Inke Hans — while working for three months at the European Ceramics Work Centre, Inke Hans developed her “Black Gold Modular Porcelain” series, a “kind of ceramic LEGO system.” Allowing for infinite combinations, the easily reproducible vases, coffeepots, teapots, 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.

René Stalings — An objector to the collective nature of Droog Design, René Stalings is most likely the “driest” designer of them all, taking everyday objects, giving them a slight twist, and in the process changing their function and their meaning. Celebrated examples include his Handbag Amie (two dustpans tied together with a piano hinge to form a lady’s handbag) and Coathanger Jut (a hanger with the head reversed and a nail attached to form a coat hanger). Stalings cherishes the anecdote of a Russian cosmonaut meeting an American astronaut, the latter showing off NASA’s latest million-dollar invention: a balloon pen that could write upside down or in weightless conditions; in response, the Russian showed him a pencil, Stalings 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 wastefulness of resources as it is a fresh look at function and form. An independent designer over since he left the Rietveld Academy in 1993, Stalings is also principal creative director at Design Machine, a strategic brand-building studio with offices worldwide.

Mirian van der Lubbe — A keen observer of the peculiarity of her surroundings and fellow human beings, Mirian van der Lubbe uses her products to reflect on the sadness of our everyday lives. Kiniglasses 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 own 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 unshakable Erasmus Bridge.
Seven Chairs in Seven Days, by Ineke Hans, 1993–95