



Wild ideas to save planet

Daan Roosegarde is as much activist as he is artist, writes SIMON COLLINS

Don't fear for the future but the climate crisis is real — and man-made. Dutch artist and innovator Daan Roosegarde is neither an optimist nor pessimist when it comes to the planet.

"I'm an activist," he said. "This is our reality. We should deal with it."

But how? How about a giant outdoor air purifier which turns smog into jewellery? Or perhaps a Space Waste Lab that upcycles space junk? Or a Smart Highway that charges during the day and glows at night?

Those projects and more have burst out of Rotterdam's Studio Roosegarde, the award-winning team of extremely forward-thinking designers and engineers that have been hell-bent on using large-scale art to force change since 2007.

"I think it's my job as an artist to trigger the imagination," Roosegarde said. "How do we want our future to look?"

The futurist will give us an idea of how Fremantle might look underwater with *Waterlicht*, a large-scale, site-specific light installation illustrating the immense "power and poetry" of water.

Having simulated floods in Europe, the US and the Middle East, *Waterlicht* (Dutch for "water light") makes its southern hemisphere debut at this year's Fremantle Biennale.

The work takes over Esplanade Park, which was built on reclaimed land, from November 1 to 3.

Here in July to inspect the site, Roosegarde explained the



Dutch artist Daan Roosegarde "floods" Fremantle next month with the large-scale light-show *Waterlicht*, or "water light".

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motivation behind *Waterlicht* during an interview at a Fremantle bar.

With one-third of the Netherlands under sea level, he said the Dutch were uniquely equipped to conceptualise a water world (minus Kevin Costner).

"How do we live in a world where the sea level is rising? Should we build floating cities? Can we harness energy from it?"

This is an artist who clearly enjoys asking the questions, and insists on asking the tough ones.

"If we're scared, if we're not curious, it's going to hit us," said Roosegarde, adding that all his works are based on a mix of "irritation and inspiration".

"We have to learn to live with rising sea levels. It's already too late to change anything ... We can do two things. We can hide, cry, sit in the corner, blame somebody else. Or we can say, 'Well, we have created this, let's design and imagine our way out of it'."

"These are interesting times," Roosegarde added.

"We are forced to be creative." The Dutch artist insisted that you don't have to be a scientist to appreciate *Waterlicht*.

This is public art, but not as we know it.

"When people think of public art, people think of a bronze sculpture with a sign 'Please do not touch'," he chuckled. "This is literally the opposite."

Roosegarde said that this

installation benefits from poor conditions. "Wind makes it more dramatic. Rain, you get these diamonds of light. We're hoping for s...ty weather."

Fremantle Biennale artistic director Tom Muller said that *Waterlicht* is "not just a light show. It's a light show that responds to a particular place and histories".

A soundscape will accompany the work, which features local stories about the port's waterfront from indigenous custodians, historians and community members.

Muller is excited that Fremantle will host the southern hemisphere premiere and said collaborating with Studio Roosegarde is part of a plan to shine an international light on the biennale.

Other stand-outs of this year's program include Bennett Miller's *Behavioural Ecologies*,

Jessee Lee Johns' anarchic micronation *South Mole Resort* and Lawrence English' sound installation in a submarine, *Standing Wave*.

After visiting WA in July, Roosegarde returned to Rotterdam to concoct the site-specific design for *Waterlicht*. The work will also be as energy-neutral as possible in line with his studio's mantra of "Schoonheid", a Dutch word that means both "beauty" and "clean".

"Clean air, clean water, clean energy," Roosegarde said. "These are really the values that are embedded in all the projects. These are the values we need as a society if we want to become future-proof."

Waterlicht is a free event at Esplanade Park, Fremantle on November 1-3 from 7pm each night. For more information visit fremantlebiennale.com.au.

Tentacles of identity struggle reach out

TANYA MACNAUGHTON

Theatre creative Jess Nyanda Moyle is so proud to be her mother's daughter that she made the Blue Room Theatre and Squid Vicious production *Cephalopod*, but she was not so proud during her school days.

She came to Australia from the Philippines in 1994 as a one-year-old in her mother's arms, with her parents wanting to give Moyle a new life.

"I used to be embarrassed about being a Filipina," Moyle said.

"I feel very lucky to have grown up in Australia. Both Mum and Dad made huge sacrifices so we could be here that there was this constant feeling for having to always be grateful, but there was also this lingering feeling that I was never enough."

"I had friends but I didn't really fit in here, especially in schools where the students were

predominantly white. Every time we visited the Philippines, I sort of felt at home, but not knowing (how to speak) Tagalog, I couldn't really talk to my family there.

"I hated the way I looked and didn't feel at home in my own body. It wasn't until I came out that I felt more at ease with myself, which is quite funny really, coming out as queer before coming out as Asian."

Directed by fellow Asian-Australian creative Joe Paradise Lui, *Cephalopod* is an autobiographical migrant story that draws parallels between some cephalopod (including squid and octopus) behaviour and what Moyle said were "survival tactics for a queer second-gen Filipina migrant".

"The title encapsulates strangeness and otherness, feeling alien in your own body and home," she said.

"Going from shame to pride is such a significant shift, but such a slow and painful one. Acceptance and celebration of self is a

process that never really ends; we're constantly evolving." The show battles against racism and colonialism and Moyle has been practising her Pauline Hanson impressions between translating Australian pub anthems into Tagalog for a karaoke competition. Moyle said she mostly just wanted audiences to have fun but she understood *Cephalopod*'s political nature simply by being a queer Filipina-Australian.

"I'm hoping audiences come in with an open heart, because I'm sort of opening mine up to them," she said. "I don't want to set out to change people's minds, or to make something transformative; that's way too much pressure. I'm just talking about my mum and I, and unpacking that experience in a way that I hope people find is visually exciting and genuine."

Cephalopod is at the Blue Room Theatre from Tuesday to November 16.



Cephalopod director Joe Paradise Lui and lead creative Jess Nyanda Moyle. Picture: Andrew Ritchie