



INTERVIEW | TOM WEERTS (MANAGER PRODUCTION, DEVELOPMENT & FOREIGN AFFAIRS AT GLOW EINDHOVEN)

By Michiel de Boer (MOESASJI)

GLOW comes from within the city

Tom Weerts shares insights on the development of GLOW, safeguarding artistic exclusivity and crowd management.

“In a sense, Corona was a blessing. It forced us to take measures and to develop another approach,” says Tom Weerts, Manager Production, Development & Foreign Affairs at GLOW Eindhoven. The enormous popularity of the light art festival raised numerous challenges. Tom Weerts shares insights on the development of GLOW, safeguarding artistic exclusivity and crowd management.

After years of rapid growth, GLOW celebrated its absolute peak with the 2019 edition. Tom Weerts: “The visitor numbers were really over the top. Around 770.000 people walked the walk, causing enormous swarms of people in the streets, day after day. We concluded: a single route through the city center was no longer possible to keep the festival safe and fun! And after 14 years, we were ready for a new approach as well. Then, Corona emerged.”

JOURNEY TO A NEW SET-UP

With COVID-control measures becoming increasingly strict mid-year 2020, the GLOW organization was scratching its heads. It didn't want to cancel the festival completely, especially since it would be more than welcome for the city to bring some light in the darkness of the second Corona wave. Tom: “We had to come up with a complete other set-up. Something that was not a festival. An event with no public, no route, no program. After some explorations, we figured out a unique approach. In collaboration with artists and GLOW-veterans Ivo Schoofs and Kari Kola, we decided to make one work, one message throughout the city. ‘Connecting the Dots’ turned out to become the largest light artwork in the history of humankind. Where we usually have to



manage around 30 locations, we now scaled up to 600 locations!" The streets, corners, buildings, facades, and trees of Eindhoven turned in deep blue light from around 2500 mega lighting units. 1000 large helium balloons - red dots - were positioned in the streets one by one.

"It was enormous by its scale alone. People, cities, and media worldwide were flabbergasted. Connecting the Dots was an artwork you could experience without even visiting it. It was just everywhere. When I heard a lady in the street say 'it is so beautiful, so soothing to experience the city like this!', we were convinced: breaking with the old GLOW route pays off."

4 AREAS

GLOW 2021 has a more modular concept. GLOW appointed 4 areas in the city that each will bring several works: the center, Strijp-S & Strijp-T, TU/e Campus, and the Campina Complex. Next to that, there are two satellite locations: High Tech Campus and Nuenen. Tom: "This way the works will be spread throughout the city, each with a different charm and offering visitors the opportunity to maintain distance towards each other if they want to."

The locations match the character of the city ranging from design and creative industry to technology and industrialization. Tom: "What is truly unique for GLOW is that all the works are exclusively created for the festival. We do not feature artists that display traveling artwork in different cities in the world. GLOW brings works that have been created for their specific location in Eindhoven. The city makes GLOW! As the organizing committee, we are involved in

guiding the artists to the character of the festival and the possibilities Eindhoven has to offer. Moreover, we support them with all sorts of practicalities: location search, technical and construction support, and of course communication, hospitality, and crowd management."

DEVELOPING WITH STUDENTS

For 8 years GLOW is connecting with education. Over the years a number of works have been developed by enthusiastic groups of students from Sint Lucas, Fontys Hogescholen, and TU/e. Tom: "It started rather experimental and fragile. As a sort of side dish. But over years it has developed into full-fledged participations. Within GLOW Development we provide consultation and support for the student teams. In GLOW Lab sessions we discuss their plans at an early stage and we follow their developments throughout the year. This approach has seriously evolved the level of student artworks and the drive of the students. More and more we succeed in bringing them together. It is great to see students from different disciplines and levels unite and bringing each other forward, with a technical solution, creative or with practical solutions for occurring challenges."

WHAT TO EXPECT AT GLOW 2021?

"This year's theme is 'Moved by Light', a somewhat feel-good modus which is adequately represented by Valerio Festi in his *Porte Celeste*, amazing gates of light. In contrast, the *Carbon Arc* of Ivo Schoofs will bring an extremely solid spindle of light over the canal at Campina Complex. Light in its bare essence. And Gijs van Bon is back with two works. Together with Nighi Zhu he will show a succession of his renowned *Ping* artwork at the new Chinese Pavillion (Strijp-S). And Gijs is also participating in a project with ASML in a sort of machine that beams drops of liquid with lasers. Each falling drop is calculated exactly to perform an amazing dance of light

resembling the core process of ASML's EUV-machine. And we have more company participations. TMC has a group of engineers that takes led-light to a new dimension at the High Tech Campus. We are exactly where we want to be. The city makes GLOW and the city enjoys GLOW. I am certain that this year we will again be 'Moved by Light'.

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GLOW 2020