

The Blue Trees

Konstantin Dimopoulos (Greece, based in Australia)

“As an artist I think in images. These installations are my 'voice' about global issues, a visual platform to effect change.” – Konstantin Dimopoulos

WHO MADE THIS ART INSTALLATION?

Konstantin Dimopoulos is a conceptual and social artist. He brings a sociological and humanist approach to his art, with a strong focus on cultural and environmental factors, including ecology and the human condition and experience. Ranging from painting to sculpture, installation, performance, and drawing, his practice draws from many different media and techniques. He creates work that intervenes in our every day, and proposes that art can be an important



aspect of social action and environmental change in our world today. Dimopoulos draws from his distinct personal, cultural and political history to create visual expressions on important and varied issues such as domestic violence, environmental ecocide, homelessness, and cultural appropriation.

Dimopoulos is of Greek heritage and was born in Port Said, Egypt in 1954. The family moved to Wellington, New Zealand when he was eight years old. This experience has been influential on his world view, as the experience of migration and being strangers in a new country unable to speak English inspired in Dimopoulos a social empathy that is still a driving force for his creative work and ideas today. He graduated from Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, with a degree in sociology and psychology and later went on to study art at the Chelsea School of Art in London. His work has been presented in temporary and permanent installations at public galleries, museums and outdoor sites throughout Australia and New Zealand, North America, Europe and Japan. He participated in the 2005 World Expo in Aichi, Japan and the 2013 Busan Biennale, Korea. He has over thirty commissioned sculptures in public spaces in cities worldwide.

WHAT WAS THE INSPIRATION FOR THIS ART INSTALLATION?

The Blue Trees is an ongoing environmental art intervention that was first created and unveiled at the Vancouver Biennale in 2011. Since then it has been installed internationally across the United States and in London in 2013. For the 2014-2016 Vancouver Biennale it was decided that *Blue Trees* would return and be realized in New Westminster and at the unveiling of the new Simons Department Store in Park Royal, West Vancouver following its success and public demand in 2011. He was inspired to create *The Blue Trees* after he visited the Melbourne headquarters of Friends of the



Photo Credit: Jaana Eleftheriou



Photo Credit: Ward Perrin/PNG

Earth in 2003. At the headquarters, he was shown the massive devastation that is occurring to the Old Growth forests worldwide. Dimopoulos inquired about how to increase awareness globally concerning the issue of forest destruction and deforestation. He wanted the issue to be more prominent and devised ideas about how to raise more awareness. The idea behind *The Blue Trees* project is that by making the trees visible, making them feel different, even surprising and strange, it forces the public to engage and to look at the trees in new ways through the transformative power of color to help the public experience and consider trees differently through this intervention.

Since its inception, *The Blue Trees* continues to engage audiences in every city where it is installed, raising awareness about this ecological issue worldwide. In 2013 the Danish Index Award selected *The Blue Trees* as one of 60 Ideas that changed the world in that year. In 2012 it was named as one of the Top 100 Activism Trends for ideas that change the world.

HOW WAS THIS ART INSTALLATION MADE/INSTALLED?

The Blue Trees is an ephemeral art piece that only lasts for a few months each time it is installed. Trees are painted blue with a water-based environmentally-safe colorant that will naturally wear off over time. Members of the community are invited to work with the artist to

colour the trees and share their concern for the environment, making this a participatory community based art installation.

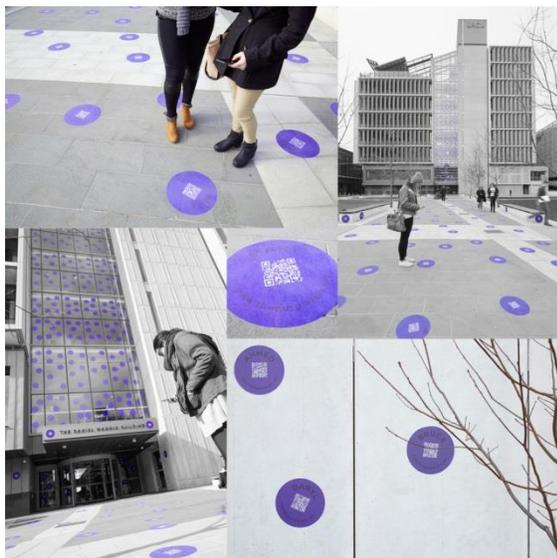
HOW DOES THIS PIECE OF ART CONNECT TO THE ARTIST'S PREVIOUS WORK?



Photo Credit: Artist Website

upward. This work is also in keeping with his dedication to bringing thought provoking, socially relevant work into public spaces rather than solely experienced inside art galleries.

Similar to many of his other works, rich colour, bold line, form and repetition are vital components of this installation. Whether making work that is abstract in appearance or creating imagery, Dimopoulos' sculptural work tend to use strong vibrant color and convey a clean sense of simplicity using strong lines to represent space, as seen is public works like Pacific Grass. In The Blue Trees project, the bold lines are organic, as each tree trunk becomes a linear form reaching



stories and perspectives inspires the potential for a social shift in each viewer.

Many of his public works, like The Blue Trees project, are intended to act as interventions into everyday life, interrupting and inspiring the viewer to look again or consider a social or ecological issue. A recent example is Purple Rain. Vibrant purple circles seem to rain down upon the side walk, each featuring a name and a QR code. Passersby can scan the code on their phones and then learn about the story of a homeless individual in the community who has been made to seem invisible. The artist is concerned that poverty and homelessness are becoming a downpour, and so he created this work to help make the invisible visible, to encourage interaction and empathy. His use of abstract, purple circles combined with personal

WHERE IS THIS ART INSTALLATION GOING TO BE INSTALLED LOCALLY?

The Blue Trees were originally installed in the 2009-2011 Vancouver Biennale in the cities of Port Moody, Richmond and West Vancouver. The Vancouver Biennale is bringing *The Blue Trees* installation back for the 2014-2016 Biennale exhibition. As with past iterations of this project, Dimopoulos aims to involve the community to assist him in painting and creating the installation collectively. In late October 2015, the artist will return to Vancouver for two

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installations. The first installation will be located on the lawn of City Hall in New Westminster and the second installation in West Vancouver Park Royal Shopping Centre in partnership with Simons department store during its grand opening celebration.

Artist Website: <http://www.kondimopoulos.com/>

Written by: Jessa Alston-O'Connor and Chrissy Nguyen