

Sign, Stretch & Solve

MIND-SETS of Ineke Hans

Ineke Hans has a lot of common sense: a word she also uses a lot. With a healthy down-to-earth mindset, a designer's soul, a sculptor's heart and a pair of clogged feet, Hans has been cultivating her design imaginary from her rural studio in Arnhem - where she recently moved into a warehouse formerly used to grow marijuana. This must be Holland... But although her pieces may look as iconic as windmills, tulips and clogs, she has never been bothered too much about her Dutchness. With the Museum voor Moderne Kunst (MMKA) in her backyard in Arnhem, she prepared a very clear exhibition called MIND-SETS, to share her thoughts and visions on design.



text INEKE HANS

When invited to make an exhibition about my work in the museum in Arnhem I initially hesitated. An overall view on your work was to me something you do when you are old. But another reason was that it seemed a bit contradictory to place objects of use in a museum where they become like art and where it is immediately forbidden to touch and use them.

Design & the Times

Design has become a kind of word that appears to be parallel with art. For some people seeing strange shapes and colours already means that something is 'designed'. In the Seventies many students wanted to do social studies. Nowadays design has become so fashionable that many are interested in becoming a designer. However, design is of all times: inventing and dealing with objects of use has been around since before the word 'design' was even invented. I decided to dive into the loose bits and ends in my mind and to use some of my thoughts to illustrate them with my work, items from my studio, my home and from three museums in Arnhem: MMKA, the award-winning Nederlands Openluchtmuseum and the city's Historisch Museum. The exhibition [at MMKA] sneakily enters the museum

café and garden where my work becomes like cuckoo eggs that have been removed from their pedestals. My Ordinary furniture can be used here, and the menu is adjusted to serving soups and salads from bowls I designed for Royal VKB.

Poetic Technician

Combining thoughts and objects together in kind of still-life settings - so called: MIND-SETS - also gives the opportunity to show not only what I make but also how I look and what I think. The exhibition is accompanied by the publication MIND-SETS, which has divided these thoughts up in three main themes: 'Sign' deals with communication and potential usage, reflecting on the signal and hints that objects can transmit; 'Stretch' takes a more evolutionary approach, considering the amount of 'stretch' we can(not) deal with and the necessity of innovation-driven design, not just in terms of new materials and techniques, but also in regards to historical, contextual, intentional or idealistic issues; and 'Solve' is about common sense, fixers, functional fun and my idea that while design is concerned with problem solving, this is more than just a physical dimension, it's also about mental functionality.

Gijs Bakker opening the exhibition at MMKA

Ineke Hans during the opening ceremony (facing page)

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There is a lot more to designing a table than creating a flat surface with four legs. Being a designer for me has to do with being a technician, a material expert, a poet, an anthropologist, a problem solver, a psychologist, an economist, a magician, a producer a philosopher and a stretcher in the time in which I live. Unlike an alchemist looking for the secret to make gold, I realise that there is no formula for design. There are many issues to deal with in design that I am consciously aware of as MIND-SETS. However, in the end there is lightness to my decision-making and I follow my heart.

Overview of the central part of MIND-SETS (top)

For MIND-SETS, Ineke Hans mixes her own design with vernacular and traditional objects (above)

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MIND-SETS runs at the MMKA, Arnhem until 5 September and then travels to The Aram Gallery, London from 16 September – 6 November 2010.
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MoOD is organised by Textirama vzw, Poortakkerstraat 90, BE-9051 Gent, Belgium - Phone +32 9 24 38 450 - fax +32 9 24 38 455 - email: info@moodbrussels.com