

## Excerpt from the article “I SLEEP IN TAXIS”

Daan Roosegaarde's room has the atmosphere of a train station. Conspicuously situated on the second floor of a post-war apartment block in Rotterdam, his sparsely furnished living room is consistently awash with the flood of intermingled street sounds that ensue from the small, but busy intersection that it overlooks. At the end of a taxing workday, Roosegaarde, a self-professed 'futurist' and the creative director of his own company, likes to quietly absorb the hustle and bustle of the city – a simple and banal pleasure that can commonly be appreciated among the young, hardworking urbanites of his ilk. Amid the chaos of the urban noise infiltrating his surroundings, he manages to soak in some 'downtime' within the short timeframe that it takes for him to distractedly smoke a cigarillo while sitting perched on the edge of his table. No matter how fleeting, these few minutes of contemplation are fundamentally important to Roosegaarde, whose hectic life is otherwise solidly devoted to negotiating his way around the public realm by way of his unusual job scope: inventing interactive installations.

In a sense the unloved state of his room – a sparse, rented space he has hung onto since his days as an architecture student at the Berlage Institute – serves as a testament to the lifestyle he has chosen to adopt, one which appears to have been rendered transient by elements that seem to be perpetually transiting from one state to another. 'It's just a room in the city – a place to crash,' he maintains with a casual, unapologetic shrug as he weaves his way through the debris with the air of a seasoned expert. 'I don't really think of it as home.' And where, indeed, does he feel at home if the fuzzy comfort of domesticity seems to have slipped between the cracks in terms of his current living situation? Roosegaarde can only smile mischievously at this question for it is obvious that the rebuttal he is about to give me has been well rehearsed.

In his personal opinion it is not necessary for one to feel hemmed in by any conventional, preconceived notions of physical environments, particularly in view of all the options that individuals are allocated these days in terms of virtual space. The penetrative nature of the wireless revolution has, in this context, enabled us to redefine the idea of domestic space by increasingly blurring the lines between the public and the private, hence making it easier than ever to find sanctuary within the interchangeable parameters of a network constructed out of intimate connections rather than submit to the inanimate monotony inevitably perpetuated in the conventional desire to feel 'at home' in a run-of-the-mill household. But, I countered, what of the millions of users who opt to stay connected *and* sustain a nice 'physical' household? Wouldn't one then have the best of both worlds in this case? 'Sure,' says Roosegaarde. 'Of course, it is ideal to have both but ultimately, having a nice room is secondary because it can always be replaced with another. In cyberspace, you can feel at home, and at the same time, stay mobile as long as you can find an Internet connection that will let you have access to the relevant data you need to build and sustain relationships. That way, you are always on the go but never out of touch.'

Particularly passionate about convincing me, he shares an anecdote about a recent experience he had while making his way back to his hotel from a nightclub in Hong Kong. 'I got into a taxi and was totally surprised to find that it offered a portable Wi-Fi service,' he enthuses with the wonder and disbelief of a child recalling the discovery of a new toy glimpsed through a store window. 'All you needed was a laptop with a wireless card and you could surf all you wanted while the driver took you through the city – I could have sat in that cab all night or even slept there. It was an amazing experience of being able to engage with the changing space of both the physical and the virtual environment at the same time.' While his positive sentiments with respect of to the great, uncharted terrain of the Internet are not exactly unconventional by today's standards, Roosegaarde's reinterpretation of spatial demographics via his installations is certainly anything but old-fashioned. Then, as his enthusiastic endorsement of cyberspace gradually shifted to articulated views on virtual connectivity and hybrid environments before subsiding into an elaborate explanation of his recent work, Roosegaarde abruptly interrupts himself to address my original question. 'Home,' he affirms excitedly, caught up in the fervour of his own epiphany, 'is where the laptop is!'

[...]

Consisting of a handful of staff, Studio Roosegaarde currently shares a building with a company specializing in drive, measurement and control technologies. A space deftly devised from a combination of strategically placed mobile shelving and a sturdily constructed metal framework, the makeshift fashioning of Roosegaarde's everyday work area surprisingly manages to achieve a serene feeling of domesticity even within the brutal, industrial setting of the warehouse premises. As tea is promptly served to us in delicate, turquoise-blue cups in the waiting room area by an attentive young personal assistant, it suddenly occurs to me that the sense of home that Roosegaarde had seemingly been so opposed to just the night before was ironically more prevalent here than within the comparatively anonymous confines of the room he would later return to that day. Within the space of this 'home', segments from various projects scattered all over the studio's working area await their turn for young technical wizards to gingerly tease them into life with ambiguous technical implements like expert botanists nursing exotic forms of plant life. Sensing my overarching interest in said process, Roosegaarde stretches an open palm out to me to proudly reveal a small sample of the translucent fibre that he is planning to use for an upcoming installation. A fragile coil of bendy plastic, the material appears eerily foetus-like, nestled against the warm flesh of its creator's hand.

*Published in the book, **Daan Roosegaarde: Interactive Landscapes** (NAi Publishers), 2010*