

Daan Roosegaarde and Cristina Gamboa inspire and caution on Forbo webinar

CO₂-neutral future needs to start today

Innovator & artist, Daan Roosegaarde, and CEO of the World Green Building Council, Cristina Gamboa, shared their inspirational outlook at the first Forbo Flooring Systems international webinar, entitled *A vision for a CO₂-neutral future*, which took place last week. During the webinar, the two guests also urged for change to start sooner rather than later. Gamboa: “Constructing a world that destructs, is no longer valid.”

By now, we are all too aware of the huge urgency to lower CO₂ emissions. The effects of climate change that we are experiencing on a global level are becoming greater and graver. According to Gamboa, we’ll need all hands on deck if we are to successfully limit the rise in the temperature on earth to no more than 1.5 degrees Celsius. The building sector will play a significant role in this: the CEO of the World Green Building Council (WorldGBC) explains that the sector is currently responsible for 39 per cent of global energy-related CO₂ emissions, and that the volume of buildings is set to double over the next thirty years. Gamboa is urging for a radical shift: “We have no second home. We need to build a new future today, not tomorrow.” A new approach to design and construction is needed in order to achieve a 50 per cent reduction in CO₂ emissions by 2030, and full energy neutrality by 2050.

In short: the WorldGBC is encouraging architects to design differently, for all parties in the construction sector to use energy and water intelligently and sparingly, building production with zero waste and re-use, buildings that can easily be adapted to new circumstances and a realisation that a building isn’t complete once commissioned; rather, that the client is responsible for all stages of the life cycle – including the processing of the ‘waste’ at the end of the use phase. Gamboa concludes: “It’s not about doing things a little less worse, but about doing more.”

Gamboa highlighted issues such as legislation and regulations that are too lenient, a construction environment that is conservative and countries that are failing to collaborate adequately – if at all – on areas such as infrastructure and best-practice sharing. In addition, she also emphasises the positives, referencing the 28 pioneering cities committed to net zero buildings such as Los Angeles, as well as the countless innovations afoot in the fields of industry and science, and recent research revealing that sustainable building makes financial sense.

According to Roosegaarde, the problem is not a lack of funds, but a lack of curiosity and imagination: “How can we create this new world if we cannot imagine it?” The artist-designer also spoke of the power of connection. “If you feel connected, you’ll take care of this thing you’re part of and not destruct it.” Like Gamboa, Roosegaarde believes in collaboration and in bringing together people, disciplines such as art and science, industry and nature. The intention behind his projects is to allow people to feel; “because you cannot convince with figures only.”

Take his *Waterlicht* project for instance, whereby Roosegaarde projected hallucinatory beams into the sky to show how high the water level could reach if we don't alter our way of life. Or *Smog Free*, which he created because pollution is still gratis. Smog Free consists of a series of towers that cleanse the air of smog. The resulting residue was then cleaned, and the carbon used to press jewels under high pressure. The jewels have since appeared in engagement rings and proven very popular, says their pioneering creator.

Then there is the small matter of Coronavirus. Gamboa believes the crisis brings with it opportunity, in that it is forcing us to pause: "It opens up our heart and shows what has been broken for a long time." She urged for a sustainable economic recovery plan and warned against falling back into old habits, as we are already witnessing happen now. According to Roosegaarde, Covid is not so much a sign of times gone by, but of times to come: "Besides Covid, we stand to face some other huge global challenges. This forces us to be creative again and re-think. What defines us? What makes us happy?" Roosegaarde believes we have a long way to go. Chuckling, he quotes President Kennedy on the attempts to put man on the moon: "We are not doing it because it's easy, but because it's hard."

Webinar host, Forbo Flooring Systems put questions to the speakers, including some submitted by architects and interior designers attending the session. Many related to interiors; in particular, norms such as Environmental Product Declarations (EPD) referenced in rating tools advanced by its member Green Building Councils like LEED, and used by manufacturers to inform users of their products' sustainable properties. Gamboa encouraged 'producers' like Forbo Flooring to educate and inspire through products such as the CO₂-neutral Marmoleum¹. Roosegaarde adds that interiors, too, are all about connection: "Wellbeing is what it's all about. You can really see the floor, but also the walls and the rest of your interior, as your second skin in that sense. What makes you happy, feel connected? That allows you to accept new ideas and open up."

The World Green Building Council is a global network of around 70 Green Building Councils across the world. The mission of these councils is to foster a more sustainable built environment. The WorldGBC looks not only at the climate, but also at human health, wellbeing, resource efficiency and circularity. As a member of the UN Global Compact Network, the WorldGBC works alongside companies, organisations and governments to achieve the targets set out in the Paris Climate Agreement and the UN Global Goals for Sustainable Development, with the ultimate goal of a CO₂-neutral, healthy, equitable but also resilient built environment.

Daan Roosegaarde is the founder and director of Studio Roosegaarde; a pioneering name in the field of liveability that strives for clean air, clean water, clean energy and clean spaces. Roosegaarde's *Schoonheid* mantra has a double meaning: 'beauty' in the sense of aesthetically pleasing (expressed through creativity, for instance), and 'cleanliness' in the sense of pure and healthy. Roosegaarde believes that these two principles should be seen as fundamental to our being. As a social design lab, Roosegaarde and his team of designers and engineers attempt to combine people and

¹ It is Forbo's mission to be CO₂-neutral by 2040

technology in art that enriches daily life in urban environments, speaks to the imagination and combats climate change. Among others, Studio Roosegaarde is known for internationally acclaimed projects such as Smart Highway (roads that charge up energy during the day and illuminate at night), the Space Waste Lab (visualisation and upcycling of space debris) and the projects cited earlier.

The webinar *A vision for a CO₂-neutral future* took place as part of Forbo's brand new Marmoleum Live Forward campaign. The campaign is dedicated entirely to fully CO₂-neutral Marmoleum – without compensation through certifications. Forbo, too, believes that our way of life needs to drastically change: this means the ways we eat, travel and spend our leisure time. But above all, it means changing the way we think. We owe it to ourselves and to future generations, claims the flooring manufacturer. With its Marmoleum Live Forward campaign, Forbo is inviting everyone to join it as it steps into a fully sustainable future characterised by conscious decision-making. That future exists in the form of natural materials such as Marmoleum, which contributes to a healthy and sustainable indoor environment.