

DUTCHCHAM MAGAZINE



INTERVIEW WITH A CHIEF

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**Crafting Spaces,
Shaping Lives**
- Studio SITEC

LEAD STORY

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**Cosmetics Across
Cultures**
- Rituals

A scenic view of a mountain resort. In the foreground, a woman is standing in an infinity pool, looking out over a vast valley. The valley is filled with green hills and a winding road. In the background, there are large, misty mountains under a cloudy sky. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and majestic.

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DUTCH DESIGN



On 28 September 2023, we had our Annual General Meeting. I want to thank all our members for their ongoing contribution and feedback provided during the year. It was also the day, that Erik Bleekrode and Michiel Mak officially stepped down from the Board. I am pleased to let you know that both have joined the Dutch Chamber Advisory Board. Once again, I want to thank both of you for everything you have done for the Chamber.

Quinten Kah and Arend Oldenzijl take over the roles as Board member, Chair of China Committee (Quinten) and Treasurer (Arend). A more detailed introduction can be found in this magazine. Once again, welcome in the Board!

The theme of this magazine is Dutch Design. Thinking about Dutch Design, the first thing which comes into my mind is "Delfts blauw" and "windmills," however Dutch Design captures much more. In this issue, several members will highlight the importance of Dutch Design and how it is embedded in their business strategy and core-activities.

Firstly, for the Dutch Consulate, it is a special year with the Netherlands partnering with Hong Kong in a year-long exchange program around the business environment, sustainable fashion, and products and brand-new design to forge long-term international cooperation, promote and exchange of ideas and knowledge and co-create innovative solutions for current and future challenges. Several events have been hosted together*, with the objective of further collaboration and creating business opportunities. The "cherry on the cake" of this collaboration is the Business of Design Week 2023 gathering over 50 international, regional, and local creative leaders for an inspiring week-long programme across the city from 29 November until 2 December 2023. Our General-Consul of the Netherlands in Hong Kong, Arjen van den Berg, will share more insights further in this magazine.

Our lead story is from our gold member Rituals, "*Happiness can be found in the smallest of things. It is our passion to turn everyday routines into more meaningful moments*". They will explain Rituals' business philosophy, and how they are inspired by the wisdom and traditions of ancient cultures and how one of their product lines integrates and combines Dutch and Asian Design.

In this issue's interview with the Chief, our member Bert Bultuis tells about the integration of cultural influences, client collaboration and the balance between creativity and business. Bert is an architect from profession and SME committee member. Have a great read!

* Designing Circularity Exhibition in Central market in June (showcasing innovative sustainable designs from the Netherlands in Built Environment, Fashion and Everyday Goods – more information and podcasts still can be found on <https://desiningcircularity.org>), Knowledge of Design Week ("KoDW") and Freek van Eijk, Holland Circular Hotspot, participating in the Rethink conference in September bringing circular inspiration to Hong Kong that offers opportunities for further collaboration and business opportunities.

Frery Winkel

CRAFTING SPACES, SHAPING LIVES

Celebrating 30 years in architecture, **Bert Bulthuis, Founder and Principal Architect at Studio SITEC**, has designed a diverse array of projects. In this interview, we explore the integration of cultural influences, client collaboration and the balance between creativity and commerce.

■ By Zuba Adham-Bos



Bert Bulthuis

Please tell us a bit about yourself and what you do.

I'm a professional architect with three decades of experience. My career has spanned across two diverse cultures and locations. For the first 20 years, I practiced in the Netherlands, and the last decade in Hong Kong. My journey in architecture has always been centred around running an SME architectural office. This has allowed us to embrace a wide spectrum of projects without restricting ourselves to a particular specialism.

2023 marks a significant milestone for our office – our 30th anniversary. In celebration, we compiled an overview of our

projects, which astonishingly totals 365, so far. Our portfolio showcases incredible diversity, ranging from kindergartens and schools to residential houses, a cruise ship club, and even extending to unique structures like gas stations. It's this variety that continually inspires and challenges us, keeping our work fresh and exciting.

Our work doesn't conform to a singular architectural style or client demand. Instead, it reflects a more holistic approach to design, where the emphasis is placed on the relationship and trust established with clients. They often approach us not with a desire for a replica of an existing design but rather for something that resonates with the unique ethos of our practice.



Bird's eye view of Kembang Baru

Has the Dutch Design ethos influenced your architectural style?

I find myself pondering the very essence of what constitutes Dutch Design. Having been educated in Amsterdam and spending over two decades working in the Netherlands, I am undoubtedly ingrained in what one might call Dutch Design. However, the notion that Dutch Design possesses certain specific characteristics is something I don't wholly subscribe to. It's more a manner of approach, a way of doing things.

Reflecting on my education in Amsterdam, which was steeped in what one might label as Dutch Design, I realise it was a journey of exploration and experimentation. This approach, characterised by continuous exploration and a willingness to delve behind the surface, forms the bedrock of my architectural ethos.

Yet, this spirit of inquiry isn't unique to the Netherlands; it's a universal trait found in creative minds worldwide. Labeling it strictly as Dutch Design feels reductive. Our styles are shaped by a myriad of influences from the environments we inhabit. As designers, especially in today's interconnected world, we are constantly absorbing and integrating global ideas, which naturally seep into our work.

My Dutch upbringing and professional experience have certainly influenced my work. But since I've ventured beyond the Netherlands, my style has also been moulded by a multitude of other influences, blending into a unique personal style.

Can you discuss how you integrate client input while maintaining the integrity of your architectural vision?

I firmly believe that architecture inherently involves the client. Their brief is crucial, as I don't create in a vacuum. Clients often approach me with their dream visions, and some are hesitant, wondering if they might unduly influence my work. I encourage them to share their thoughts. I view myself



Courtyard of Kembang Baru



A socially-mixed housing model

as a sculptor, with the client's input serving as my clay. Architecture isn't a solitary art; it's a collaborative creation, shaped by the wishes and dreams of those we design for.

I make a point of being highly flexible with my clients, always ready to adapt, but within certain boundaries. For instance, I'm open to discussing changes in the feel or functionality of a space, such as altering a corridor to create a more expansive entrance or incorporating more natural light. But not to clients dictating specific designs.

It's also crucial to establish a clear understanding with clients about the role they wish me to play. I often say, "you get the clients you deserve." If a client seeks my expertise, they're not just hiring me to execute their ideas; they're engaging me to think, conceptualise, and bring a unique perspective to the project. If they're not interested in this collaborative, thought-driven approach, it calls into question the value of my involvement, especially considering the fees and the intensive nature of the design process. This alignment between client expectations and my role is essential to creating architecture that's both true to my vision and resonant with the client's aspirations.

How do you balance the creative and business sides of running an architectural studio?

Balancing the creative and commercial aspects of running an architectural studio is indeed a nuanced task. Aspiring architects are often driven by a passion for design, sometimes to the point where they are willing to work for minimal financial reward. However, it's crucial to understand the value of one's work. Charging appropriately is essential; it not only signifies the worth of the design but also allows for the creative process, which is both time-consuming and resource-intensive.

In my experience, creativity shouldn't be constrained by financial considerations. I often tell my peers that in the architectural business, one can be their own worst enemy. It's vital to secure enough fees to support the intensive nature of our work and is key to maintaining the necessary flexibility for creative exploration. This approach does sometimes mean that certain projects require more resources, but that is a natural part of our profession.

For instance, while working on a private house in the Netherlands, I created around 150 different detailed designs, each requiring about four hours of work. This extensive effort might not always be immediately evident to clients, but it's an integral part of delivering quality work.

Ultimately, architecture is a fulfilling business. It might not be the most lucrative industry, but it offers the opportunity to create meaningful products while ensuring a decent living. My primary goal has always been to make a good living, balancing my creative aspirations with the practicalities of running a successful business.



Carved entrance door

Has your Dutch background influenced your work on international projects?

My Dutch background has indeed shaped my approach to international projects, particularly through the lens of architectural practice in the Netherlands. This approach is deeply rooted in extensive dialogue. For instance, in my current project involving an urban plan with housing in the Netherlands, the contrast in processes between there and Asia is stark. In Asia, the pace is much faster; designs often progress with minimal discussion. Conversely, in the Netherlands, the process is interlaced with discussions across various departments, making it quite comprehensive and layered.

This difference in approaches has influenced my own evolution as an architect. While living in the Netherlands, I was fully immersed in this discussion-centric approach, which fundamentally moulded my thought process. Now, having stepped outside of this environment, I find myself thinking

more ambitiously, unshackled from the constraints of a familiar process. It allows me to envisage broader possibilities before inevitably engaging with the procedural aspects.

What has been your favourite project?

One of my most cherished projects has been 'Kembang Baru' in Zwolle, the Netherlands. This unique endeavour was designed for the elderly with Dutch-Indonesian heritage. What sets Kembang Baru apart is its diverse nature; it's a blend of social housing and luxury apartments available for rent or purchase. Each resident enjoys their private space, yet the complex fosters a sense of community through communal spaces.

What's truly heartwarming is the lasting impact this project has had. Even after 15 years, I often hear residents recounting fond memories from the time of its construction. It's very rewarding to realise the significant role your work plays in people's lives. These individuals have spent 15 to 20 years of their lives in a space I helped create. It's a testament to the enduring value of architecture – crafting spaces where people live and work for many years. The influence one can have through architecture is quite extraordinary - and humbling at the same time.

The photos in this article are from the project 'Kembang Baru' Housing for the Elderly, The Netherlands (Handellaan 237, Zwolle)

A SOCIALLY-MIXED MODEL

- Clients: Projectteam Holtenbroek, SZW, Deltawonen
- 35 apartments, a communal activity room and kitchen, a communal garden
- 50% social housing, 25% rental and 25% for sale
- Built gross 4,830m²
- Photos: Studio SITEC (1), Vulkers Fotografie (2, 4), TV Oost (3)

This building, to improve facilities for former Dutch Indies-elderly, is square-shaped around a shared courtyard garden, but actually consists of four connected buildings, one which has been raised to accommodate a semi-sunken parking garage and storerooms. All 35 apartments, (social-rental, rental or purchase) have their own terrace/veranda facing the sun. An expressive roof overhang on a wooden colonnade creates extra space between the interior and the exterior to walk, sit and garden. The exterior of each of the four blocks is finished with different materials. Enlarged batik elements (such as the tile tableau and Trespa vectogram) evoke the former Dutch Indies. The showpiece is the huge, carved entrance door, made in Bali.

DUTCH DESIGN IS STEPPING UP IN HONG KONG

FUSED footwear is a futuristic shoe brand based in Hong Kong, offering fully 3D-printed footwear. The brand was born out of a designer's exploration of having complete control over the development and production process.

Here is the story of FUSED footwear's journey with its founder, Philippe Holthuisen.

From Holland to Hong Kong

How does a Dutch product designer find himself crafting 3D-printed sneakers in Hong Kong? Philippe shared, "In 2016, I arrived in Hong Kong, teaming up with a friend to launch a start-up. He had recently transitioned from a business centred around 3D-printed consumer products. Given my background in footwear, we recognised an unmet need for fashionable corrective footwear."

This vision was anchored in a common issue. Many people deal with flat feet or high arches, which can lead to alignment problems. As the years pass, these challenges can affect mobility. With Hong Kong's tropical climate, sandals are a preferred choice, traditionally incompatible with corrective insoles. The duo planned to develop fashionable, comfortable sandals, with a 3D-printed corrective insert.

Their journey wasn't without its hurdles. Philippe looks back: "Our initial ambitions were grand, but the complexities of traditional shoemaking, especially on a small scale, quickly became evident." Resource constraints and the magnitude of the endeavour, made them decide to pull the plug on their start-up idea.



However, despite the setback, adversity kindled innovation. During his period at the start-up, Philippe saw the potential to create fully 3D-printed, functional shoes. After 6 months

at the Makerhive in Kennedy Town, the first wearable 3D-printed shoes were born. "I had brought the idea to life, and was now on my way to transition from a designer to entrepreneur." With his 3D CAD skills – a digital design tool for crafting objects – and a suitable 3D printer, he could sidestep the need for external manufacturing. Ever since, he has been growing FUSED footwear steadily, while learning many practical lessons and how to build a brand.

Dutch Design influences

Dutch Design is woven throughout Philippe's story. "My design journey is marked by two key Dutch influences," Philippe explained. Firstly, his academic roots lie in the Design Academy Eindhoven: a leading design school, internationally recognised for its innovative approach and renowned professors and alumni. The academy's design methodology encourages innovation and individual exploration and experimentation. It has imparted a pragmatic, hands-on and methodical approach to design challenges, echoing Dutch sensibilities.

Secondly, he learned to apply his product design and 3D CAD skills to footwear while working at United Nude, a notable and avant-garde Dutch footwear brand. "During my time there, I worked on crazy, conceptual shoes with the owner and Creative Director, Rem Koolhaas, and it's where I caught the footwear bug." However, he recalls being frustrated by not being able to test the women's cool designs for comfort. With FUSED footwear he has solved that problem: Philippe personally wear-tests every design for several weeks, ensuring both style and comfort coexist.

"Through my designs and growing FUSED footwear, I now hope to add my own chapter to Dutch Design!"



■ By Philippe Holthuisen
Founder of FUSED footwear
www.fusedfootwear.com

CIRCULAR DESIGN IS KEY

Hong Kong, an international city known as a shopping paradise and an important hub in Asia, is becoming increasingly aware of climate challenges, much like the Netherlands. Both places aim to transform into a circular economy by 2050.

Navigating this transformation in a bustling city like Hong Kong, and for the Netherlands as a transit country serving as a hub for Europe, particularly in agriculture and various goods arriving at our Rotterdam harbour, poses significant challenges.

Achieving a circular economy isn't a simple task. It requires maximising resource usage, prolonging product lifespans, and making crucial shifts in energy sourcing to become more environmentally friendly, producing with minimal waste.



Becoming circular demands technical innovations, including new materials, revised production methods, and regulations to guide individuals and manufacturers towards more sustainable practices. Above all, it requires a shift in behaviour, embracing circularity as the optimal way to preserve our planet and secure a sustainable future.

As proud members of the national creative industries platform, CreativeNL, we are honoured to participate in the Business of Design Week (BODW) 2023 as the partner country. Under the theme "Game Changers", we're assembling a diverse group of designers, thinkers, policymakers, researchers, and businesspeople to share insights on circular design. Importantly, they're not just here to convey a message; they're eager to learn about the challenges faced by Hong Kong in the built environment, textiles, and product design. To address these challenges, we're bringing in experts, business people and researchers to have meetings, workshops and lectures to engage with their Hong Kong counterparts.

During BODW 2023, we'll convene with potential business partners, research institutes, and governmental organisations to ensure that our efforts as the partner country yield sustainable results. We acknowledge that a delegation flying in from the Netherlands has a negative environmental impact. Therefore, our goals are ambitious: we aim to inform and learn from each other to collectively achieve a positive impact.

The design of a product significantly influences how it is used – thus, designers play a crucial role in our transition to a circular economy. By adopting alternative business models such as leasing and refurbishing, we can catalyse change in both the Netherlands and Hong Kong.

Through collaborations with local partners in Hong Kong, including the Business Environmental Council and the Hong Kong Design Institute, along with six research tracks established in close cooperation with the Netherlands Applied Design Research and our national government supporters, we're working with programs like CIRCO and What Design Can Do to create long-lasting partnerships.

We are not only bringing ideas and people to Hong Kong. Last month, our partnership with the Design Centre, brought a wonderful program to Eindhoven during the Dutch Design Week in Eindhoven. Hong Kong Design Centre brought 12 wonderful circular designers with the exhibition 'Capsule'. They introduced the Dutch audience for the first time with an exhibition from Hong Kong during the Dutch Design Week!

I am personally passionate about the circular challenge and confident in our partnership with Hong Kong. Our collaboration with the Dutch Chamber of Commerce on the iDiscovery map, created in conjunction with Charlot Teng, showcases 15 points of interest in Hong Kong related to circular initiatives. This digital map aims to guide you to local initiatives dedicated to circularity.

You are very welcome to explore these places and become a game changer yourself!



■ By Monique Knapen
Coordinator Business of Design Week
Strategic Advisor China CreativeNL

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT

A lot of organisations have a great focus on their product offering, product design, and customers. There are also extensive efforts on continuous improvement in operations. But what about finance? This is often neglected; while financial performance is the lifeline of an organisation.

The current economic environment is getting tougher. Interest rates are increasing. Market conditions are making it harder to find new funds either through investors or banks. Economic downturn puts pressure on profits, so cost control becomes even more important.

Therefore, it is crucial to have a fresh view of the financial performance and find improvement potentials. Of course these opportunities need to be converted into actions so they are turned into cash and revenue.

Here are some examples:

Supplier payments

Companies often pay their suppliers too early. This can be analysed by looking at the DPO (Days Purchases Outstanding) on the balance sheet and comparing that with the actual contractual payment term. If DPO is lower than the contractual payment term, there is an improvement opportunity to redesign your payment process and increase your cash flow.

Customer payments

The key indicator for customer payment efficiency is DSO (Days Sales Outstanding). A DSO that is higher than your contractual payment term with your customers indicates that there is an improvement opportunity.

Do your customers pay on time? If not; why not, and has that conversation with them happened?

Are there customer payments that have been outstanding for a long time? What can we do to resolve this? Is your invoicing process efficient? The earlier you invoice, the earlier you can get paid.



Inventory

The key indicator for Inventory is Inventory turns; the lower this number is, the higher the cash tied up in inventory. A low inventory turns normally indicates an improvement opportunity. Do you have the right products in inventory? Is that linked to a sales projection? Does the inventory contain obsolete products; can we sell them maybe at a discount?

Cost review

What I often see is that after a couple of years, a portion of the cost in the Profit and Loss becomes a mystery. There are Unknown costs: "Not sure what it is but somebody signed up for this and it's been there ever since". Non-added value costs: does the cost really add value; maybe it made sense in the past but does it still do today? When was the last time the cost and payment terms have been negotiated? Why are there multiple suppliers for the same service/product? Can we consolidate with a better price? All of this indicates that there is an opportunity to improve your profitability and cash flow.

Let's give an example of the impact of improvements. If you have money tied up in open customer payments, inventories, offset with low open supplier payment of in total 1.000.000 and you would be able to improve that with 20%, then 200.000 cash could be freed up. This cash can be used for fuelling your growth, your product development, that marketing campaign you want to do, or just create a nice safety cash buffer.

To summarize, especially in the current economic environment with interest rates rising, it is crucial to have a solid financial performance. This starts with identifying improvement opportunities by analyzing your financials and comparing them with the right KPIs. Then take the time for focused actions to realise this improvement potential and improve cash and profitability.



■ By Paul G.M. Mol
Mol and Partners CFO Advisory

NLINBUSINESS: MORE ENTREPRENEURS, IN MORE FOREIGN COUNTRIES

The recent decision by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to extend the subsidy to NLinBusiness (NLiB) for 4 years until the end of 2027, is a good moment to take stock and look ahead. NLiB has been an important collaboration partner for the Dutch Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong. So what do they do and what can we expect in the years to come?



NLiB was founded in 2017 as an initiative of the Dutch employers' organisations VNO-NCW and MKB Nederland, supported by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The rationale behind NLiB is that although the Netherlands is high in rankings of international trade – especially in fields of food and agriculture, advanced machinery and services – there are lots of growth opportunities. Either entrepreneurs or SMEs who are not internationally active yet, or companies which could further expand their international activities (e.g. beyond Germany, into Poland). The mission of NLiB is therefore: more entrepreneurs, in more foreign countries. To achieve this aim, NLiB has developed a comprehensive online platform, consisting of Dutch entrepreneurs, local service partners and business hubs abroad. Furthermore, on their website NLiB shares market reports and testimonials from experienced entrepreneurs, and they organise events – such as workshops and networking get-togethers. Over the years, hundreds of entrepreneurs were helped to make their next step abroad, generating business opportunities, jobs and economic value added.

The Dutch Chamber of Commerce is one of the business hubs in the network of NLiB and is one of the hubs with an accreditation – a “seal of quality” as an international business chamber. For the Chamber, NLiB has been a valuable partner for several reasons. First, NLiB offers us a complementary network, one beyond our own primary circle, which is mainly based in and around Hong Kong. Thanks

to NLiB, we can reach out to companies and stakeholders (e.g. governments or universities) in the Netherlands. Second, NLiB generates referrals of Dutch entrepreneurs with ambitions in the area of Hong Kong or the Greater Bay Area. Through this channel, the Chamber gets in touch with these Dutch businesses – who eventually may become a member. This is further facilitated through our “soft landing kit” services. Finally, NLiB orchestrates frequent meetings between business hubs; both in the region (Greater China and Asia Pacific) and on a global scale. In these meetings, best practices are exchanged between business hubs on a range of topics, such as organisation, activities/services, promotion and digitalisation. The best way to illustrate the importance of NLiB is to imagine if this initiative would not exist; the Chamber would probably have limited exposure to stakeholders in the Netherlands and there would hardly be any contact between our colleague hubs in Asia.

Tom Bakker, General Manager of the Chamber, attended the Business Exchange Days in September 2023 in the Netherlands. There, he not only met his colleagues from all over the world but also had the opportunity to talk with industry organisations and government. The participating chambers agreed that collaboration – especially in the fields of digitisation, services and promotion – will be enhanced in the years towards 2027. Through pooling our resources and networks, we can help more Dutch entrepreneurs expand their businesses internationally. Finally, the International Business Days on 7 September in Rotterdam, offered the chance to meet over 50 entrepreneurs with ambitions towards Hong Kong and/or China. While for many businesses this remains a big step, the number represented a significant increase from the years before. The Chamber welcomes the extended mandate of NLiB and looks forward to receiving more Dutch entrepreneurs in our part of Asia.



■ By Tom Bakker
General Manager of the Dutch Chamber of
Commerce in Hong Kong
www.dutchchamber.hk

THE DUTCH DESIGN SPIRIT IN HONG KONG

The Netherlands and design go hand in hand. The whole world is familiar with Miffy, but the Netherlands has already shown that it is a leader in design in so many areas.

In 2021, the residence was completely redesigned with Dutch design and art to mark fifty years since the Netherlands purchased the property. Visitors love to marvel at the furniture, which is modern and cozy at the same time. In 2022, Creative NL accepted the invitation from the Hong Kong Design Center (HKDC) to become country partner for the Business of Design Week (BODW) in 2023. In the same year, the top sector for the creative industry agreed on a strategic partnership with the HKDC, which offered the opportunity to put the spotlight on Dutch design during the BODW at the end of November 2023, and also during the Knowledge of Design Week (KODW) in June 2023. In the spring of 2023, the Consulate General organized an innovative exhibition Designing Circularity in Central Market, with contemporary examples of circular design in everyday goods, fashion and the built environment.

The slogan for the BODW 2023 is Game Changers, which nicely expresses what the Netherlands aims to do with its participation: working with relevant players in Hong Kong on the challenges associated with the transition to a circular economy. The focus is on architecture (built environment), sustainable fashion and product design because the Netherlands has a strong reputation in these areas. With our partners in Hong Kong, we hope to make a difference in accelerating towards a more circular way of living and working.

The Netherlands wants to start a conversation about the role that design can – or even should – play in the transition to a circular economy. Without circular thinking there can be no circular design and a sustainable product or service. Something should not only be beautiful, but also functional. Two years ago – with Covid-19 restrictions still in place – the Consulate General organised a film evening for its network in the creative sector. The documentary was called It's Dutch Design and tried to pinpoint what exactly is distinctive about Dutch design. Ultimately, this turned out to be mainly a mindset, a free space that allows people to be innovative in designing and to know that good designs will find their way to production. I find it inspiring to see that we also want to bring that spirit to Hong Kong.

Back to the residence. The specific question from the editorial team was whether I wanted to highlight a design

from the new redesign. The long introduction is proof that I find this difficult, because the totality of the redesign appeals to me so much. But in the end I choose the large chandelier in the hall, because the story of the redesign started with the old – and in my opinion ugly – bronze chandelier that used to hang there. My request to replace this chandelier with a modern Dutch designed lamp ultimately led to the project in which all downstairs areas were given a makeover. The lamp is called Meshmatics and is a design by Rick Tegelaar for Moooi, the iconic Dutch design firm. Especially in the evening, the beautiful steel wickerwork of the lamp against the ceiling comes into its own and is a real eye-catcher for everyone who enters the house. Modern, yet gezellig.



■ By Arjen van den Berg
Consul-General of the Kingdom of the
Netherlands to Hong Kong

COSMETICS ACROSS CULTURES

In an insightful conversation with Raymond Cloosterman (CEO & Founder) and Niki Schilling (Chief Impact Officer), Rituals' journey unfolds, revealing how Dutch design heritage uniquely shapes its global cosmetic presence. Discover the interplay of culture, sustainability, and innovation that sets Rituals apart in the competitive beauty landscape.

■ By Zuba Adham-Bos



Raymond Cloosterman Niki Schilling

How do you think the cultural and design heritage of the Netherlands sets Rituals apart from other global cosmetic brands?

Rituals is a cosmopolitan brand, created by our Dutch founder Raymond Cloosterman while he was working in Paris. With his passion for design, fragrances and well-being, he created this unique and innovative beauty brand. Rooted in Dutch design heritage, Rituals was launched in Amsterdam, which we honour with our special Amsterdam Collection.

We worked together with the Rijksmuseum on the design of this special collection after we found the perfect piece that would give shape to the collection; the porcelain Delft Blue vase.

For this collection, we went back to discover our roots and design heritage and were inspired by 17th-century Amsterdam. We worked together with the Rijksmuseum on the design of this special collection after we found the perfect piece that would give shape to the collection; the porcelain Delft Blue vase. We found that this vase mixed East and West perfectly, a conjugation that has always been part of the DNA of Rituals. The mixture of blue and white is very Dutch, very ours, but at the same time also very oriental. We also took two ingredients from that era, tulips (at that time, more precious than gold!) and yuzu. This

combination led to a beautiful fragrance that is used for the products of the Amsterdam Collection. We try to combine inspiring ancient cultures and the Western world, and this is one of the aspects that set us apart from other global cosmetics brands.

Dutch design often prioritises the user experience. How has this influenced Rituals' approach to customer engagement, both in-store and online?

The user experience is extremely important to us. We invest significantly in our stores, because it's the epicentre of our company. This is the place where people can truly experience our brand and enjoy luxury in all its senses. Moreover, we introduce about 200 new products every year and a unique store experience is crucial as we've learned that this helps create a connection with our customers. People fall in love with our philosophy and products because of our most valuable marketing asset – our stores.





We always aim to leave a lasting impression on our in-store visitors, welcoming you with a warm cup of tea, followed by a hand massage at our water island. In selected stores, we offer pure relaxation in the Mind Oasis, where innovative science meets age-old meditations and techniques for ultimate relaxation. We also offer our customers the time and peace of mind to learn about the different products at their own pace in our stores.

Collectively as an organisation, we prioritised the experience of the consumer as well as the urgent need for digital integration and translated this into innovative initiatives like endless aisle (where shopping knows no boundaries), click and collect, ship from store (using and leveraging our stores as warehouses), personal shopping appointments, customised fragrance experience and much more. We really see a synergy between an offline and online experience.

How does Rituals incorporate sustainable practices into its product design and overall operations?

We do this in several ways in which the biggest factors are packaging, stores, and ingredients. When it comes to packaging, we are continuously expanding our collection of refills to reduce packaging material. We also ensure that the packaging material for our products is recyclable or made from recycled material. And together with our suppliers, we work on canisters with the highest possible

percentage of recycled aluminium for the entire range of our iconic shower gels (our best-selling product), resulting in a lower footprint.

In addition, our stores have energy-saving devices (such as LED lighting). We are also exploring how we can improve the design of our stores to maximise energy efficiency. For new store designs, we are increasing the amount of recycled and environmentally certified materials. We work with our logistics suppliers to ensure low-impact shipments and offset our store-related carbon emissions by supporting certified carbon projects. As part of our Net-Zero ambition - we commit to reducing our greenhouse gas emissions by 50% in intensity by 2030, versus our 2021 figures, and achieving Net-Zero by 2050 - we are also investigating how we can contribute to removing carbon from the atmosphere in the long term. However, the focus for us is primarily on the significant reduction of emissions in our operations and in the chain.

Regarding ingredients, we aim to formulate our personal care formulas to contain more than 90% naturally sourced ingredients. Additionally, we work with our perfumers to create fragrances with a lower environmental impact, and we strive to use traceable or environmentally friendly ingredients (e.g. coconut oil). We are exploring the use of concentrated formulas to reduce our shipping footprint and also solid form.

THE POTENTIAL OF DUTCH ARCHITECTS IN HONG KONG

The term “Dutch Design” represents the design aesthetic common to designers in the Netherlands. More broadly, it refers to the fashion designers and architects with an international standing.

When I was studying at the University of Groningen, I saw great buildings such as the city hall, market square, university buildings, museums, and private houses. Most importantly, I felt they contributed to an eminently diverse and distinctive Dutch society. The buildings were often creations of a familiar building type: brick walls and a coloured tile roof. Windmills also mark as an icon in the Netherlands.

Hong Kong enjoys a unique cultural heritage that is influenced by both Chinese and Western influences. The former Legislative Council Building in Central, Hong Kong Island, was completed in 1912. Its design is identical to the Old Bailey in London with the Greek Goddess of Justice and Law. In Kowloon, the headquarters of China Light and Power (CLP) at 147 Argyle Street opened in 1940. The building was designed by in-house architects of the Kadoorie Estates. The CLP headquarters is a clear example of art deco architecture, which was popular in a range of countries, from France to New York, in the 1920s to 1930s. Currently, it is also easy to find traditional Chinese walled villages (eg. Kat Hing Wai, Tsang Tai Uk. etc.) in the New Territories. According to Professor Li Hoyin, Director of the Architectural Conservation Programmes at the University of Hong Kong, western-type buildings in Hong Kong can be categorised into four phases: Victorian period, Edwardian period, Pre-World War II Modern period and Post-World War II Modern period. Most recently, the newly built M+ building and Kai Tak Cruise Terminal display different styles compared with notable buildings from previous periods.

The Dutch environment has nurtured many famous architects with creativity and aspirations. There will be several mega



Headquarters of China Light and Power (CLP)

projects for long-term development in Hong Kong in the near future, and these projects provide an opportunity for Dutch architects to show the dynamics of Hong Kong as an international city. For example, it was estimated that the Northern Metropolis will develop more than 3,000 hectares of land new development in phases over the next 20 years. Many of these areas require international architects to build houses, high-tech innovation hubs, eco-recreation/tourism spaces and schools or shopping centres. It is possible that Dutch architects could participate in a few projects to display distinctive Dutch design in Hong Kong.

The architecture in the Netherlands has received international recognition. For example, the reconstruction of Rotterdam demonstrates a progressive and energetic city which is at the forefront of innovation. The Van Nelle Factory has also been ranked on the UNESCO World Heritage List. Meanwhile, many buildings are designed with climate adaptive measures such as water plazas, wadis, green roofs and less pavement. SAWA is being built on the Lloyd Pier in Rotterdam, and it has been designed with the aim of storing CO2 instead of emitting it. During the 21st century, there has been more emphasis on environmental protection and sustainable development. As Dutch architects have experience in designing sustainable buildings, they could also contribute more to the green development in the Northern Metropolis.

The Hong Kong SAR government could provide more opportunities such as international conferences and thematic talks to invite city planners and architects to visit Hong Kong for detailed discussions on Northern Metropolis development. Hong Kong is regarded as a springboard to a larger Chinese market. If the projects develop a good reputation and image, they could definitely help increase opportunities in the Greater Bay Area.



■ By Dr. Wing Lok Hung
Lecturer, Faculty of Social Science at
The Chinese University of Hong Kong

DUTCH DESIGN VS CHINA PRODUCTION

“If you pay peanuts, you get monkeys” – James Goldsmith, 20th century French businessman

After three years pretty much stuck in quarantine-obsessed Hong Kong, this summer felt like a breath of fresh air. Quite literally, as we spent most of it in the Netherlands rather than suffer the heatwaves of southern Europe, meaning we got our fair share of pleasantly cool weather.

During our stay we cycled past my old offices in “Philips-city” Eindhoven, VO-2 for insiders, and the adjacent woodlands part of the Philips family estate. The woodlands are bordered by the Anthony Fokkerweg, as if to remind us of the key Dutch industrialists’ names in one go.

Philips’s history reads like an early 20th-century Silicon Valley tale: brothers Gerard and Anton, one a techie and the other a salesman, start the company just before World War I. Key asset is technology, specifically the know-how to combine glass and metal. First to make lightbulbs, which evolved into radio tubes and then X-ray tubes used in industrial and medical equipment.

The common denominator of Philips products was inventiveness and durability. People bought them to last a lifetime, less so for their sleek design, though that changed later. As senior product manager shavers, colleague and mate from my early Philips days Rob Fletcher produced a travel shaver that was pure eye candy, besides being lightweight and extremely easy to use.

Like Philips, Fokker was known for its reliable but somewhat clunky products. The early years of air travel, when Amsterdam-Batavia flights involved two or more stopovers, demanded passenger confidence in the quality of the metal box separating them from Mother Earth - and certain death.

Ironically, the recall is due to a design fault. Dutch design used to be top class - or its industrial variant at least, the only relevant one in my view.

Fokker aircraft were near indestructible and many far exceeded their intended economic lifespan, some by 25 years or more. Some are still flying 50 years after they were built and this extreme durability was one of the prime reasons for Fokker’s ultimate demise: no replacement market.

From personal experience, the replacement market is the main focus for pretty much all Chinese manufacturers.

A local legal system designed as a shield from product liability and other claims helps, but an inexplicably generous international array of import duty exemptions is the clincher. It enables them to flood global markets with substandard products which, because they are dirt cheap, despite breaking down or disintegrating within a year virtually guarantee future revenue.

In his book “Poorly Made in China”, recommended reading for anyone sourcing there, Paul Midler mentions the “China price”. This serves as the standard Chinese excuse for quality issues - the fault always rests with the foreign buyer, you see. The inconvenience, injuries and even deaths caused by shoddy products such as electric chargers catching fire are someone else’s problem.

Today Philips is a shadow of its former self. Despite improving its outward designs and surviving the onslaught of Japanese and Korean competitors in the 1980s and ‘90s, the anti-competitive advantages enjoyed by PRC manufacturers proved too much. First all manufacturing plants and then the lighting and consumer electronics divisions were divested. The medical and healthcare business that is left now faces extinction, ironically due to a global recall of its breathing devices.

Ironically, the recall is due to a design fault. Dutch design used to be top class - or its industrial variant at least, the only relevant one in my view. Granted, I mind somewhat how my shoes and clothes look, and will even confess to admire a great car design. However, product design solely for beauty while compromising on functionality will not get my vote. Call me old-fashioned.

This piece is written on an Apple MacBook Pro. Solid brand, great functional design, no complaints there. Yet within a week of purchase, some keys came off. Guess where it was assembled...



■ By **Ralph Ybema**
Managing Director at China Law & Tax
www.chinaltd.nl

GREEN WORLD & DUTCH DESIGN

What does design have to do with creating a Green World? More than you may think.

While we are busy discussing the reduction of emissions, cleaning up the oceans or land for that matter, and thinking about new energy forms for transport, logistics or other ways, the foundational pillar remains design.

When we create products, for example cars, the design is not only about how it looks or performs. It also encompasses energy consumption, be it fossil or renewable green energy like EVs or hydrogen. Design allows for an integrated vision of all these elements, but also considers the product's end-of-life recyclability. And so on for many products.

In addition, design can enhance our quality of life, evoking feelings of well-being. Think of gardens, airports, train stations, or buildings: the more attractive, inviting and human-centric their designs are, the more value they will create as people like them.

Discover the role that Dutch design plays in societal challenges here:

<https://www.dutchdesignfoundation.com/en/labels/world-design-embassies/>

Fundamentally, design brings culture to the table. It changes our perspectives or tells us whether we like it (or not, which remains something personal), but it is more than that. It needs to bring together different things like a business case (affordable), looks (image & branding), functionality (ease of use), feelings (nice to experience), materials (re-use, recycle, circular?), and more.

Surprise: The Dutch Government has the best graphic design. Find out why here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nMwUOWCnQ6Q>

For a deeper dive into the respective views of what design is: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cMbNAjpn5PU>

OK, one more for the road, about design & green stations: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B8tekmGUe9c>

Hong Kong also has an example of green design at work:



The overarching point remains: A Green World can greatly benefit from strategic and thoughtful design. This column has highlighted before how we can benefit from data analysis when constructing buildings. When combined with forward-thinking design, it can substantially reduce carbon emissions.

It is here where aesthetics meet functionality, a crucial beginning of a process to make this a better and more agreeable place to live, in a sustainable way. What more could we ask for?

Personally, I can only hope design will be a part of the process in our minds. We have seen several examples in the links above to underscore its importance.

After all, don't we all dislike poorly planned structures, ugly buildings constructed only for profit or unattractive cars, just to name a few examples? Design gives a chance to create something beautiful blended with purpose, and evoke a good feeling at the same time.



■ By Bernard Scheffens
CEO at WSS Asia Ltd
www.wss-asia.com

CLUBLAND

The British likely invented the gentlemen’s club as it became known in the 18th century. While other countries, including The Netherlands, also still have a few gentlemen’s clubs that date from the 19th century, the phenomenon was largely British. And as such, it followed the British colonial civil servants and military officers as the British Empire grew and grew.

Of course, Hong Kong as a colony also could not be without its clubs, so very soon after the British took possession of Hong Kong Island in 1841 and the rest of Hong Kong in 1842, work was started to establish clubs, often in conjunction with existing clubs back home in Great Britain.

The three oldest social clubs in Hong Kong, in order of establishment, are:

The Hong Kong Club: Established in 1846, The Hong Kong Club is one of the oldest and most prestigious private clubs in the city. It has a long history and has been a prominent social hub for the elite. At the start, its members included government officials and the heads of major British trading firms, such as Swire, Wheelock and Jardines and one Danish family-owned group, Jebsen. It was referred to simply as “The Club”, and has long been described as the seat of real power in British Hong Kong: “Here the Governor and senior civil servants would sit in

regular, informal sessions, usually over breakfast or lunch, with members of the commercial elite.”

The original trading firms were known as “Hongs”, influential business groups who facilitated trade between China and Europe through Hong Kong, much as they still do today. The famous and very entertaining James Clavell novels *Tai-Pan* and *Noble House* while fictional, are based on quite some historical research and do paint the influence they had (and to a certain extent still have) in Hong Kong.

The Club, as well as other clubs, only slowly opened its doors to female members under pressure from the Sex Discrimination Ordinance, which came into force in 1996.



Building where the Hong Kong Club started in 1846

Membership of The Club remained exclusively male and European until the 1970s when the first Hong Kong Chinese members were accepted. The difficulty of becoming a member of one of the established clubs led Sir Robert Ho Tung Bosman (the half-Dutch, half-Chinese tycoon, and the richest man in Hong Kong in 1897) to co-found The Chinese Club in 1897. Similarly, the Chinese Recreation Club was inaugurated in 1912 as a parallel to the exclusively European Hong Kong Cricket Club.

The Club, as well as other clubs, only slowly opened its doors to female members under pressure from the Sex Discrimination Ordinance, which came into force in 1996.

The Hong Kong Cricket Club is the second oldest club in Hong Kong: founded in 1851, the Hong Kong Cricket Club is one of the oldest cricket clubs in Asia. It was first situated in Central, with the cricket field being where Chater Garden is today. In 1975, the Club gave up its site in the middle of the bustling Central District and moved to the greener Wong Nai Chung Gap.

Unlike the Hong Kong Club, which has very long waiting lists and one needs to know several members who will vouch for you before balloting takes place, the Cricket Club has a shortcut if you are a very good sporter. If one is good enough to play on one of the Cricket Club Teams at a competitive level, in one of the six sports (cricket, hockey, lawn bowls, netball, squash or tennis), and one commits to playing for the CC for at least three years, then a fast track and considerably cheaper membership option is possible. The Club plays at a high international level, having attained the prestigious ODI (One Day International) status. During the 2018 Cricket World Cup Qualifier however, Hong Kong got defeated by the Netherlands in a playoff match and lost their ODI status. However, they were allowed by the International Cricket Committee to play two more ODI matches after that in the Asia Cup.



The HKCC started on Chater Road, which is now Chater Gardens

The Hong Kong Jockey Club: Established in 1884, the Hong Kong Jockey Club is a well-known institution in Hong Kong, primarily focused on horse racing and its very important charitable activities.

When in 1982 President Deng Xiaoping spoke about the future prospects of Hong Kong post-handover with British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, he famously stated that in Hong Kong “Horses will still run, stocks will still sizzle, and dancers will still dance.” And indeed, every Wednesday evening (Happy Valley) and Saturday afternoon (Shatin) the horses still continue to race. The Jockey Club earned HKD 19.4 bln from horse racing bets alone last year, as well as HKD 20.7 bln from football betting and HKD 3.5 bln from the Mark Six lottery. The income from horse racing of HKD 19.4 bln was derived from HKD 140.4 bln of bets on horse race results! Of the betting and lottery revenue 76% (or HKD 35.9 bln/ EUR 4.3 bln!) is returned to Hong Kong in the form of charity, as well as Betting Duty and Profits taxes paid to the government. It was once calculated by one of the Big Four accounting firms, that the Jockey Club is the primary reason that Hong Kong goods have no VAT! Although not strictly a social club, perhaps in practice it often is, the first Freemasons lodge (like a club within Freemasonry) was established in 1843 almost immediately after Hong Kong became a colony: Zetland Lodge No. 525. Freemasonry has since expanded greatly in Hong Kong and has its own rather grand building called Zetland Hall, at no. 1 Kennedy Road, which houses many dozens of lodges from English, Irish and Scottish mother organisations. This is a rare phenomenon in Hong Kong, due to real estate constraints and prices: in other countries across the world the English, Scottish and Irish do not share premises. This building was built in 1949, after the original Zetland Hall – situated at the juncture of Ice House Street and Zetland Street - was almost completely destroyed by American bombings of Japanese-occupied Hong Kong in 1944.

The club tradition continues to thrive in Hong Kong, with numerous new social and business clubs being established every year. The handover hasn't changed this at all, and viewing the stock market swings since 1997, President Deng might have been even more accurate in stating that “Horses will still run, club members will still meet, and dancers will still dance”.



■ By Daniël de Blocq van Scheltinga
Managing Director at Polarwide Ltd
www.polarwide.com



28 June
YP Mingle



18 July
UBS Private Art Tour



26 July
European Business in China



7 September
Welcome Back Dinner Cruise



11 September
InterCham Luncheon Reception



13 September
Masterclass in Circular Economy



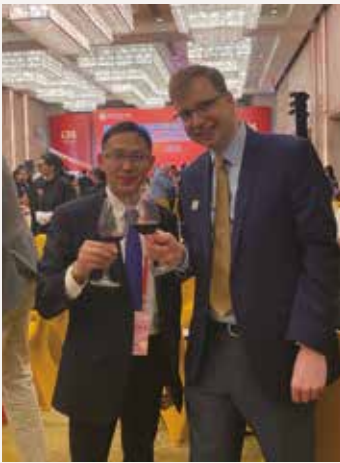
14-15 September
ReThink



19 September
Growing your Business in Asia through M&A



13 October
Dutch Sourcing & Trade Networking Drink



14 October
Canton Fair



20 October
Waste Management Tour



25 October
Mussel Party 2023



30 October
Property Markets in
Hong Kong and China



31 October
Rituals VIP Night



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PASSING THE PEN

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Who am I?

I was born in Guangzhou, China, and moved to Sydney, Australia at a young age. My favourite subject in school was maths, and I had studied a combined degree of commerce (specialising in accounting) and law at university. It was always my intention to go into accounting/auditing, so it surprised a number of people (myself included!) when I decided to become a lawyer. In my spare time, I love spending time with family and friends, travelling and practising yoga.

My professional background is:

I am a financial markets lawyer qualified to practise in Australia (New South Wales) and Hong Kong. I have over 10 years in post qualification experience. I started off primarily as a debt capital markets lawyer in private practice in an international law firm, before moving in-house to a US bank a few years back. Over the years, I have gained experience acting for different clients in a wide range of areas including loans, custody, escrow, derivatives, and structured products. My professional goal is to keep learning and developing as a lawyer, while continuing to do my job well.

I moved to Hong Kong because:

I wanted to see the world. From the time I first moved to Australia as a young child to university, I had rarely left Sydney. In my last year of university, I went on exchange to the Universiteit van Amsterdam for a year. That experience opened my eyes – it introduced me to people from places I had never even heard of up until that time, new ways of thinking and new cultures. I made friends in Amsterdam who I still keep in touch with – in fact, many of them attended my wedding a few years back. Why Hong Kong – I had done an internship here, and got a job offer. I initially only intended to stay a couple of years – but more than a decade later, I'm still here!

I work for:

Myself. I currently run my own legal consulting company, which I set up in May this year. Up till then, I've always had an employer, so it has been an interesting experience having to handle the day-to-day administration of company matters myself. Consulting allows me to work for different clients in different areas, and to make sure I am always learning something new.

My most remarkable work story is:

The people I meet and the things I learn from them. Each person I've worked with has taught me something new, whether it's what I want to do or who I want to be. I have met some of the smartest and kindest people through work. I even met my husband indirectly because of work – we were both studying Mandarin in Taiwan while we were in between jobs. I sometimes wonder where I would be now if I hadn't decided to accept that job offer when I did!

I find most of my business contacts through:

I am on the panel of an alternative legal service provider, which helps me source work and clients. I attend a lot of networking events, but that's mostly to chat and meet new people. The Dutch Chamber in particular has allowed me to meet people from a broad range of backgrounds and fields.

One day I will be:

Living my goal as a 70-year-old silver haired lady still fit and nimble enough to hike mountains and touch my toes. And hopefully still pleasant enough to be around that my family and friends will be willing to hike those mountains with me.



Welcome new Board Members:



Mr. Arend Oldenziel (Treasurer)

Mr. Arend Oldenziel: is an audit partner at KPMG looking after clients in the Financial Services sector. Arend has been an active member of the Chamber for many years and is looking forward to come back as Treasurer.

“ I am pleased to re-join the Board and look forward to work together to keep the Dutch Chamber in a healthy and sustainable financial position. ”



Mr. Quinten Kah (Chair China Committee)

Mr. Quinten Kah: is Commercial Director at Intertrust Group (a CSC Company) - the world's leading provider of business, legal, tax, and digital brand services with 4,000 employees who are dedicated to providing world-leading, specialised administration services focusing on bespoke corporate, fund, capital market and private wealth services in over 30 jurisdictions.

“ I am delighted to join the board and to continue to contribute to the members of the Dutch Chamber and Dutch business community via the events organised by the China Committee. ”



Mr. Harmen Overdijk (Chair Finance Committee)

Mr. Harmen Overdijk: is co-founder and global Chief Investment Officer for Leo Wealth, an international wealth management firm with offices throughout Asia and the US. Harmen has been active in the Dutch Chamber in previous years and is currently chairman of the Finance Committee.

“ I'm looking forward to joining the board to help the Dutch Chamber grow its member base and make sure the organisation remains a useful resource for the Dutch business community. ”

We are an independent, member-driven, non-governmental, non-profit business association which serves to facilitate business in Hong Kong and Greater China for its members by providing networking, knowledge sharing and company profiling opportunities.

As the representative body of Dutch business in Hong Kong, we maintain close relationships with both the Dutch and the Hong Kong SAR governments.

DutchCham Gold Members



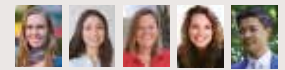
Membership & Annual fees

• Gold Member	HK\$ 20,000
• Corporate Member	HK\$ 8,500
• SME Member	HK\$ 3,500
• Associate Member	HK\$ 3,500
• Young Professional	HK\$ 750
• Start-up Member	HK\$ 1,750
• Overseas Member	HK\$ 2,500

Joining fee waived for 2023

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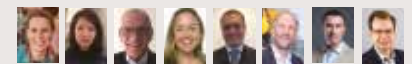
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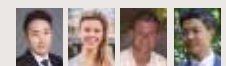
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