

BACKGROUND

Inspired by the *speed* and transience of contemporary electronic messaging, for example, on *SMS, X, WhatsApp, Facebook, Messenger, Telegram, Slack, Signal*, the idea arose to visualize the opposite:

THE QUALITY OF SLOWNESS OF MESSAGES WRITTEN ON PAPER.

The ongoing wars in Ukraine and Gaza led to the concept of taking the ancient wisdoms on ***peace*** and ***freedom***, collected, translated, and published by Erasmus as the substantive messages and letting them travel *slowly* over water.

THE IMAGINATION

The artistic imagination of the idea is packed into a 20ft shipping container and sent on a slow journey down the Rhine. From Erasmus's home, place of work, and place of death in Basel, to his birthplace Rotterdam, to which he never returned. Not as a statue, but as a traveller with his ideas, Erasmus sails down the Rhine, past cities that have been connected by the same river for centuries: by trade, knowledge, industry, migration, and imagination.

Erasmus's humanist thought is being brought to the attention of the public. Centuries ago, Erasmus collected thousands of ancient wisdoms ('Adagia') from writings accessible worldwide. Not a dry collection of sayings, but an attempt to pass on the wisdom of different times and cultures. Short sentences that still help people to think, for example about:

Friendship, Tolerance, Freedom, Peace, and a United Europe.

This art project now entails a new journey through the thought of Erasmus. His sayings on Peace and Freedom, are transported through the container as 'messages in many bottles' and shown to the public.

The vehicle

The container is more than packaging. A shipping container is a unique product of our time. Normally, it transports raw materials, machines, and products. It connects factories, ports, businesses, and consumers. In this artwork, it transports things that are at least as valuable: wisdom, ideas.



The 20ft HC shipping container has double doors on both sides and is 6m long, 2.44m wide, and 2.9m high

ERASMUS MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE, International Art Project

The contents

The contents of the container will consist of:

- messages in many bottles;
- information walls;
- audiovisual presentation of sayings.



The 'message in a bottle' is already visible from the outside through the transparent panes of the silhouettes of Erasmus; the—to the eye—countless large bottles are stacked on racks inside. Later, as the public walks into the container, the steel racks holding several hundred transparent glass 3-liter bottles are visible on either side.

The information walls in the container show the public the project goal and Erasmus's messages. The canvas "*ERASMUS'S EUROPE*" is also hung. It depicts (in an abstract way) the part of Europe travelled by Erasmus as it was 500 years ago. Erasmus's many travels took him to many cities where he studied manuscripts and had his writings printed.

The audiovisual presentation is the next phenomenon the public walks past in the container. Against a slanted wall, a monitor projects alternately synchronized Latin sayings. The AI-edited image of the statue *DESIDERIUS MULTIPLEX* ® (2009, Erasmus University Rotterdam) is brought to life synchronously with speech.

In addition, the public receives brochures containing the purpose and content of the project.

Debate sessions can be organized around the statements of Erasmus. Educational lesson plans can be created for students, for example: history, the Middle Ages, citizenship, and geography (Rhine, Europe).



Examples from preliminary promotional video of audiovisual and map presentation: <https://atelier-geef.com/EMIAB/>



WHO IS INVOLVED

Production content

The artist Gerard Frishert - **GAF**® - operates as author and creator, director and presenter at all stages of organization and production.

For the production process, the support of various teams of professionals, as well as their workshops and equipment, is called upon.

Process support

Advisory support for the art project was provided by various experts:

- Mr. Marc Zehnter, Director of the Historisches Museum Basel;
- Mr. Ove Lucas, Director of Stichting Centrum Beeldende Kunst Rotterdam;
- Mr. Koen Holtzapffel, Erasmus expert, Arminiuskerk Rotterdam;
- Ms. Marianne van Wensveen, process and project monitoring;
- Mr. John Tholen, Latinist, curator at the Rotterdam Library;
- Mr. Gerard Coppus, financial auditor;
- Mr. Dietert Bleijs, multimedia communication.

Committee of Recommendation

A Committee of Recommendation has been constituted, consisting of:

- HE Ms. Karin Mössenlechner, Dutch Ambassador to Switzerland;
- Mr. Bart Kuipers, seaport and logistics advisor at Erasmus UPT;
- Mr. Frank Smeele, Professor at Erasmus School of Law, transport law expert;
- Mr. Jeroen Chabot, Chairman of the Erasmus Committee, Icon of Rotterdam.

The members of the committee endorse the intended project goal and contribute to safeguarding the integrity of the art project. Based on their current societal roles and expertise, they contribute where necessary with advice and by establishing contacts to secure support.

PLANNING

- | | |
|--|----------------|
| • realization of container and interior fitting | October 2026 |
| • realization of bottle contents | January 2027 |
| • transport to Basel | May 2027 |
| • public stand Basel city centre | June 2027 |
| • boat trip to Rotterdam via the Rhine | July 2027 |
| • city stand Erasmus University Rotterdam campus | September 2027 |
| • public stand Rotterdam city centre | October 2027 |
| • evaluation and publication | November 2027 |

COST

The cost estimate for manufacturing, equipping, and certifying the container amounts to approximately € 160,000.00.

The costs for transport and opening the container in Basel and Rotterdam are estimated at approximately € 50,000.00.

Upon completion of the project, an accountant's compilation statement regarding the financial records will be published.

FINANCING

More donations are needed to realize the art project and the event.

Start-up capital is already available. There are already many enthusiastic expressions of support. However, after the realization and travel of the container, the project entails ambitions that require additional organizational support.

The cities of Basel and Rotterdam are asked to facilitate a public location.

After the Rhine voyage, the container will first land on the campus of the Erasmus University Rotterdam.



Institutions/companies can adopt a visible part or the whole of, for example: transport, documentation, etc.; a detailed cost estimate for this category is available upon request:

art-project@erasmus-messageinabottle.eu

Please feel welcome to help us complete the mission through a donation.

Anyone who considers the project a good initiative and wishes to support it financially can transfer an amount to:

Bank account NL49ABNA0157311368 in the name of ART PROJECT EMIAB, stating donation, sponsorship, or subsidy.

If desired, the display of sponsor and grant provider logos on the artwork is possible.

FINAL RESULT

The artwork and its content depict, in a layered manner, the quality of slowness of messages written on paper.

While all daily life is pregnant with reports of wars, the art project has brought ancient wisdom, spread through centuries and diverse cultures, and ever relevant regarding the universal importance of *Peace and Freedom* to a wider audience;slowly,....so that it may last better!

The art project will be available to follow on the website:

www.erasmus-messageinabottle.eu

Rotterdam, August 2026

ATELIER GÉÉF[®] ; to whom all rights remain reserved (Pictoright Amsterdam no. 39974)

ART PROJECT ERASMUS MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE

Bank account NL49ABNA0157311368 in the name of ART PROJECT EMIAB

art-project@erasmus-messageinabottle.eu