



Dutch Design: A History

Mienke Simon Thomas

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From the colourful abstraction of the Rietveld chair to the dry wit of the 'milkbottle lamp' by design cooperative Droog, modern design in the Netherlands has always been a hotbed of experimentation. Dutch designers have consistently pushed to the limits anything from posters to postage-stamps, home furnishings to street signage, ceramics to city airports. Indeed, in the last decade or so, Dutch design has become a worldwide phenomenon, almost a brand in itself, with regular publications in magazines and books promoting the remarkable output of this small country. This book takes an in-depth look not just at designs made in the Netherlands, but behind the works created throughout the twentieth century and beyond. Author Mienke Simon Thomas, a curator at one of Holland's leading museums, provides a compelling thematic account, guiding the reader through the beginnings of crafts education, the debates of design as art, the moral and social ideals of modernism, the new profession of industrial designer, state-sponsored initiatives, and conceptual design objects and 'anti-design'. As she argues, Dutch design seems to have been inspired by the wish to be functional, simple and affordable, but she also reveals how it has simultaneously embraced luxury, decoration and even exclusivity. A much-needed introduction to Dutch designs and their creators – as well as the clients who commissioned them and the state initiatives that supported them – this book will be essential reading for designers, historians and the general public with an interest in design.

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