

# Visual Arts

## Look Up and Plug In

Daan Roosegaarde

Artist and designer Daan Roosegaarde (° 1979) calls himself a 'hippy with a business plan' and a 'technopoet'. The artist was educated at ArtEZ Institute of the Arts in Enschede (in the east of the Netherlands) and at the Berlage Institute in Rotterdam. In recent years he has emerged as a contemporary visionary, melding together new techniques, space, man and nature. His ideas are philosophically, politically, ecologically, socially and artistically inspired. In Roosegaarde's view, old mechanisms from the industrialised world of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries no longer work. Instead we should move towards a society where control plays no role, where the tone is set instead by collaboration, interactive dynamics and empathy for surprising possibilities of all kinds. Roosegaarde believes that technology and social media will increasingly become second nature to us, and that technology and nature have long ceased to be separate worlds.

Daan Roosegaarde has won the Dutch Design Award, the Design for Asia Award and the Innovative Practice Award for his innovative ideas. He leads the multidisciplinary Studio Roosegaarde, which has offices in the Netherlands and China. Trained as an artist and designer, he roams the borders of the two disciplines, revealing himself through his studio in the architecture world, through public spaces and in the art and design world. He also gives lectures and organises master classes, for example in 'meaningful leadership'. One question he often asks is 'Do you know why you can't tickle yourself?' His immediate answer: 'The brain is a system attuned to the avoidance of undesirable situations, so it's constantly predicting what's coming. Before you even move your finger to tickle yourself, you're aware of it - in contrast with someone else tickling you. The same is true of innovation: you need others to break the system open.'<sup>1</sup> His studio is home to the 'yes but' chair, in which he sometimes seats his clients, and for every 'yes but' uttered they receive a small electric shock.



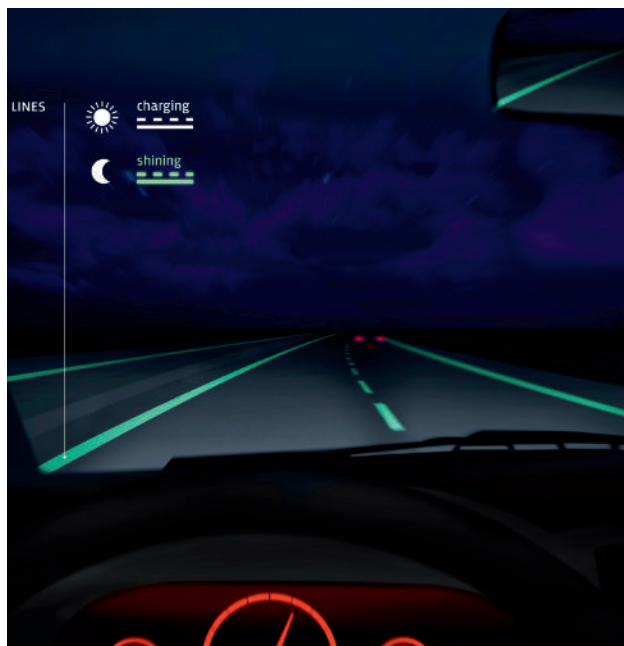
Studio Roosegaarde, *Sustainable Dance Floor*, 2008

'The future is fluid. You can anticipate or design that future, and imagination is crucial for that...'<sup>2</sup> says Roosegaarde. On the popular television programme *Summer Guests* in 2013 he showed a short film by French designer Philippe Starck, in which he suggests that everyone needs to open their eyes - to look not only downwards to find firm ground, but more importantly upwards - at the world. It is a matter of observation and in particular of being open to amazement. Roosegaarde: 'The world is enormous. ...If we can't fit in in one place, we can just go elsewhere. Making connections strengthens things. If you want something new, the trick is to get people to 'plug in' from different sides. If it works, they strengthen rather than cut into one another.'<sup>3</sup> Daan Roosegaarde is an advocate of combining: 'Experiencing something old differently, and linking it to something new... and eliciting new words - that's what it's all about. (...) It's simply a matter of hacking: shifting the mentality from the old world to the new.'<sup>4</sup>

In *Dune* (2006) Roosegaarde created his first futuristic relationship with urban space. In Rotterdam's Maastunnel and later along the bank of the River Maas (*Dune 4.2.*, 60 metres in length) he created all sorts of stalks (fibre) which sway back and forth as you walk or cycle past. At the same time an LED at the end of each stalk flashes and they produce the sounds of crickets. *Dune* employs advanced technology to bring about a magnificent meeting of public space, man and nature. While *Dune* is surprising and enchanting, at first glance *Marbles* has the appearance of a collection of boulders. The work is located in a square in the new city of Almere (province of Flevoland) where lots of young people meet. The plastic shapes work very interactively, lighting up in different colours when touched, flashing in different rhythms and making noises. The rhythm varies from slightly agitated to rather listless and bored depending on the feedback from the environment.

Roosegaarde and his colleagues conducted research in a laboratory in Eindhoven for the development of *Crystal*. Hundreds of crystal shapes (wireless LEDs charged by magnetic fields) light up when you touch them. They lie strewn across the ground with endless potential for play. There is an open source connection so that they can be programmed democratically. Roosegaarde has nicknamed this work 'Lego from Mars'. *Flow* is an installation with hundreds of ventilators which blow individually when touched, developing an illusory landscape or transparent body in the space. *Lotus Dome* takes the shape of a Renaissance dome made of foil. As you approach the structure a number of aluminium lotus flowers open up, releasing light from the heart of the *Lotus Dome*. The work has been displayed in a 17<sup>th</sup> century church in the French city of Lille and in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam.

Back to Rotterdam for a moment, where dancers in a club generate the energy for everything around them to function optimally. The *Sustainable Dance Floor* sustainably converts the energy of the dancing crowd. Roosegaarde is also developing an



Studio Roosegaarde, *Smart Highway*, 2012

electrostatic vacuum cleaner to 'suck away' stifling smog particles from the sky above Beijing. *The Smog Free Park* works with magnetically charged copper reels to draw the pollution to the ground, where it is filtered. Roosegaarde has succeeded in manufacturing diamonds from the distilled CO<sub>2</sub> by flattening the carbon particles, and then working the diamonds into a piece of jewellery for the future, the *Smog Ring*. Anyone who buys one of these rings is in fact buying 1000 smog particles, thus contributing to a piece of clean sky over Beijing, where a park will be created, supported financially by the profits of the jewellery sales.

The *Smart Highway* is characteristic of the way of working at Studio Roosegaarde. It was developed in collaboration with scientists and a construction company. Since summer 2013 the N329 near Oss (North Brabant) has had colourful light strips instead of streetlights. The paint for this was developed by Roosegaarde in collaboration with the construction company to absorb enough light during the day to shine for eight to ten hours.

The application is based on the glow-in-the-dark principle and inspired by beautiful light-producing jellyfish. There is also paint being developed to change colour when it freezes. Blue snowflakes can then appear on the road surface, warning drivers of slippery conditions. Windmills and solar panels feed the road with its dynamic light patterns. Roosegaarde's dream is to light the Afsluitdijk (the connection between the west and the north of the Netherlands constructed in 1932) in the same way. He has further plans: he is working with Delft University of Technology on a technique for charging electric cars wirelessly while driving along the motorway. Inductive charging through electromagnetic fields in the road surface would allow sustainable drivers of the future to charge their vehicles without having to find a charging station.

Recently six hundred metres of cycle path in Nuenen in Brabant were fitted with glow stones. The thousands of stones recharge during the day to light up together in the evening, transforming the cycle path into the painting *The Starry Night* (1889) by Vincent van Gogh, who lived in Nuenen between 1883 and 1885. It truly creates the feeling of cycling or walking in Van Gogh's sparkling starry night in the south of France.

For Daan Roosegaarde it is clear. He likes to quote the famous media expert Marshall McLuhan: 'There are no passengers on Spaceship Earth. We are all crew.'<sup>5</sup>

DAVID STROBAND

Translated by Anna Asbury

[www.studioroosegaarde.net](http://www.studioroosegaarde.net)

1 - 5: [www.Bindje.nl/laat-je-kietelen-daan-roosegaarde-over-social-design-en-leiderschap](http://www.Bindje.nl/laat-je-kietelen-daan-roosegaarde-over-social-design-en-leiderschap)

## 'The Most Hated Man in America'

### The Frick Collection on Show in The Hague

A young New Yorker with a growing taste for art will first find his way to the Museum of Modern Art, for Picasso and van Gogh, then to the Metropolitan Museum of Art for - in my case in the 1950s - the Etruscan warrior and the Cellini cup, the most spectacular works in the museum, both of which were later exposed as forgeries. Eventually, you got wind of a smaller, more exclusive museum with a higher threshold than the Big Two. The Frick Collection, on Seventieth Street at Fifth Avenue, is not a simple walk-in attraction. It is a town palace, built in 1913-1914 as the private home of Henry Clay Frick (1849-1919). When I first visited it, as a student of art history, it was still intimidating, as if Frick himself were about to collar you and ask you what was so special about Turner's *Harbour of Dieppe* or Goya's *Forge*.

Since then, the Frick has bent over backwards to become as accessible as it can, at least online. It was one of the first museums to offer a virtual visit on the Internet, allowing you to go from room to room and to click on any object that you want to see or study in detail. If Frick's original intention was to enable Americans to appreciate great art without crossing the Atlantic, the museum now gives Europeans (and everyone else) access to a great American collection without even getting up from their chairs.

The lover of Dutch and Flemish art finds himself in the company of Frick himself, whose first acquisition of an Old Master, in 1896, was a still life by Jan van Os (1744-1808) and one of whose proudest possessions, bought in 1906, was the magisterial Rembrandt self-portrait of 1658. From 1899 - Frick's 'breakthrough Rembrandt year', as one source has aptly described it - until 1919, the year of his death, Frick would acquire at least 145 paintings, of which more than one-fifth belonged to the Dutch and Flemish schools. None of those paintings, nor the hundreds of objets d'art and sculptures Frick