



e-text+textiles

## Made in Holland



Dutch design is a global phenomenon. *Sette*, an Italian magazine, has even called the Netherlands the “promised land of the creative class”. From the Senseo coffee machine to the Bugaboo pram, Dutch design is guided by a long tradition and driven by innovation. On top of that, Dutch designers are cosmopolitan and inquisitive, taking inspiration from any place they find it and fusing diverse tastes and styles into something we somehow recognise as characteristically Dutch.

The members of the Droog Design Collective are among the leaders in a permanent process of cross-pollination between cultures, methods and materials. One renowned example is Marcel Wanders’ Knotted Chair. Wanders, who studied at the Art Academy in Arnhem, designed the work with the help of specialists from Delft University of Technology. The resulting chair is a combination of macramé and high-tech superfibres, a sublime synthesis of individuality and innovation.

Design courses are similarly forward-looking. Despite their distinctive histories and cultures, the technical universities, Amsterdam’s Rietveld Academy, Arnhem’s Fashion Institute, and Eindhoven Design Academy all have a common aim: to expand our horizons. According to the British design and architecture magazine *Icon*, Eindhoven Design Academy is in fact “the most influential organisation at the heart of the world’s most influential national design culture”.

Nevertheless, innovative designs would never see the light of day without art patrons who pair discrimination and curiosity. The eye-opening results of this mix are visible in the revival of the centuries-old earthenware factory Koninklijke Tichelaar Makkum. By linking the ideas of designers like Jurgen Bey and Hella Jongerius with the knowledge and skills of Dutch craftsmen, the company has swiftly risen to international prominence.

Model patrons are found in both the public and the private sector. While the unique look of Dutch coins and banknotes has now made way for the uniformity of the euro, yellow trains and striped police cars still zoom across the country’s landscape. Even Dutch postboxes exude a style that is at once individual and universal.

The process by which international, multicultural elements transmute into a dynamic Dutch culture resembles nothing so much as alchemy. In the words of Aaron Betsky, the director of the Netherlands Architecture Institute, “Dutch society has always been open and exists as much as a refinement of other countries as it does as a self-contained entity.” If an open society is the key to Dutch design, then international cooperation is the fuel that sustains Dutch innovation.

Dingeman Kuilman  
Prensela Dutch Design Foundation