

# amsterdam marketing

## PRESS FEATURE

### **Dutch Design: pragmatic with a twist**

**Amsterdam is the home base for many internationally renowned designers working within a characteristically Dutch aesthetic. Dutch Design can be summed up as pragmatic, individualistic and unpretentious – with a strong twist. It is no coincidence that you often see people walk around galleries featuring the work of Dutch designers with a broad smile on their faces.**

Since the renovation of the café of New York's MoMA by Dutch designers in 1994, Dutch Design has been considered "hot" internationally, with some people even going so far as to refer to "The Dutch Miracle".

### **International influence since De Stijl**

The contemporary quality of Dutch Design did not come out of the blue. From 1918, the De Stijl (neoplasticism) movement put the Netherlands on the map internationally as a design country. Artists, designers and architects such as Theo van Doesburg, Gerrit Rietveld and Piet Mondriaan aspired to simplicity and abstraction. The reputation of De Stijl movement began with the Red and Blue Chair of Gerrit Rietveld in 1918. Dutch Design has experienced another spectacular blossoming since 1980. All kinds of innovative industrial designers from Amsterdam and the Netherlands have worked in internationally renowned collectives, such as Designum (established 1980), Droog Design (est. 1993) and Moooi (est. 2001).

### **Relationship between architecture and industrial design**

There is perhaps nowhere in the world where the relationship between architecture and industrial design is so clear as it is in the Netherlands, both in terms of the emphasis on shape and use of materials. The architecture of the Amsterdam School (1915-'30) is characterised by sculptural shapes, in which the architect not only designs the façades, but also the minor details such as the house numbers and the metalwork of the doors. This can also be seen in recent Dutch architecture. Some examples in Amsterdam include the extremely varied canal-side façades on the Java Island and the residential building the Silodam, designed by architectural firm MVRDV.

### **Amsterdam: an inspiring city for designers**

Amsterdam is the home base of internationally successful designers such as Marcel Wanders, Satyendra Pakhalé, Jan Jansen, Viktor & Rolf, Alexander van Slobbe and Claudy Jongstra. Amsterdam has succeeded more than any other historical city in evolving into a contemporary breeding ground for creative talent. The combination of historical atmosphere, human dimension, freedom and room for new ideas has an inspiring effect on creative minds. It is no coincidence that Amsterdam likes to call itself "Capital of Inspiration".

### **Droog Design**

Many innovative Dutch industrial designers are, or have been, connected to Droog Design, founded in 1993. The initiators of this group were jewellery designer Gijs Bakker and design critic Renny Ramakers. Droog Design integrates talents in a loose network of established and rising designers with extremely diverse projects. Designer who are, or were, involved with Droog Design include Richard Hutten, Hella Jongerius, Jurgen Bey and Claudy Jongstra. Since 2004, Droog Design has offered designers space for exhibitions and presentations in the Staalstraat, where they also sell design products. Upstairs, there is a single-room hotel.

Staalstraat 7B

[www.droog.com](http://www.droog.com)

### **Moooi**

Another group of Dutch designers are associated with Moooi, founded in 2001 by Amsterdam designer Marcel Wanders and Casper Vissers. Piet Hein Eek belongs to the Moooi group of innovative industrial designers. Since 2010, the Moooi flagship store can be found in Amsterdam's Jordaan district, in a space covering no less than 700m<sup>2</sup>.

Westerstraat 187

[www.moooi.com](http://www.moooi.com)

### **The Frozen Fountain**

This shop and gallery brings designers and specialised craftsmen together to produce original design products. You can find work here from, among other people, Claudy Jongstra.

Prinsengracht 629

[www.frozenfountain.nl](http://www.frozenfountain.nl)

### **SPRMRKT**

SPRMRKT is located in a former supermarket at Rozengracht 191 and offers designer clothing and original design from the 1970s and '80s.

[shop.sprmrkt.nl](http://shop.sprmrkt.nl)

### **WonderWood**

WonderWood, located at Rusland 3, has beautiful wooden furniture, in particular from 1940-'70. They have both vintage items and replicas of now-classic designs.

[www.wonderwood.nl](http://www.wonderwood.nl)

### **Furniture**

Leading Dutch architects, such as Berlage and De Bazel, were designing furniture for their own buildings as early as 1900. From the 1930s, Amsterdam department store Metz & Co played an important role in the world of furniture design. After 1945, many progressive furniture manufacturers came on to the scene, such as Pastoe, Gispen and Spectrum.

### **Interiors and public spaces**

Amsterdam offers beautiful examples of "Gesamtkunstwerken" (literally, total works of art), which were built shortly after 1900: the Beurs van Berlage (1903), the Scheepvaarthuis (1915, since 2008 Grand Hotel Amrath) and the Tuschinski Theatre (1921). The interiors of these buildings, including the furniture, form part of a complete architectural concept.

These now classic interiors offer a beautiful contrast to the current generation of Amsterdam designers. One leader in this field is Concrete Architectural Associates. This Amsterdam bureau has designed many unique interiors, such as De Lairesse Chemist's and the restaurant Nomads on the Rozengracht. Van Meyer & Van Schooten designed the stylish shoe shop Shoebaloo at PC Hooftstraat 80. Other examples include: Brasserie Harkema (Nes 67) by architectural firm Prast and the interior of the Hermitage Museum Amsterdam (Amstel 51) by Merckx + Girod Architekten.

### **Public spaces**

Running parallel to the rise of the Amsterdam School in 1915, there was increasing attention paid to the design of street furniture. Museum Het Schip in the Spaarndammerbuurt district offers some beautiful examples. A selection of this furniture can be seen in the garden of the museum's lunchroom, such as a newspaper kiosk and post boxes.

## **Graphic design**

The Netherlands has a long tradition of typography. The advent of De Stijl movement led to the abandonment of unnecessary ornaments and the straitjacket of symmetry. From 1920, Piet Zwart was an important pioneer in the New Typography movement. A few big names from 1960 onwards are Otto Treumann and Wim Crouwel (Total Design). Gerard Unger became internationally famous as a designer of typefaces. Paul Mijksenaar, meanwhile, specialised in the design of signposts for airports and stations. He has worked for international airports such as JFK and La Guardia in New York. Anthon Beeke gained great fame as a designer of theatre posters. The agencies Thonik and Mevis & Van Deursen are famous for their designs for the cultural sector.

## **Jewellery, fashion & shoes**

Amsterdam is far from having the international reputation of Paris or Milan as a fashion city, but it is one of the most inspiring cities for trend-spotters. Famous fashion designers with an atelier and/or shop in Amsterdam include: Alexander van Slobbe, Viktor & Rolf and Aziz Bekkaoui.

Around about 1970, the BOE groep was set up in Amsterdam. They believed that jewellery did not necessarily have to be made from gold, but could just as well be made from cardboard, cork or even paper. One famous designer who adopted this style was Gijs Bakker. Paul Derrez (Galerie Ra), among others, makes combinations of precious and non-precious metals. Otazu is one example of the young generation worth mentioning, who has, among other things, designed a collection for Gassan Diamonds.

Jan Jansen (1942) is one of the most important shoe designers in Europe. He made his breakthrough with "Woody", a wooden clog in 1969, and is still active. Hester van Eeghen (1958) is a leading designer of leather bags and accessories. She manages to combine humour and the highest quality.

A relatively new phenomenon in Amsterdam is Red Light Fashion Amsterdam, an organisation that exhibits work by progressive Dutch fashion designers in Amsterdam's Red Light District, De Wallen. This intriguing mix in the oldest part of Amsterdam has become an international hotspot for design tourists. See [redlightfashionamsterdam.com](http://redlightfashionamsterdam.com)

### **Design in the Stedelijk Museum**

The Stedelijk Museum has a beautiful collection of applied arts and graphic design, with a total of 70,000 pieces. Part of the design collection is permanently exhibited on the ground floor. Highlights are, for example, the Red and Blue Chair (1918) and the Harrenstein bedroom (1926) by Gerrit Rietveld, the Revolt chair (1953) by Friso Kramer and the Knotted Chair (1996) by Marcel Wanders. In 2012, the Stedelijk was expanded with a spectacular new wing, the "Badkuip" (Bathtub), which was designed by the Amsterdam agency Benthem Crouwel.

[stedelijk.nl](http://stedelijk.nl)

### **Design events**

A number of unique events related to design take place in Amsterdam every year, such as ELLE Festival in the city centre of Amsterdam. In addition, Amsterdam International Fashion Week organises a large fashion event twice a year.

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**About Amsterdam Marketing**

Amsterdam Marketing is the city marketing organisation of the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area, active in the fields of promotion, information, research and services. Our ambition is to put this region on the map as one of the five most attractive metropolitan areas in Europe for its residents, visitors, businesses and influential groups. Under the motto "I amsterdam", we present the region as a dynamic place to live and work, an attractive travel destination and a test market for innovation.