

## **Leiden experiences unique evening during Seeing Stars Leiden**

*Successful experiment lays foundation for future editions*

Leiden, September 25, 2022

On Sunday evening, the city of Leiden was the scene of a remarkable experiment; Seeing Stars Leiden. For Daan Roosegaarde's art project, thousands of Leiden residents were asked to turn off their lights and look at the sky from their garden, roof terrace, city park or on the street. From 10 p.m. - 11:30 p.m., the lights in the city were extinguished and, in addition to the stars, planets Jupiter and Saturn were visible from the historic streets of Leiden.

Because of the cloudy weather forecast, it remained a mystery until the very end whether there would actually be anything to see. Just before 10 p.m. on Sunday evening, the excitement was palpable among Leiden residents. The complete darkening of much of Leiden's city center proved to be a magical experience, and then the stars appeared, a few minutes later than the scheduled time of 22:00 due to cloud cover.

### **Moment of connectedness**

At ten spots in the city, astronomers stood with telescopes to explain the universe to those present. The moment when one area after another was actually "turned off" was magical. "Never before has the light been turned off on this scale in a city to see the stars. By taking away the light, we see the stars again. At a time when governments around the world are calling to save power, Seeing Stars shows the beauty of scarcity," Roosegaarde said. Cities such as Venice, Stockholm and Sydney have now expressed interest in their own Seeing Stars initiative. This seems to lay the foundation for future editions of Seeing Stars.

### **Unique experiment**

It is the first time that lights have been turned off in a city of this scale to see the stars. The fact that this took place in Leiden is partly due to the fact that Leiden is this year's European City of Science. A year in which science reigns supreme. The project Seeing Stars Leiden fitted seamlessly into the programme and the city of Leiden. Initiator Daan Roosegaarde says: "I couldn't have wished for a better place. In the heart of science, where great astronomers walked and where countless discoveries have been made. But the project could not have succeeded without the passion of the people here. The organisations and people behind Leiden&Partners, the municipality, scientists from Leiden University and the Old Observatory have made this dream come true."

According to Leiden's Mayor Henri Lenferink, the event was a success: "Turning the lights 'off' is not as simple as it seems. We had to do a lot of work beforehand to get this done while also paying close attention to safety. It takes some guts to carry out this project in a city like Leiden. I am enormously proud of everyone who contributed to this, but the result was also worth it. We were able to give the people of Leiden a wonderful gift."

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Note to editors (not for publication): for more information about Seeing Stars Leiden, please contact Mincke Pijpers of Leiden&Partners at [mincke@leidenenpartners.nl](mailto:mincke@leidenenpartners.nl) or by phone at 06-55171744. Or with Sayori van Leeuwen of Studio Roosegaarde at [sayori@iconicstudios.amsterdam](mailto:sayori@iconicstudios.amsterdam), tel: 06-50212972.

Photo credit: Dirk van Egmond Treffend Beeld Beeldmateriaal: film material can be downloaded from Seeing Stars Leiden via <https://f.io/BsWK8DBX>. Attention! This is not footage from Sunday evening, September 25, but from the test run prior to the experiment.

About Seeing Stars Leiden The organization of Seeing Stars Leiden, a project by artist Daan Roosegaarde i.sm. UNESCO was in the hands of the project team under the direction of Leiden&Partners, i.c.w. the municipality of Leiden, Oude Sterrewacht Leiden, Leiden University, Cultuurfonds Leiden, Leiden Kennisstad and Citizen Science Lab. This project could not have come about without the help of Leiden2022, SRON and Airbus.