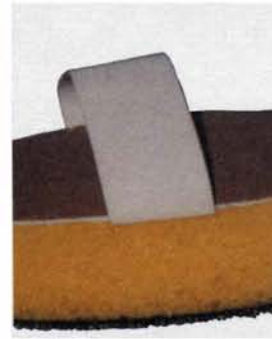
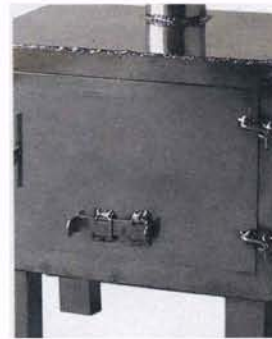
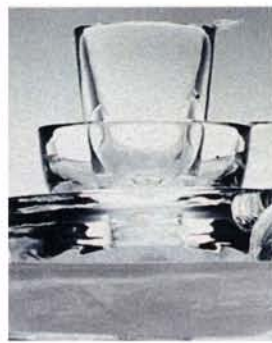
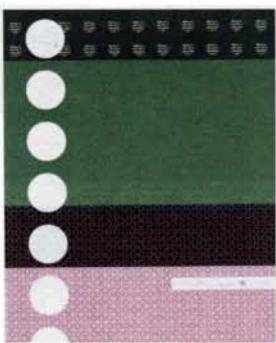




False Flat

Why Dutch Design Is so Good
Aaron Betsky
with Adam Eeuwens

PHAIDON



Hella Jongerius — In 2003 Hella Jongerius won the Rotterdam Design Prize, had solo exhibitions at the London Design Museum and the Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, in New York, cochaired the International Design Conference in Aspen, and saw the publication of a book devoted to her work. In *Metropolis* magazine, Museum of Modern Art design curator Paola Antonelli pronounced Jongerius a “unique talent who has no rivals.” In the same article, Jongerius is also called “the new Vermeer.” The cause for this praise and adoration is Jongerius’s ability to meld the old with the new, high tech with low tech, first world with third world, craft with industrial process, intuition with expertise, to create products she calls “new antiques.” These are modern artifacts that hold an ingrained value, foster an immediate emotional attachment, and are imbued with a meaning that does not merely reflect the latest design trends.

Ineke Hans — While working for three months at the European Ceramics Work Centre, Ineke Hans developed her “Black Gold Modular Porcelain” series, a “kind of ceramic LEGO system.” Allowing for infinite combinations, the easily reproducible vases, coffeepots, saucers, and so on are all cast in the notoriously sensitive black porcelain, a tricky material that exerts its own will in the final form. Architectural critic and curator Lucy Bullivant aptly describes Hans as a “designer with the impulses of a sculptor and the industrial experience needed to define products with a commercial life.” After working on mass-produced furniture and product collections for Habitat UK, Hans founded her own studio in 1998. Witty yet sober, her work reveals the interplay between function and form, exposing archetypes and exploring materials, techniques, and established codes.

and in the process changing their function and their meaning. Celebrated examples include his Handbag Annie (two dustpans tied together with a piano hinge to form a lady’s handbag) and Coathammer Jut (a hammer with the head reversed and a nail attached to form a coat hanger). Stallinga cherishes the anecdote of a Russian cosmonaut meeting an American astronaut, the latter showing off NASA’s latest million-dollar invention: a ballpoint pen that could write upside down or in weightless conditions; in response, the Russian showed him a pencil. Stallinga sympathizes with the Russian. The practical runs much deeper than does the whimsical in his work. This is as much a social commentary against the wasting of resources as it is a fresh look at function and form. An independent designer ever since he left the Rietveld Academy in 1993, Stallinga is also principal creative director at Design Machine, a strategic brand-building studio with offices worldwide.

Henk Stallinga — An objector to the collective nature of Droog Design, Henk Stallinga is most likely the “driest” designer of them all, taking everyday objects, giving them a slight twist,

Niels van Eijk — WAT (Working Apart Together) was the title of Miriam van der Lubbe and Niels van Eijk’s 2002 exhibition at the Vivid Gallery in Rotterdam. The two share an old farmhouse in the countryside, each pursuing their own iconic ideas, while occasionally collaborating on exceptional projects. As students at the Design Academy in Eindhoven in the mid-’90s, they became immersed in the Droog Design school of thought and left as natural masters of its teachings. Van Eijk’s cow chair from 1997 became one of the classics of Droog’s collection. More recently, his Bobbin Lace Lamp uses not lightbulbs but glass fiber as a conduit of light, while his stoves evoke memories of props in a van Gogh painting. Van Eijk’s designs take the core characteristics of the source material and forge an intimate bond between form and function, past and present, raw and refined. The resulting creations are both elegant and enchanting.

Miriam van der Lubbe — A keen observer of the peculiarities of her surroundings and fellow human beings, Miriam van der Lubbe uses her products to reflect on the madness of our everyday lives. Wineglasses get a piercing, a lady’s handbag is pistol shaped; her furry Poodle Chair can be shaved to accommodate its owner’s aesthetic desires. She is not interested in creating new form; she wishes only to take what already exists and add her (often biting) commentary: she has rematerialized the iconic, disproportionately slim Barbie doll as a chocolate calorie bomb and decorated the ubiquitous Dutch windmill with Islamic, Chinese, and African symbols. When Van der Lubbe adorns napkins with historical Delft Blue figurines, the characters skate no longer on ice but on a skateboard, they light up not a clay pipe but a joint, and the classic bridge in the background is transformed into the unmistakable Erasmus Bridge.



Seven Chairs in Seven Days, by Ineke Hans, 1993-95