

# Application for the European Responsible Care<sup>®</sup> Awards 2011

Category: Special Award Community Outreach

## Organization name: Union des Industries Chimiques (UIC)

UIC is the French Association of Chemical Industries.

When dealing with public authorities at a national, European, or sometimes even international level, UIC is the sector's mouthpiece. It defines its stance and coordinates concerted action and self-imposed industrial policies, while offering its members a vast range of services to help them develop the French chemical industry in a sustainable manner.

The UIC has 1 300 member businesses, 80% of which are SMEs. It works with a network of 15 regional UIC offices, 16 industry unions, 9 associated federations and the LENICA (a union that represents 17 chemical industry groups). In short, UIC is truly representative of the chemical sector in France. Furthermore, it has a European Affairs representative based in Brussels and works with the CEFIC (the European Chemical Industry Council), the ICCA (International Council of Chemical Associations) and MEDEF (French Confederation of Businesses).

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**Project title:** L'art en la matière (Material art)

## Description of the project

### «L'art en la matière»: the chemical industry goes out to meet the public

To pay tribute to the UN's decision to make 2011 the International Year of Chemistry and to highlight the French Chemical Industry Association's initiative, chemical manufacturers have invited plastic artists to exhibit their works from Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> January to Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> January 2011 at events organised simultaneously in Paris, Lyon, Lille and Marseille: L'art en la matière.



This «Material art» exhibition comprised four exhibits designed to give the public four different and unusual views of issues that are key to the future of our planet and at the heart of the chemical industry's activities:

- Recycling,
- Biobased chemistry,
- Air Quality,
- New energy sources.

In presenting these ephemeral and symbolic works of art in four of France's major cities, the chemical industry showed that it is keen to discuss issues with the public.

During this four day exhibition, many chemical industry representatives were at hand, beside the exhibits, to answer questions and explain the vital contribution the chemical industry makes to our everyday wellbeing and to protecting the planet.

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## Media coverage

The event was publicised through a website ([www.lartenlamatiere.fr](http://www.lartenlamatiere.fr)) where visitors could discover images of the works of art and a 'best of' video of the event (see Appendix). It also provided examples of the chemical industry products or processes in each of the four fields covered by the «Material art» exhibition.

To raise media interest before the event, the French Association of Chemical Industries carried out a public opinion survey in France on public perception of the chemical industry. The event was justified by one of the key findings that showed that the public were frightened by the chemical industry because they did not understand its activities. The French public wanted more information - the objective of the "Material Art" operation was to provide it.

Press conferences were held during the event in the four cities involved. The exhibition was mentioned about 50 times in traditional media reports (TV, radio, newspapers and magazines) and 73 times on the web.

The event was also an opportunity to establish links between the industry and journalists from general publications, who were interested in the issues we highlighted. The French Association of Chemical Industries will be able to go back to them on other occasions such as for informative working lunches on a number of topics of public interest.

## The outcome: a wonderful exercise in public relations

The exhibits were opened in the presence of over 1 000 VIPs, representatives from the industry and also stakeholders (public authority representatives – mayors and regional councillors – as well as representatives from the Administration, Education and Labour Unions, etc).

There were numerous, positive exchanges between the public and chemical industry «ambassadors». The public showed a real interest in the measures taken by chemical manufacturers to protect the planet. Many had no idea how much chemistry does to provide solutions for combating climate change, dwindling fossil fuel resources, the development of new energies, etc.

As a collective communications operation, «Material art» was of benefit to all the companies in the chemical sector. It is one of the actions undertaken by the French Association of Chemical Industries since 2007 to target the public and change the image of the chemical industry in France.

## Genuine employee involvement upstream

Since this event involved chemical manufacturers, the French Association of Chemical Industries wanted to involve sector employees from the word go. In July 2010, the UIC urged all site directors via a poster and e-mail campaign to collect the pink plastic bags used to create the «Rosae Plasticae» and in November 2010, it launched an employee testimonial competition.

The three best testimonials were rewarded and published on the exhibition website ([www.lartenlamatiere.fr](http://www.lartenlamatiere.fr)), accompanied by a video interview with the author.

One of the great achievements of the January 27<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> event was a request from the UIC for employees who would be «chemical ambassadors» to the public. The idea was for them to explain the event and why it was happening, and to talk about their experience of working in the chemical industry.

In total, 7 000 plastic bags were collected in France, 600 testimonials gathered and 300 employees took on the role of ambassadors for the duration of the event. It all generated a genuine feeling of pride in working for the chemical industry.

## Appendices

- Description of the works of art
- «Best of» event Video – with English sub-titles.
- «Best of» event Book

## Appendix 1

### Description of the works of art

#### Paris - Parvis de la Défense - «RosaePlasticae» by Marie-Hélène Richard

##### Theme: recycling

This poetic exhibit is made from thousands of used plastic bags. It highlights the ongoing work of chemical manufacturers to transform and manufacture plastic materials so that they are easy to recycle and can be reused to produce new materials, energy or compost.

The processes and approached involved promote the creation of a circular material economy that is crucial to save fossil and natural resources and to preserve our planet for future generations.



#### Lille - Place du théâtre - «Mechanical field» by Vincent Leroy

##### Theme: bio-based chemistry

This exhibit made from Altuglas depicts long grasses. It highlights the work done by the chemical industry to develop molecules and materials from vegetal matter as petroleum resources are limited, and to find replace fossil fuels with renewable biomass.



**Lyon - Place des Terreaux - «Sph'air» by Stephan Bohu and Marie-Hélène Richard**

**Theme: air quality**

This exhibit made from meteorological balloons is in two parts – one on the ground and another floating in the air. Since we cannot survive without air, this work of art highlights the work done by the chemical industry to preserve the quality of our air by reducing greenhouse gas emissions (-50% since 1990) and by helping other industries to reduce their own emissions.



**Marseille - Place Villeneuve Bargemon - «Hélioflore» by Shigeko Hirakawa**

**Theme: new sources of energy**

This is a monumental flower with petals made from photovoltaic panels. The solar energy generated throughout the day will be used to power the LED lights at the centre of the flower at night. This technology highlights the products and processes developed by the chemical industry to improve the performance of numerous energy sources such as photovoltaic panels, windmills and lithium batteries, etc.



### Appendix 2

#### Best of video - English subtitles

*"It's quite surprising really, but fun. Children will love it and maybe the grown ups will a little too."*

*"At the end of 2009, the UN announced that 2011 would be the International Year of Chemistry."*

#### **A unique opportunity for the chemical industry to touch people's hearts and minds.**

*"Material Art is a programme launched by the French Chemical Industry Association. We invited 4 artists to create a piece of art – relatively large, even monumental pieces – aimed at the general public and which would also publicise the chemical industry's contribution to sustainable development and to resolving the major problems or challenges facing our planet."*

#### **Rosae plasticae – Marie-Hélène Richard**

*"Rosae Plasticae is a work of art that aims to make something beautiful out of something we find particularly ugly – the plastic bags we hate to see littering the countryside. It took nearly 9 months to gather the 7000 to 8000 bags we needed.*

*Some were found, collected and sent to us by acquaintances. Over half came from various members of the French Chemical Industry Association, who were fully involved."*

#### **Sph'air – Stéphan Bohu et Marie-Hélène Richard**

*"Sph'air is a piece of art designed for the Place des Terreaux in Lyon. It comprises 127 helium filled balloons fixed to the ground by weights. Because the work was about the air, we got the idea to use balloons and to make them look like a cluster of molecules or simply a slightly misty morning at the beach."*

#### **Hélioflore – Shigeko Hirakawa**

*"The French Chemical Industry Association asked me to make it. This flower symbolises the coexistence of nature and technology. Every petal is made of a photovoltaic panel and these panels capture solar energy during the day and release it at night to light up the entire square."*

#### **The mechanical field – Vincent Leroy**

*"The mechanical field is an island of grass. Each one and a half meter high blade moves with the slightest breeze. They also light up slightly, like that, very slowly and the fittings make little rustling noises. There's a constant play of little vibrations. It's rich, quite natural and ephemeral."*

**Olivier Homolle – President of UIC**

*“We wanted to establish a dialogue between the public at large and the chemical industry, so our representatives were there to talk to them. A little bracelet, which symbolised this link, was our way of taking this relationship a little further.”*

**Testimonials of passers by**

*“It's really funny, because last night I dreamed that I was surrounded by air bubbles. Funny isn't it...”*

*“From a long way away I saw this huge bunch of roses. It caught my eye.”*

*“It's true. It's unbelievable... hard to imagine that they're made of plastic. It really doesn't look like it!”*

*“We're a bit schizophrenic in the way we reject the image of the chemical industry while using its products every day.”*

*“I hope that at last it will change the image of the chemical industry – that people will realise that it's also involved in removing pollution.”*

*“I find it surprising – surprising in a positive way. It's great that these two forms of 'art' really talk to each other and can be brought together to produce something so astonishing.”*



International Year of  
**CHEMISTRY**  
2011

