JURY REPORT

Looking at fifteen nominations by five scouts, the international jury of the Rotterdam Design Prize 2013 pondered the question of what characterizes Dutch design today. The great diversity of projects in this year's selection doesn't prevent the observation that conceptuality is an enduring trait of design in the Netherlands. With only few exceptions, ideas trump objects. Objects, that is, in the conventional industrial sense. And even where there is a manifest product – a phone, a flying car, shoes, a minesweeper – the object often exemplifies a conceptual approach toward a problem and its contexts rather than simply solving it. The almost complete absence of the traditional industrial commodity product in this year's selection is remarkable in a time when mass markets and general economic concerns seem to rule design and innovation strategies. This bias may be due to a shared concern of the Rotterdam Design Prize's scouts, who all stress the importance of the social and human aspects of design and the power of design to cast a practical eye on bettering conditions of life. But it also reflects a broader tendency in Dutch society, towards greater social responsibility and more participation, and away from reliance on the traditional institutions of government and industry.

While the nominations reflect a quality of experimentation, curiosity, wittiness and engagement that is deeply engrained in Dutch design and culture, the international jury also points to a potential risk of this concept driven mentality: the ties that bind sweeping concepts to feasible solutions can become slack. There is much to be gained from taking into account the marginal contexts of product development and venture into the dicey shadows of thinking beyond of the industry's highlights; but leaving the practicalities of mass production – and their economic, social and environmental consequences – to China and other production moguls, may result in a fading away of skills and knowledge required for making things.

That said, the jury is delighted to see the high level of openness to tackling tricky problems in Dutch culture, and the accompanying well-argued rethinking of habitual approaches in many of this year's nominations. This year's winner is a prime example of connecting innovative findings from thorough research to a deceivingly simple interaction concept that effectively helps change lives.

The winner of the Rotterdam Design Prize 2013 is **temstem**, an app for smartphones and tablets that empowers people who suffer from hearing voices to silence these, if only temporarily. The collaborative research of healthcare professionals from the **Parnassia Groep** and designers from **Reframing Studio** resulted in an up-to-date tool, which promises to have great impact on the lives of its users. The app addresses a problem in one of the central areas of concern in design today, healthcare, and does so with contemporary media.

Temstem is a language-based game, which empowers its users to actively repress the voices in their heads. Next to its distractive qualities, the app can also produce longer-term therapeutic effects; it facilitates its users to address their problem directly and take control. The app is not meant as replacement of the psychiatrist or drugs, but provides an innovative and effective tool for self-help to those suffering from this psychosis. The jury finds that temstem brilliantly demonstrates the impact design can have on real problems. The jury acknowledges that the true value of this work in progress lies in its innovative use of interaction design within a concrete therapeutic setting, which at the

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same time serves as continuing research platform on which therapists, designers and users are co-producers of a potentially life-changing tool. The international jury unanimously agrees with scout Caroline Hummels that temstem is an exemplary product on the nexus of research and design and therefore awards it with the Rotterdam Design Prize 2013.

Extensive research also laid the foundation for the new graphic identity of **Alzheimer Nederland**, an ambitious charitable foundation that seeks to raise public awareness of Alzheimer's disease as well as its own activities in this field. **Studio Dumbar** developed a new typeface, which effectively symbolizes the process of cumulative loss of memory in patients. The disease creates holes in a patient's memory and gradually 'eats away' at their identity. The jury praises the truly sophisticated typeface design and the dignified aesthetics of the pictures of Alzheimer's patients that enliven the brochures of the foundation. The new graphic identity will certainly help connect a broad public to a growing problem that will affect all of us in one way or another; one in five people in the Netherlands will develop some kind of 'dementia' at some stage of their lives. Studio Dumbar's posters and brochures with their blurring motives are eye-catching without over-shouting the subject. A highpoint of graphic design.

Both **temstem** and the new identity for **Alzheimer Nederland** testify to the openness of Dutch society to address issues that are elsewhere often treated with bashful reserve. The jury finds great merit in both projects in marrying a complex brief to a straightforward and excellently executed product.

Also addressing a nasty problem is **Mine Kafon**, the graduation project of Eindhoven's Design Academy alumnus **Massoud Hassani**. His proposal for a new approach to clearing mines in post-conflict areas has stirred a heated international debate on how design can or should deal with this global and often lethal problem – which is an accomplishment in itself. Although many unresolved aspects of the Mine Kafon's workings and design can raise serious questions concerning its feasibility in practical terms, the jury acknowledges its quality as an effective critical artifact. The visual poetry of the contraption's overall form; the idea that it proposes a low-tech, low-budget tool for inhabitants of mine-infested areas; and the fact that it has attracted funds to study the problem further from a design perspective, all of this at least qualifies Mine Kafon as an effectively designed narrative around a problem that urgently needs solving.

Another design that endeavors to tackle a global problem is **Fairphone**. Designer **Bas van Abel** started this project as a critical campaign to raise awareness of the shadow of abuse cast over one of the world's most liberating recent inventions, the smartphone. Dire working conditions and child labor in production centers of the components, polluting production methods and unsustainable use of rare and often conflicted minerals, which are regularly connected to the making of these phones, need to be addressed. Van Abel, a pioneer of Open Design, tackled the problem by venturing into the lion's den: producing and marketing a phone of his own design using existing components and channels. The open design approach allows for incremental amelioration of both the design and the production processes and conditions. Beyond laying bare the complex production chain of smartphones, Fairphone confronts the problem – and competitors like Apple and Samsung – right where it counts, in the market where growing consumer awareness calls for matching producer responsibility. The fact that not only the production but also the design of the Fairphone is far from finalized does not affect its prime quality; with Van Abel's strategy the product itself becomes a tool for changing the way its made.

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More a working method than a concrete product is **Hidden Design** by **Afdeling Buitengewone Zaken** (Department of Extraordinary Affairs). The design method takes the idea of 'prototyping' to the next level, that of staging a realistic users' environment within small communities before the product is made, and design and develop it further in the process. Although the jury appreciates the hands-on and socially focused mentality behind the method, it is also critical of its potential and reach. The nominated project, 'Connecting Local Retailers' in the Belgian village of Wieze, is a case in point. Why would a village, with its traditional close-knit network of one-on-one physical contacts between inhabitants, need a digital service that potentially circumvents many of these personal meetings? And is the labor-intensive method feasible on the larger scales of (sub)urban life, which may profit more from its merging of digital technology and service design? As a method, Hidden Design still has many loose ends.

Down-to-earth practical is the design of a **Dynamic boarding information at train platforms** by **Edenspiekermann, STBY, ProRail and NS Reizigers**, a combination of designers, researchers, infrastructure administrator and public transportation company. After extensive research among train passengers the collaborative team presented a 180 meters-long digital LED display that details the incoming train's position, occupancy, entrance points and facilities. The jury commends the effort in making traveling by train a more smooth experience and the translation of a sophisticated information infrastructure into an intelligent and clear design. At the same time, the jury wonders if this project is not too technologically driven and thereby always behind on the latest stage of communication technology. And does it really solve such a pressing problem? On the one hand the project makes one hungry for more (real-time inter-platform interactive information exchange!), and on the other one wonders whether the charm of slight chaos should disappear completely from the daily routines of travel.

An even stronger ambivalence befalls the jury with the **PAL-V** project. **PAL-V Europe NV** and **Spark Design & Innovation** have set out to realize an archetypal boy's dream, that of a flying car. The combination of technological and aesthetic design of the resulting vehicle, a road-ready gyrocopter, is without doubt innovative and sophisticated and the whole thing looks ultra-cool. But the jury can't help wondering if this design is not a dream of the past. It does hardly address the real problems of mobility today and ignores discussions around sustainability, fuel efficiency, alternative transportation strategies, congestion etc. The few environments in which this proposal seems practical are also slightly sinister; very rich individuals and the military. It could become a solo joy-ride for the happy few – but leaves the problems of the real world untouched.

A world of his own is that of **Piet Parra**, who's giant mural **Weirded Out** graced a 60 ft. wall in the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art in 2012. Certainly, Piet Parra has developed a distinctive and refined visual language, and his work as illustrator for major publications is of unquestionable quality. The jury agrees with scouts Erik and Ronald Rietveld, who nominated Weirded Out, that he sets an example for young designers, enticing them to follow their own passions, fascinations and skills instead of following the market. However, the jury also holds that Weirded Out was made in the right place: a museum of contemporary art, instead of a design museum.

While **Marcel Wanders** is undoubtedly a mature and acclaimed designer, and **Moooi** a leading brand of interior design products, the jury doubts whether the nominated presentation of the brand at Milan's Salone in 2012 truly surpasses the level of decoration. To wit, the staging of **Erwin Olaf**'s giant photos as backdrop for imaginatively arranged items of the Moooi collection in a huge Milan hall was overwhelmingly effective in terms of a theatralization of marketing. In that, the installation was highly consistent with the

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theatre of design that Milan is. In all modesty, the jury thinks that the two great talents of Marcel Wanders and Erwin Olaf could have raised above this buzz, and insert a more critical note, engaging in a different way in the discourse about their role as leaders in the field. Instead both stayed in their comfort zone – a sophisticated place with limited relevance for design.

A bit too 'Hollywood' is also the jury's comment on **Anouk Wipprecht**'s **Interactive couture**. The jury follows scout Nikki Smit in his praise for the intelligence and engagement in Wipprecht's experimentation with fashion and wearable technology. And her involvement in the discourse on cloths as both hiding and revealing the emotional and or physical condition of their wearers is obvious and eloquent. Critical notes can be placed with the limited scope of the interactive dresses – all rather theatrical designs, of which the artifice threatens to overwhelm the serious undercurrent: the debate on how (wearable) technology will affect our social lives. Nikki Smit remarks: "The Smoke Dress makes us think: what if our clothes could reflect, support, even correct our behavior?" In the jury's eyes, Wipprecht doesn't answer the question she raises herself.

Daan Roosegaarde is one of the more visionary of Dutch designers, and often quite effective at pairing wild dreams with remarkably real contexts, but the jury fails to see the innovative quality of Roosegaarde's **Crystal** project. The installation of hundreds of 'stones' that emit light when placed and manipulated on a special underground is certainly aesthetically pleasing and can result in playfully poetic moments of interaction or self-absorbed tinkering with light. It is a sweet project, but also a bit naive, in the sense that it doesn't seem to strive at more than just being there. With that, the jury holds, Crystal remains a purely aesthetic phenomenon, which only marginally shows the power of design.

Marga Weimans took her own DNA code as starting point for designing **Body Archive**, a collection of dresses that at the same time associates on the merging of fashion and digital technology. Although the jury appreciates her engagement with some highly topical issues of technology and cultural (self-)expression through fashion, it is critical of the ways in which these topics reflect in the actual designs. Considering the huge impact and consequences of DNA technology, now and in the future, Weimans' interpretation of her own DNA does not surpass the level of personified decoration – as critical as the narrative around it may sound. Also the use of 'augmented reality' in one of her dresses doesn't activate the audience to more than marvel at the effect on the tablet screen. The jury would welcome it if Weimans were to succeed in linking her panache as designer of eye-catching and surprising things to the many layers of meaning potentially connected to her subject matter.

The experimental shoes designed by **Winde Rienstra** may not look very comfortable, but they do represent a keen and intelligent look at the lack of innovation in footwear design and industry. The cardboard **Facet Heels**, the **Bamboo Heels** and the **Lego Heels** are examples of clever experimentation with rather unusual combinations of atypical materials resulting in adventurous prototypes. There is a definite material quality in these designs, and in that respect they are striking and innovative. But the jury misses a connection to innovating the industry, that Rienstra purports to seek. How can these one-offs become models for production?

A modest design that exactly produces what it sets out to do – that is **Fingle**, an iPad-based game by designers Adriaan de Jongh's and Bojan Endrovski's young game development company **Game Oven**. Fingle started as a graduation project and kick-started the company – an example of the fruitful communication between design

education and independent game developing in the Netherlands. The jury finds Fingle pretty focused, fun to play and effectively designed but wonders how relevant it is for design: why would we need an iPad app to get physical again?

Lernert & Sander humor the branded perfume and advertising business with their witty project **Everything**. By collecting almost 1400 samples of all the new fragrances launched in 2012 and mixing these into 1,5 liters of perfume, they staged a critical commentary on what they see as the "perverse" excess of the business. For Wallpaper magazine they cleverly associated on the theme of **Handmade** with the expensive bespoke suits by Brioni, by ordering one for the hand of a model. There is a definite charm to such direct translations of 'every fragrance' into 'Everything' and 'Handmade' into 'made for the hand'. But that's about it: very funny.

On behalf of the jury,

Max Bruinsma
Jury chair

Jury: Caroline Baumann, director of the Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, Edwin Heathcote, architecture and design critic, Virginia Tassinari, assistant professor social spaces aan MAD University in Genk.