

Over Floris Hovers

The Bottleboats, the Stoklamp, Plankfurniture, Fixed chair and the now iconic series, ArcheToys. The designs of Floris Hovers – furniture, lighting and models – are surprising in their disarming simplicity. Not abstract minimalism, but the final result of a prolonged process of reduction. What remains is the essence – an almost cartoon-like composition of form, construction and colour. Achieved in an interplay between man and machine. Many of his products betray a somewhat naïve, playful approach. ‘My designs must be readable and recognizable’.

Floris Hovers (1976) lives and works in Raamsdonk (NL), where he also grew up. After a foundation course in construction engineering and following a study in advertising and presentation techniques, he graduated in 2004 from the Design Academy Eindhoven.

In 2006 he founded his own design studio and in 2011 was awarded the Sanoma Woonaward (Livingaward) ‘Young Talent’. As a lecturer he was associated with vocational training in Fine Arts at AKV/St. Joost, specializing in Spatial Design, in the period 2009-2012. In addition he regularly gives readings and guest lectures both at home and abroad.

International recognition came with his iconic ArcheToys. This series of modelvehicles has been included in the permanent collection of the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam and is produced under license by design label Magis (I) since 2013. beside a continued development of his own original work he also have products in the collection of Magis, GOODS, Functionals, Label, New Duivendrecht, FEST and Vij5. Floris Hovers’ products are regularly exhibited at international (trade) fairs in, for example, Milan, Cologne, Kortrijk and New York. In the Netherlands his iconic designs can be found at design galleries such as The Frozen Fountain (Amsterdam) and Strand West (Utrecht).

Work

It all looks so simple. A plastic shampoo bottle and on top a sail, fastened with elastic bands. A wooden stool whose constituent parts are held together by rope.

And then the toy cars, built up from nothing more than steel pipes and tubes.

Floris Hovers is fascinated by simple materials and techniques. With these he constructs accessible furniture, lighting, interior products and models: true and a touch timeless. “Readability is essential to me, you must be able to see the underlying structure”. This is further highlighted by the descriptive product names referencing the, frequently alternative construction methods: Bottleboats, Tied-up Stool, Sticklamp.

Larger objects he regards as architecture in miniature. Within this context bookcase Casco alludes to the grid of an apartment building. These associations are not so surprising as Hovers comes from a family of craftsmen: carpenter, cabinetmaker, builder. His studio in Raamsdonksveer, is housed in the former concrete factory of his father, for him it remains an ideal location. “Building and constructing - that is rooted deeply within us”.

Back-to-basics improvisation

The search for ultimate simplicity comes strangely enough from his natural tendency towards decoration. "I can intensely enjoy glamour and richness. But these experiences hold a mirror in front of me. Extravagance doesn't suit my personality, restraint does." He develops his vision in the tension that is created between exuberance and self control: a deeply rooted search for insight.

In a world where everything appears possible, Floris Hovers has deliberately set himself limits. The materials with which he loves to work come straight from the warehouse: planks of wood, profiles of steel, reels of rope. The techniques are equally basic: sawing, welding, punching, carving. These boundaries give him control of the materials.

And a stillness from which to begin his search. Not towards the unknown, but in essence to hone the known. 'Back-to-basics' improvisation has gradually become his strength.

Three-dimensional cartoons

A perfect example of the strength achieved by simplification is the shaping of ArcheToys, a collection of model vehicles. To eventually arrive at a recognizable product family, the range of profiles were not experimentally extended, but rather reduced. Only in this way did the models remain recognizable, appealing to a collective memory. A tanker, tractor, station wagon. The development of the precise archetype requires an acute understanding of form and colour, as meticulous as it is uncompromising.

When that characteristic outline is finally discovered, it appears this blueprint can then be seamlessly translated into other materials. Such as the cardboard version (CARton), to be painted according to your own imagination. The wooden blocks (CARtools) go even further, allowing the user to construct their dream car. Complete with cones representing the piercing light of headlamps. Altogether the product eventually becomes a three-dimensional cartoon. Universally legible, worldwide. Through children and adults, who project upon it their childhood memories. Reason enough for the Italian design label Magis to include the complete range of ArcheToys and the building blocks CARtool into their collection.

Workshop = playground

Designing models didn't just appear out of thin air. There is something about toys and Floris Hovers. Vintage toys you understand, from the 50's and 60's. A carefree era at odds with today's hectic world. In his studio a small part of his collection can be seen: fire trucks, tin toys, construction sets. It offers a glimpse into another facet of Hover's design approach. Again the inclination towards simplicity, but now as a counterweight. "I want to hold onto the purity of what it is to be child-like. Design is still for me a playful way to approach the adult world. Tinkering - my favourite verb".

Industrially Handmade

He still works today just as he used to, whilst playing in the concrete factory, giving shape to a global concept. Drawing board and workbench stand close together, inseparable points of reference in a circular design process. Knowledge and intuition go hand in hand: sketching, making, refining, sketching anew, making anew. An almost meditative 'slow design' where all superfluous matters fade. "I feel like I am always in the middle of a process. Things are never completely finished, but sometimes that doesn't matter. Sometimes they're right just as they are".

He rarely works with a computer – compass and protractor are sufficient. Initially everything should either be possible to self produce or, if on an industrial scale, then with relatively simple resources. Also in terms of production he searches for a balance between extremes, between the manual and the machine. 'Industrially handmade' as he so aptly describes it.

Graphic signature: 2,5D

His graphics background has clearly left its mark. During his search for the essence of a functional object, Floris Hovers eventually returns to the diagrammatic archetype. A silhouette or outline that is recognizable at a glance, just like pictograms or cartoon figures.

This graphical imagery is then converted back on the workbench into a spatial product. From excessive 3D to crystal clear 2D, in turn scaled back up to 2,5D – 'a cartoon in 3D'. Without exception they include a twist. Because after peeling off all the unnecessary details, layer by layer, an unpredictable element is always revealed. A small particularity that gives everything a new depth. Toy cars with their front wheels before the frame suggesting eagerness, a standard lamp where the flex has become an essential part of the design. It is the crux of his signature: a controlled slip (faux pas) within a, for the rest, perfect construct of picture and proportion.

Context: touching simplicity

Colour forms an integral part of each design, the finishing touch. An absolute incorporated at the beginning of the design process. Confident striking colours and colour combinations ultimately give the restrained products their characteristic shape and expression. Also his choice of colours tends towards the restful mood of the 50's. A palette of soft, agreeable, mostly secondary colours. In keeping with the disarming naiveté of the design language used. Colour, form and proportion finally blend together into an icon, a product in context.

"My products communicate feeling: recognition and memory. Pure human emotions are expressed. I demonstrate how touching simplicity can be".

2014

DONK – table designed for LABEL van den Berg

IMM cologne design fair presentation for LABEL

Featured Editions by Stylepark at IMM Cologne – presentation for LABEL van den Berg

Object Rotterdam – exposition in 'the Rotterdam'

UNITS – design im netz der teile – Exhibition Sparda Bank Münster by S-works

Galerie Jacques Cerami - duo exhibition Jean-Baptiste Sauvage + Floris Hovers

2013

Lecture and workshop at ECAL/Ecole cantonale d'art de Lausanne Switzerland

MAGIS ArcheToys became part of the collection Fuoritema MAGIS spa

Think Dutch – a new book by FRAME and DAAB - Flessenboot/bottle boat on cover

Tutto Bene – 10th anniversary group exhibition Zona Tortona Milan Designweek

Object Rotterdam – exposition in NAI Netherlands Architecture Institute

Guest at Kunststof TV / NTR Dutch public broadcaster

Participation of panel about contentmarketing and social media - E-Home&Deco congress RAI Amsterdam

Lecture – TOPOS centre of architecture Maastricht

Animation-movie from the CARton cars made by Remy van Zandberg

Inside Design Amsterdam – group presentation

Tabloid Tables together with Vij5 part of the collection designlabel Vij5 Eindhoven

Dutch Design Week Eindhoven broad presentation solo works at Strijp S/Klokgebouw

Volvo trucks The Netherlands - special design business gift

Gemeente Museum Den Haag – part of WONDERCHAMBERS exhibition for children –
Movie about making a chair

Meesterlijk Design and Crafts fair Amsterdam – Westergasfabriek

Exhibition Second Life, from worthless to valuable – by YKSlexpo - Amman (Jordan)

2012

Teacher spatial design at the academy of fine art AKV st. Joost Breda

Stoklamp part of the collection Functionals

Biennale Interieur Kortrijk Belgium – presentation various works of furniture Floris Hovers Collection

Inside Design Amsterdam – solo presentation Floris Hovers collection

Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam – workshop designing cars

Dutch Design Week – presentation CARton cars – Piet Hein Eek Eindhoven

Samsung notebook - cooperation to Dutch web campaign for Samsung Notebook

Design Flessenboot/Bottleboat part of collection Goods Amsterdam

Galerie 37 – 37 graden – exposition art/design/fashion – bottle boat

Book illustrations – Historic book with stories for children about the dutch region Heusden and Althena

Design CARton – Modelcars made of Cardboard and plywood

LODZ design festival – exhibition design for children

2011

Teacher spatial design at the academy of fine art AKVst. Joost Breda

ArcheToys incorporated into the permanent collection of the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam

Design 'Panaltybench' oak

Solopresentation Milan - Salone del Mobile – Ventura Lambrate - autofficina

Temporary 2 exposition Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam – collection ArcheToys

Dutch Design Week - group presentation/exposition – Piet Hein Eek Eindhoven

Part of Exposition 'Huize Brabant' – BKCC tilburg

LODZ Design Festival – Poland – exposition NEOFARM – Suggested Tin – ArcheToys

Makers Festival Amsterdam – workshop with kids making a Bottle boat

Lecture 'from rags to Apps' -Toy design in an evolving world' op het Shenkar

College of Engineering and Design in Tel Aviv, Israel.

Winner Sanoma Woon Awards – young designtalent

NEW studio and Wokshop in Raamsdonksveer the Netherlands

Inside Design Amsterdam – solo presentation Flessenboot/Bottle boat

Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam – workshop making boats

2010

Teacher spatial design at the academy of fine art AKVst. Joost Breda

Inside Design Amsterdam – Elle - presentation Lloyd Hotel together with desiglabel Vij5

Dutch Design Week Eindhoven – exposition/presentation various works at Piet Hein Eek

Design Flessenboot/Bottleboat

Design showcase 'VAKWERK'

Design fixed lounge upholstered and armrest

Publication ArcheToys - book about TOY design by publisher GESTALTEN

2009

Teacher spatial design at the academy of fine art AKVst. Joost Breda

Belgrade Serbia – Cultural Centre of Beograd exposition, lecture and workshop

Kunsthall Weert – Jack Vreeke – exposition ArcheTOYS

Galerie COSC bergen op Zoom – solo exhibition

Ontwerp op de weg – Designroute in the city of Haarlem

Publication 'Magazine mixt' – The independent Designguide – Laura Housely

Wrapped stool part of the collection Design label Vij5 Eindhoven

Tutto Bene Salone del Mobile Milan – group presentation

Design Plankfurniture serie 01 writing desk – coffetable - tabel

Publication ArcheToys - book PLAY ALL DAY by Chris van Uffelen – publisher BRAUN

2008

Teacher spatial design at the academy of fine art AKVst. Joost Breda

Salone Del mobile Milaan) presentation Arche Toys bij Goods Amsterdam

Onomatopée exposition DESARTING together with artist Charles van Otterdijk various works

Dutch Designhouse Eindhoven exhibition (2008) The Family of Form – Galerie YKSI

Dutch Design Week Eindhoven presentation solo works at Strijp S/Klokgebouw

Via Milano (2008) – Arche Toy collectie

Design Plankfurniture serie 01 stool - chair - bench

2007

Artifact (2007) international contemporary crafts fair Bruges – presentation works

Dutch Design Week Eindhoven presentation solo works at Strijp S/Klokgebouw

Exposition Dutch Villige Noordbrabants Museum Den Bosch

2006

Exposition AEKI Breda stichting KOP BREDA

Exposition Dutch Villige Noordbrabants Museum Den Bosch

Dutch Design Week Eindhoven presentation works at Strijp S/Klokgebouw

Employed at Piet Hein Eek

Design second serie of Archetoys

ArcheToys part of the collection GOODS Amsterdam

2005

Salone del Mobile Milaan - Order:systems and paterns against chaos in the world

New York Designweek - expositie Dutch Village: innovative traditions in design from the Netherlands

Exposition: interior design fair Amsterdam

Dutch Design Week group exposition: Belezza Universale – serie of furniture universal construction

Employed at Piet Hein Eek

Design first serie of Archetoys

2004

Graduated in the direction Atelier, Design Academy Eindhoven

Nomination economy price Northern Brabant (Netherlands)

Graduation show Design Academy Eindhoven(2004)- graduation projects Fixed and suggesting Tin

Employed at Piet Hein Eek

Design Fixed chairs and cabinet Suggesting Tin