vous-informer/actualites/chaque-annee-600-000-tonnes-de-plastique-sont-rejetees-dans-la-mer-mediterranee>





EVERYDAY ACTIONS

Here is a list of actions you can take on a daily basis! Don't hesitate to share them with your family and friends:

For your favourite drink, stop using plastic straws and **choose a nice stainless steel straw** that you can keep for a long time!



For birthday parties: instead of plastic cups and cutlery that are thrown away, **choose dishes that can be washed and reused!**

For school and outings, stop buying plastic bottles and **use a nice water bottle to put in your backpack instead!**



When you go shopping, remember to take **a cloth bag to store your groceries**, and preferably choose "**bulk**" food and products, without plastic packaging!



For the bathroom, you can choose to use **solid soaps** instead of liquid soaps that are always stored in plastic bottles.



When you go shopping, make sure you look at **the labels on the clothes you choose**: many clothes are made of **plastic microfibres** such as elastane, acrylic, polyamide, polyester... These plastics get diluted in the water when you wash your clothes in the washing machine. Avoid plastic, and prefer clothes made of cotton, wool, hemp or linen... **natural materials!**



DEBATES

Get into small groups to write down some ideas and then share them with the rest of the class.



In your opinion, is it possible today to do without single-use plastics? If so, what are the alternatives?

Canadian photographer Benjamin Von Wong created his "TurnOffThePlasticTap" installation with the help of over 100 people: friends, family members, volunteers... Now it's your turn to imagine your own action for the planet! If 100 people came to help you, what would you like to do to protect the planet?



FIND THE WORD!



G	P	W	E	N	V	I	R	O	N	M	E	N	T
S	R	E	U	S	E	C	E	C	O	L	O	G	Y
W	P	H	O	T	O	G	R	A	P	H	E	R	F
I	O	B	E	X	H	I	B	I	T	I	O	N	C
R	E	D	U	C	E	C	A	N	A	D	A	K	F
P	O	L	L	U	T	I	O	N	P	U	E	T	C
A	C	T	I	V	I	S	T	P	E	H	S	Z	Q
E	V	E	F	Q	R	E	C	Y	C	L	E	D	Y
L	B	E	N	J	A	M	I	N	T	Y	W	H	D
V	F	T	J	I	C	O	N	T	I	N	E	N	T
H	X	C	N	B	V	P	L	A	S	T	I	C	S
Z	T	K	P	L	A	N	E	T	B	G	S	S	L
Q	S	Y	U	O	O	C	E	A	N	T	S	L	F
A	R	T	I	S	T	X	S	X	O	J	C	N	P

Activist
Artist
Benjamin
Canada
Continent
Ecology
Environment
Exhibition

Ocean
Photographer
Planet
Plastic
Pollution
Recycle
Reduce
Reuse

RESOURCES TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT BENJAMIN VON WONG

Check out Benjamin Von Wong's other projects, photographs and call to action videos on his website and social networks!

Follow the hashtag #TurnOffThePlasticTap on :

- [#TurnOffThePlasticTap](#)
- [Instagram](#)

Follow Benjamin Von Wong on :

- [Facebook](#)
- [Youtube](#)
- [Instagram](#)
- [Twitter](#)
- [Blog](#)



All Photos @Benjamin Von Wong | Von Wong Production

Cover: #TurnOffThePlasticTap, Plastic Beach, 2021

P.1: #TurnOffThePlasticTap, behind the scenes at Landfill, 2021

P.2: #TurnOffThePlasticTap, Installation View, Paris

P.3: #TurnOffThePlasticTap, the making of, 2021

#MermaidsHatePlastic, Plastic Beach, 2016

#Strawpocalypse, Parting of the Plastic Sea, 2019

P.6: #TurnOffThePlasticTap, Installation View, Paris

P.9: #TurnOffThePlasticTap, Plastic Container Yard, 2021

#TurnOffThePlasticTap, Plastic Beach, 2021

P. 10 & 11: #TurnOffThePlasticTap, the making of, 2021

P. 13: #TurnOffThePlasticTap, behind the scenes at Landfill, 2021

'TIL NEXT TIME AT THE CANADIAN CULTURAL CENTRE!

Our complete programme:
www.canada-culture.org



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