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New Art, Old Craft, 1875–1915

The Paris Exposition Universelle of 1900 offers a useful starting point for a view of Dutch design at the turn of the twentieth century.[1] The Dutch entry gives an idea of the products then considered interesting, representative and beautiful enough to be presented internationally. However, it is almost just as fascinating and revealing to consider what was not selected for this special occasion.[2] The organization of the entries was in the hands of a committee set up and funded by the Dutch government, comprising members of parliament, ex-ministers, a member of the Amsterdam Chamber of Commerce and the chairman of the Advisory Council of the Museum of Applied Arts, Haarlem, as well as the chairman of the venerable Pulchri Studio artists' society in The Hague.

The Netherlands was represented in Paris by no fewer than 559 exhibitors. While this may appear to be a large number, when set against a grand total of 83,071 participants this was in fact rather small. Despite this modest number, however, the Dutch economy was then flourishing. One should not forget that ever since the seventeenth century it had been based on trade. Around 1900 this state of affairs was even consolidated by the opening of the Dutch East Indies for exploitation by private enterprises and the growing coal and steel industries in Germany.

The 1900 Exposition Universelle was still organized along nineteenth-century lines in that every branch of industry in the widest sense of the word was represented. Thus exceptionally designed, artistically decorative and functional objects formed but a small part of the entry. Agriculture and livestock businesses were also represented with their products, even including a number of cattle and horses. Visitors in Paris could also study new developments in the shipping and fishing industries, get acquainted

H. P. Berlage, tile design based on Ernst Haeckel's *Kunstformen der Natur*, c. 1905.

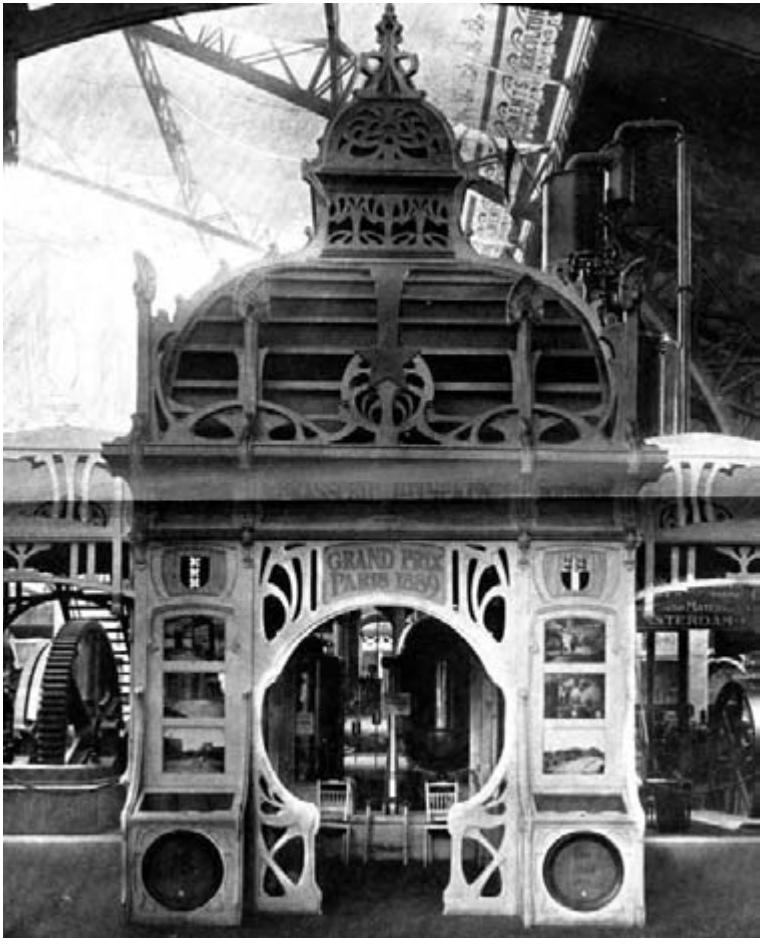
with the results of the new and flourishing chemical and mechanical industries, or view products by the then rapidly expanding Dutch food and drink manufacturers, including the attendant packaging industry. And, not least, they could sample the results of the Netherlands' famous genever (gin) distilleries and breweries.

Among more than five hundred participants, only a few dozen displayed products categorized as 'industrial art' or 'applied art' – products that because of their extra attention to design, artistic decoration, costly materials and skilled finish put them 'above' everyday functional objects. These were mainly to be found in the 'Decoration and Furnishings' department, a section of the Dutch entry selected by a subcommittee that included, among others, Adolf Le Comte, who had formerly taught at the Polytechnic School in Delft, and E. A. von Saher, director of the School of Applied Arts in Haarlem.

In this department nearly all the space was reserved for entries from the Dutch ceramic industry. In addition to a few smaller pottery manufacturers, De Porceleyne Fles from Delft and the Haagsche Plateelbakkerij Rozenburg proudly showed their large and varied collections of modern decorative pottery. The same department presented colourful carpets, stained-glass windows, furniture, decorative silver objects and various base-metal items.

The entire Dutch exhibit was housed in a series of individual pavilions designed by Karel Sluyterman, lecturer in decorative art and theory of ornament at the Polytechnic School, Delft, who was assisted in this by The Hague architect Joh. Mutters. Sluyterman chose an exuberant, contemporary version of International Art Nouveau – the so-called Congo style. This imaginative blend of Art Nouveau and Exoticism came into vogue following the Exposition Internationale in Tervuren, close to Brussels, in 1897, where the Belgian Congo pavilion had been executed in this arresting style. At the committee's request, Sluyterman's remarkable design, including decorative batik fabrics, striking colours and contemporary lettering, had attempted to create uniformity among the somewhat disparate Dutch departments. The result evidently met with the approval of the international jury, which presented him with highest possible award for his design at the end of the exhibition.[3]

None of the leading industrialized companies from the Netherlands producing decorative or functional objects was represented at the Paris Exposition Universelle. Both the Dutch organizers and potential entrants obviously felt that products should be handcrafted, or at least partly so, in order to fall into the 'industrial art' or 'applied arts' category. An artistic product had to be unique and not mass-produced in a large factory. For this reason neither of the two largest ceramic factories in the Netherlands, The



Karel Sluyterman, Heineken pavilion at the Exposition Universelle in Paris, 1900.

Sphinx (formally Regout) and Société Céramique, both in Maastricht, were present. At the time these two companies belonged to a handful of truly large industrial manufacturers in the Netherlands. With more than 3,000 employees, including many children, these firms, with the help of steam power, produced virtually anything to do with ceramics around the clock.[4]

The well-developed Dutch textile industries were also noticeable by their absence, including not only the wool factories and damask weaving mills in Brabant, but also the cotton textile factories in Twente, which were then among the country's largest industrial companies. Like the four leading calico printers in Haarlem, Leiden, Rotterdam and Helmond, they exported virtually all their production to the former Dutch East Indies.[5] Also absent from Paris were the equally large and important furniture

Jurriaan Kok (Haagsche Plateelfabriek Rozenburg), teapot and three vases, eggshell porcelain, *c.* 1900.

firms, such as Pander, Mutters and Eckhart, and the leading metalware firms, like Daalderop and DRU. All these manufacturers seem to have had little confidence in the commercial advantages to be gained in Paris and, despite the organization committee's urgings, they were not prepared to spend time and money on proper representation there.

Despite these omissions, a review in *L'Art décoratif* declared that 'Holland is presented at the Exhibition as one of the nations most active in pursuing a new style'.[6] Fifty years of official endeavours to take applied art to a higher level had reaped results. Thus the jury concluded with a certain satisfaction that, artistically speaking, the Netherlands could compete with the rest of Europe; even the President of France, who visited the Dutch exhibit on 30 May 1900, described it as a 'huge success'.[7]

Looking Back: Design in the Mid-Nineteenth Century

Half a century earlier at the Great Exhibition, the first international exhibition, held in Kensington, London, in 1851, it had been a different story. Time and again this exhibition has been seized upon to highlight the abominable quality of Dutch industry at the time.[8] It is indisputable that from the

J. M. van Kempen, Utrecht, silver goblet decorated with representations of medieval ancestors of the Orange and Nassau Houses, 1847, shown at the Great Exhibition, London, 1851.

eighteenth century the once flourishing industry, artisan skills and favourable trading position of the Netherlands markedly declined due to the ascendancy of Great Britain. The abolition of the guilds in 1798, followed by the division of the Low Countries and the establishment of Belgium in 1830, meant that little now remained of this industry. Well-to-do Dutch preferred to obtain artistic, well-made consumer goods from abroad. Luxury furniture from France, Belgium and Germany was considered more appealing than that of Dutch manufacture.

While it is true that industrialization and modernization occurred more slowly in the Netherlands than elsewhere in Europe, recent research shows that developments there had their own specific character.[9] It is inappropriate to link industrialization solely to the introduction of steam power, as is often the case. For a long time the hundreds of windmills all over the Netherlands, as well as the smaller gas engines, were simply much cheaper and more efficient for most of the small Dutch factories. This places a different light on the batik decorative friezes designed by Karel Sluyterman for the 1900 Paris Exposition Universelle: windmills, represented in a decorative Art Nouveau style, were a generally accepted feature of Dutch industry at the time and had not yet become a hackneyed traditional symbol. The small scale and versatility of Dutch industry also gave it a flexibility that ensured that modernization would ultimately make its way there too.

In retrospect, the Dutch entry for London in 1851 was not representative of the situation in the Netherlands. It was not the stagnant industry but rather the lack of interest by the Dutch government that was the chief reason for the sparse representation. Prime Minister Thorbecke had handed over responsibility for Dutch participation to private initiative, with the result that only 115 companies were prepared to send products to London at their own expense. Unlike other countries, the Netherlands still did not consider a good international display of its national industry to be a government matter.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, however, the artistic quality of Dutch decorative and functional objects became a cause for concern among the cultural elite. Triggered by subsequent international exhibitions in Paris (1855, 1867, 1889), a second in London (1862) and others in Vienna (1873) and Chicago (1893), a debate had begun about the languishing state of Dutch design.[10] In official reports and cultural magazines the reason for this was sought in the immense lack of feeling for art, be it among employers, workers or consumers. Moreover, it was customary to point out how this contrasted sharply with the Netherlands' glorious past, particularly the 'Golden Age' of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Thus, art and architectural history were brought to bear in an attempt to

raise national awareness in the field of industrial art. In so doing the critics hoped that the 'industrious and down-to-earth Dutchman' would finally emerge and be a match for the 'inventive Englishman', the 'refined Frenchman' and the 'practical American'. That way the greatness of former times could undoubtedly be recaptured.

For these reasons illustrious Old Dutch applied arts were proudly displayed at the first international industrial exhibition in the Netherlands in 1877.[11] The organizers, who by now included government representatives, were convinced that the display of such fine old examples would boost contemporary industry and stimulate Dutch manufacturers and consumers' sense of national pride. At this event, titled *Exhibition of Art Applied to Industry*, the design and artistic standard of the exhibited products were pivotal, rather than the technological advances so prominent in other industrial exhibitions.

The responsibility for this concept lay with the newly appointed arts official of the Arts and Science department at the Ministry of Home Affairs, Jonkheer Victor de Stuers. This first Dutch 'arts' official was driven by an ambition to awaken an interest for their own past among the Dutch. During the last quarter of the nineteenth century he was at the forefront when all aspects of Dutch culture were being determined, including museum policy, art education and the preservation of historic monuments and buildings. His power was such that he had the casting vote in awarding national architecture commissions like the one for the Rijksmuseum and the Central Station in Amsterdam, for which the Gothic Revival architect P.J.H. Cuypers was appointed.

The architect J. R. de Kruyff was actually the most important figure in organizing the exhibition. He also designed the presentation. In a brochure published prior to the exhibition, he defined the concept of industrial art as 'containing those products of human endeavour, in which the imagination is harmoniously reconciled with the guiding sense of beauty, which extends to the production of domestic objects which industry brings forth to satisfy the numerous requirements of everyday life'.[12] But there were few examples of mass production or everyday items; the exhibition was more about luxury household goods, hand-knotted carpets, lavishly carved furniture made from gleaming, expensive types of wood, heavily ornate mirror frames and silverwork. Exceptions to this were the modest exhibits from the ceramics factories of De Porceleyne Fles in Delft and Regout in Maastricht.

More important than the exhibition itself were the jury report and the other publications that appeared in its wake. One government-appointed committee, in which De Kruyff again played a central role, wrote a report

Cover of the magazine *Decoratieve Kunst en Volksvlijt*, 1875.

on Dutch industrial art in 1878.[13] It concluded that the situation was in general still 'depressing'. Fortunately, the critical committee members saw a few rays of hope. They considered the carpets of the Royal Carpet Factory in Deventer to be outstanding, while the furniture companies of H. P. Mutters and H. F. Jansen were praised for the diversity of genre styles. Yet the entries from the two ceramic factories were judged far below standard, with severe criticism of the decoration applied mechanically to the Maastricht wares. The 'depressing' results were then seized upon by De Stuers and other interested parties to implement several reforms in the Netherlands. A Museum of Applied Arts was founded in Haarlem and serious plans developed for new courses to be established.[14] Much use was also made of knowledge and experience from abroad.

Foreign theoretical treatises were also useful for a small group of Dutch specialists. In particular, Gottfried Semper's views, as expressed in such publications as *Der Stil in den technischen und tektonische Künsten* (1860–63), were initially critical in forming opinions in the Netherlands. After a visit to the International Exhibition held in London in 1862, the secretary of the Netherlands Society for the Trade and Industry, F. W. van Eeden, for instance, wrote a series of articles that prominently featured his knowledge of Semper's published works.[15] A decade later Van Eeden became the first director of the Museum of Applied Arts in Haarlem. Semper's conviction that the style – or design – of a product should be derived from its function, its material and the technique by which it was made had already become common knowledge by the 1870s.

Following writers like Owen Jones, Ralph Wornum, Richard Redgrave and A. W. Pugin, the study of historic styles became essential in the Netherlands. In 1884 Carel Vosmaer's translation of Lewis Foreman Day's *Everyday Art* (1882) appeared as *De Kunst in het Daaglijksch Leven*. Towards the end of the nineteenth century the Netherlands became acquainted with the more socially engaged design ideas of John Ruskin and William Morris. The major consequence of this was a steadily increasing appreciation of craftsmanship and a better understanding of the position of the industrial artist in society. The publications of the French architectural

theorist Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc, which became known in the Netherlands chiefly through the architect P.J.H. Cuypers,[16] were to have just as big an impact as those by Semper and the English writers. As a result the Netherlands became familiar with new Gothic-based ideas about architecture and design. French, German and Austrian periodicals as well as sample portfolios were constantly scrutinized in the Netherlands during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The first Dutch magazine on design was a version of the German monthly *Gewerbehalle* and first appeared in 1870 as *Kunst en Industrie* (Art and Industry). The first original Dutch periodical was the decorative art magazine *Tijdschrift voor Decoratieve Kunst en Volksvlijt* in 1875. Unfortunately, this spirited initiative from C.A.J. Geesink, the owner of an Amsterdam printing firm, who also made plans for a Netherlands Art and Industry Museum, folded after only two years.

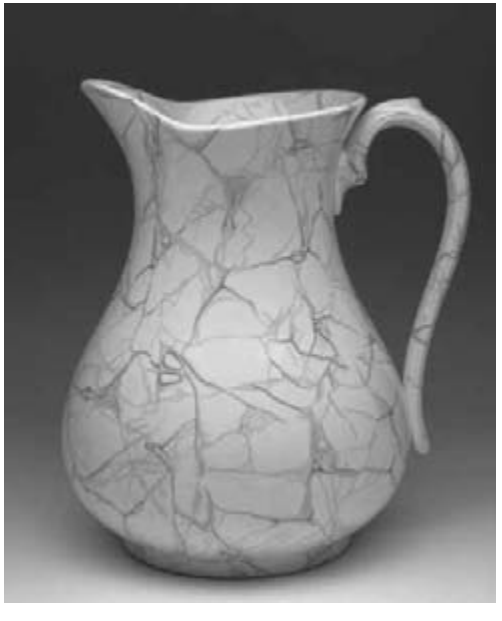
Early Design Education

During the late nineteenth century the Netherlands was particularly interested in how the newly reformed education in art and design was organized abroad.[17] At first it seemed that education reform in the Netherlands was on a par with the growth of industrial production. Steady increase in mechanization, scale and division of labour had led, for instance, to the founding of the first technical school in Amsterdam in 1871. Now that it was increasingly evident that future workers could not be trained as well on the factory floor, special vocational courses had to be set up. Pupils ranging in age from twelve to sixteen were then taught, among other things, how to become carpenters, blacksmiths and painters. The second Dutch technical school to open its doors was in The Hague.

When the government committee on industrial art, under the influence of Victor de Stuers, argued in its 1878 report for improvements in education, the director of The Hague technical school, H. L. Boersma, wrote a lengthy reply in which he warned against the slavish adherence to traditional applied arts emphatically advised by the committee. Each era had its own characteristics and its own applied arts: by failing to recognize this, he felt the committee did not do justice to the requirements of industry. Boersma was also against the distinction the committee made between industrial designers and artistic crafts people, and the priority it wished to give to the former group. The director argued that Dutch industry was on such a small scale compared to neighbouring nations that the artistic development of crafts people should take first place.[18]

The first 'School of Design for Applied Arts' was founded in Haarlem in 1879 on the initiative of the Netherlands Society for Trade and Industry as a logical extension to the town's Museum of Applied Arts, which the Society had opened two years previously. Its first director was the architect Eduard A. von Saher, who had trained at the Polytechnikum, Zürich, and had been taught by Gottfried Semper. The combination of a school and museum was already to be found in various foreign museums, the earliest and most notable example being the South Kensington School and Museum in London. In 1881 a National School of Applied Arts was incorporated into the Amsterdam Rijksmuseum, where, alongside drawing, emphasis was placed on theoretical training. Here an influential teacher was Pierre Cuypers, who had initiated another type of training a few years earlier. During the building of the Rijksmuseum he had noticed that skilled stonemasons and woodworkers were few and far between, so in 1879 he set up a new training school for the purpose. This on-site building shed or workshop later became the Quellinus School of Applied Arts. Here the refining of practical traditional skills rather than drawing and theory was the main concern in the early years.

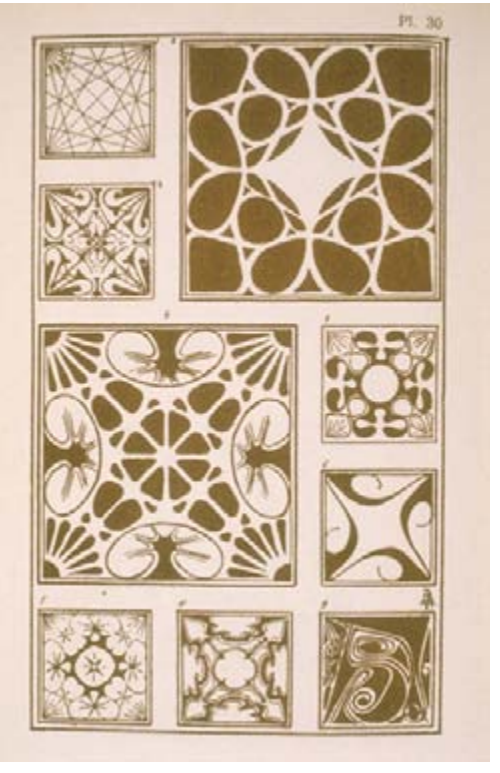
The objective of this and various other new schools of applied art inspired constant debate for the rest of the century, which led to the curricula often being modified and adapted. Since the prime intention, with the exception of the Quellinus School, was to train future designers for industrial design, the new schools were chiefly schools of technical drawing. For so many days a week pupils were supposed to work in a workshop or factory and then receive additional 'theoretical' instruction at school. Since the 'art' component, in the context of industrial 'art' and applied 'art', was virtually synonymous with ornament, teaching mainly covered the history of ornamentation and the technical drawing of well-conceived decoration.[19] Much attention was devoted to studying historic styles, including those from the East. The underlying principle of acquiring such knowledge was not to copy styles, but rather to establish a way of achieving well-founded new designs: 'Study the Old so that you will remember it and gain strength to begin afresh', as Cuypers wrote in fine Gothic lettering on the walls of the Rijksmuseum. Moreover, armed with



Petrus Regout & Co., Maastricht, jug with imitation marble, *c.* 1860.

this improved knowledge about styles, the designers would be less likely to give in to the commercial malpractices of many manufacturers. Jacob de Kruyff, who became the director of the National School of Applied Arts, railed against the 'terror' of commerce and the various fads found in the industry of his time. Particularly objectionable, in his view, was the trend to imitate expensive materials in a cheap ersatz manner, like painting cheap wood to make it resemble costly marble or much rarer types of timber. He also roundly condemned as a 'fad' the popular use of naturalistic plants and animals as decorative elements.

Indeed, stylization of flowers and plants was central to ornamentation training. Pupils were taught how to make nature more abstract and reduce it to simple, repetitive, decorative motifs. Towards the end of the century, however, geometric or systematic design began to permeate Dutch applied arts education. While patterns of straight lines or triangles had in fact almost always underpinned decorative design, the ideas about this, under the influence of the growing popularity of Theosophy, gained an entirely new relevance in the Netherlands.[20] According to Theosophy, mathematics and the laws of measurement and numbers had a divine meaning, while an almost mythical significance was ascribed in particular to the Egyptian isosceles triangle.



A page from J. H. de Groot, *Driehoeken bij Ontwerpen van Ornament* ('The Use of Triangles in the Design of Ornament'), 1896.

The architects Karel de Bazel and Mathieu Lauweriks, both of whom had trained with Cuypers, joined the Theosophical Association in 1894. They were so fervent about their discoveries that they even set up a special artists' section intended to serve as a 'temple' for studying and spreading the message of these 'revelations'. In this Vâhâna lodge classes in design were started in 1897. Every Friday night a few dozen pupils would gather for this purpose in a room at the old Hotel American in Amsterdam. By 1904 some two hundred artisans had followed the Vâhâna lodge's course in systematic design. In their turn, the artists trained there then taught in applied arts education. Consequently, the principles of designing according to geometric systems were widely disseminated in those years. The architect J. H. de Groot and his sister, the needlework artist J. M. de Groot, even put together

Metal workshop of Frans Zwollo, Sr, at the Haarlem School of Decorative Arts, *c.* 1905.

in 1896 a small practical manual entitled *Driehoeken bij Ontwerpen van Ornament* (The Use of Triangles in the Design of Ornament), in which the new method was explained with the help of examples. This manual also showed that systematic design could be explained in a much less vague and esoteric manner. Using a triangle, a compass and a ruler, anyone could learn to draw the most varied new decorations.

Around 1900 applied art schools mainly combined the stylization of nature with design based on geometric systems. This led to the flat two-dimensional decoration considered characteristic of Dutch decorative art of the period. The finest and most typical examples of this are the batiks and damask designs of Chris Lebeau and the ceramic decoration of Chris van der Hoef and Bert Nienhuis.[21] The most spectacular results of combining nature and geometry in decorative art were achieved by the architect H. P. Berlage. Around 1900 he transformed illustrations of micro-organisms from Ernst Haeckel's book *Kunstformen der Natur* (Art Forms in Nature) into marvellous, almost purely geometric decorative designs for tiles, stained-glass windows, plates, wallpaper and even three-dimensional objects like lamps.

Meanwhile, decorative design lessons at the applied arts schools were no longer aimed only at future designers or draughtsmen in industry. More to the point, it was becoming apparent that this type of designing was becoming an objective in itself. An increasing number of pupils who were not already working and practising a traditional skill were enrolling at the schools. As a result, a few critics warned that future designers should be better aware of the purpose for which they were making the decorations. The architect Jan de Meijer complained about the 'dry affair' that killed the personality of the artists, and his colleague Willem Retera feared that this theoretical work would restrain their fantasy.[22] The term *sierkunstenaar* ('decorative artist'), initially slightly demeaning, now became a fashionable description of those artists who specialized in designing ornament, but who no longer possessed the skills to make the products themselves. Such a lack of practical skills was now seen as a shortcoming.

Subsequently, the schools of applied arts – besides the one in Amsterdam, a school was founded in 's-Hertogenbosch (1882), while new applied arts departments in existing art academies were opened in Utrecht (1886), The Hague (1889), Rotterdam (1902) and Groningen (1903) – introduced classes in a number of straightforward skills. Around 1900 it was

possible to learn lithography, woodcarving and batik work, crafts in which it was possible to incorporate decoration without too many technical aids. A further step was later taken when workshops for making ceramics, metal objects and furniture were added. The precious metals worker Frans Zwollo was one of the most confirmed believers in this 'workshop' concept in applied arts schools.[23] About ten years later the potter Bert Nienhuis also became an influential proponent of this practical form of education.

While industrialization continued apace, design education paradoxically focused increasingly on the artistic and skills side of manufacturing. Around 1900 the 'artist-craftsman' emerged – a pattern designer, artist and craftsman all in one. So while the schools of applied arts had been founded in the nineteenth century to raise the standards of industrial products and had given an initial spurt to the evolution of the later industrial designer, this process changed course again in what can best be described as a conservative direction. For the time being the schools did not train industrial designers but produced textile artists, creative metalworkers and potters.

Paris 1900

If we now return to the Exposition Universelle in Paris and focus in greater detail on what was to be seen there, it is evident that many Dutch decorative products were the logical result of the developments outlined above. De Porceleyne Fles, the only ceramic factory in Delft in the eighteenth century to survive fierce competition from Britain, had patently taken to heart the advice of such as Victor de Stuers and De Kruyff.[24] From 1877 the company had successfully concentrated again on producing traditional blue and white tin-glaze pottery, for which Delft had become so famous two centuries earlier. At the same time the firm was experimenting with new glazes and firing processes, as well as more contemporary designs.

Partly as a result of the successful initiative in Delft, the Haagsche Plateelfabriek Rozenburg was founded.[25] The decision to take on the architect Theodoor Colenbrander as a designer of new forms and decoration turned out to be an inspired move. This idiosyncratic artist quickly helped Rozenburg to establish a reputation by designing a number of original and exciting decors and models. This groundbreaking work later earned Colenbrander the unofficial title 'Doyen of Dutch applied art', awarded to him in 1923 by H. E. van Gelder, director of the Gemeentemuseum in The Hague.[26] At Paris in 1900 the director of Rozenburg, Jurriaan Kok, was again able to present something with novelty value – a new paper-thin type of

T.A.C. Colenbrander (Haagsche Plateelfabriek Rozenburg), *Constantinopel* wall plate, 1886.

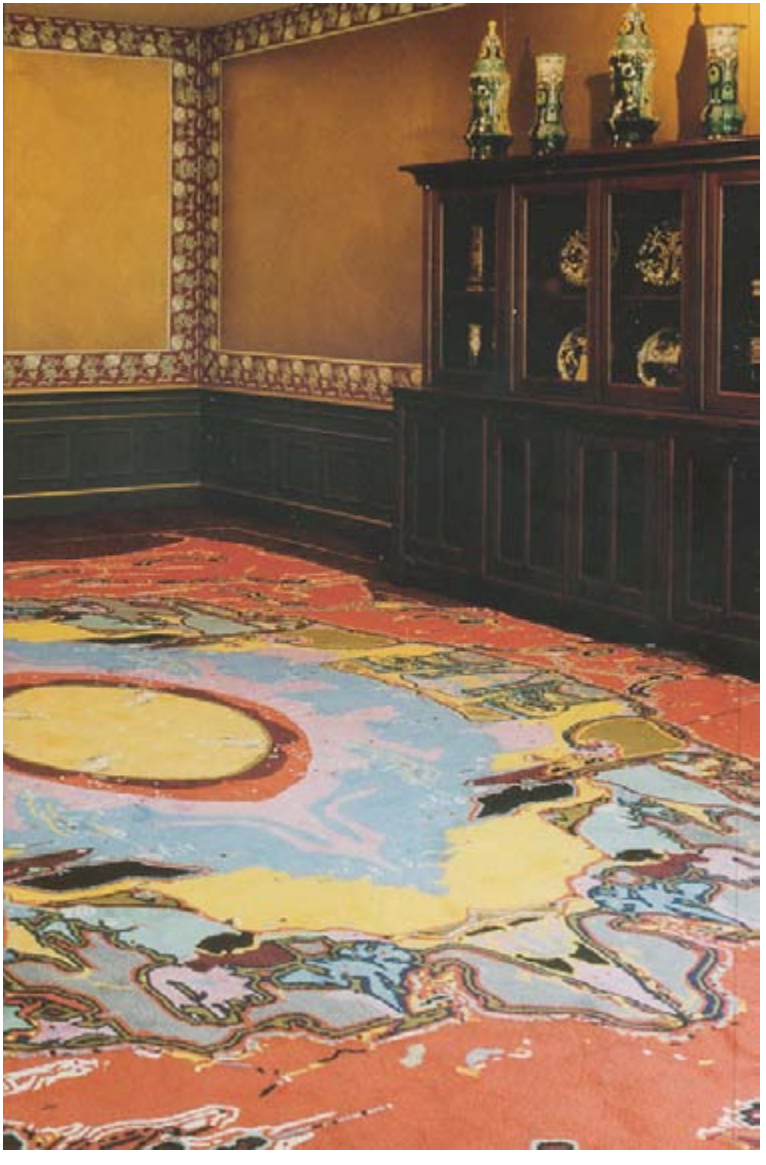
semi-porcelain called 'eggshell'. Partly based on Kok's own designs, Rozenburg had cast a major collection of new ware from this exquisite material, which was decorated with extremely refined, colourful, Japanese-inspired depictions of plants and birds. This new product was an overwhelming international and commercial success in Paris. After the young Queen Wilhelmina honoured the firm with the privilege to use the title 'Royal', Jurriaan Kok showed his gratitude by creating a specially decorated eggshell porcelain tea service for the wedding of Wilhelmina and Hendrik van Mecklenburg on 7 January 1901.[27] De Porceleyne Fles and Rozenburg's winning formula stimulated the founding of various new Delftware factories between 1890 and 1900, five of which submitted work to Paris. The influence of decorative design classes and the stylization of nature were clearly evident in the modern designs of this new Dutch pottery.[28] There were also products to be seen in Paris from a handful of earthenware factories in Friesland, where most of the traditionally designed, everyday kitchen and tableware in the country was still made. Around 1900 these companies were still just about able to ward off competition from British mass production.[29]

Decorative pottery: large vase decorated by C. J. Lanooij, 1907, from Wed. N.S.A. Brantjes Co. firm, Purmerend; and five smaller vases, 1900–05, from Plateelfabriek Zuid-Holland, Gouda.

The Royal Carpet Factory from Deventer regularly participated in international exhibitions.[30] Since the first half of the nineteenth century the firm had produced, as well as simple cow-hair rugs, luxury, hand-knotted Smyrna carpets with patterns inspired by Near Eastern carpets. Artistically, the patterns were very much in keeping with the increasing focus on colourful, exotic decoration, especially on textiles. In Paris the Deventer factory presented not only these popular designs, but also one or two new ones by Theodoor Colenbrande. Since about 1895 he had been creating patterns for hand-knotted carpets that, as with his pottery, resulted in something completely new. His colourful expressive designs had more or less the same structure as Near Eastern ones, yet at the same time were totally innovative in their free style. They rapidly caught on among the Dutch cultural elite: Willem Hendrik Mesdag, the influential and wealthy marine painter and collector of oriental art, furnished his grand home in The Hague with Colenbrander's carpets and started to collect his Rozenburg ceramics as well. Still more or less in its original state, this is now called the Museum Mesdag and is open to the public.

Interest in oriental textiles was also apparent in a growing fascination for the Javanese batik technique. This had become increasingly familiar in the late nineteenth century partly due to the strengthening of relations with the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia). Dutch calico print-works were even

T.A.C. Colenbrander (Royal United Carpet Factory, Deventer), carpet in the Museum Mesdag, The Hague; remake of a design from 1893.



able to imitate the time-consuming traditional process by mechanical means and could thus compete with native batik makers. Artists such as Gerrit Dijsselhof, Carel Lion Cachet and Johan Thorn Prikker began to experiment with the technique after admiring the batiks in the Museum of Applied Arts in Haarlem and the Ethnographical Museum in Amsterdam.[31] This was limited to small-scale projects, apart from Thorn Prikker's designs made on a

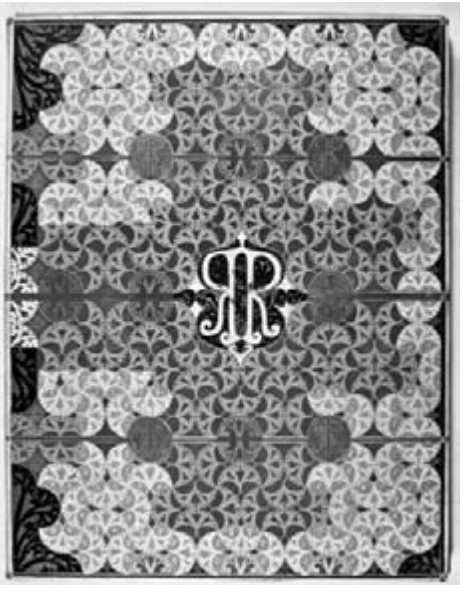
Women producing designs by Johan Thorn Prikker in the Arts and Crafts batik studio, Apeldoorn, *c.* 1901.

Interior of the firm Arts and Crafts in The Hague, 1898.

larger scale in the Apeldoorn-based batik workshops of Arts and Crafts in The Hague.[32] Examples of the company's batik fabrics were shown in Paris, while Sluyterman's decorative friezes adorning the exhibition (see above) had also been created in its workshops.

In 1900 Arts and Crafts was still the only firm of its type. It had been started two years earlier as the first workshop and gallery outlet for art and modern applied arts in the Netherlands. The gallery had been modelled along the lines of the Paris gallery Salon de l'Art Nouveau, run by Siegfried Bing, even though its name suggests a link with the English design movement. The painter and designer Johan Thorn Prikker was the leading artist for Arts and Crafts, but work by Jan Altorf and Theodoor Colenbrander, and by foreign artists like Henry van de Velde and George Minne, was sold there as well. The products of these two Belgian artists instantly provoked fierce criticism at the gallery opening in August 1898, while Thorn Prikker's batiks and furniture, clearly inspired by what the Belgians were doing, also came under fire from certain reviewers. Berlage, for instance, wrote in *De Kroniek*, a month after the official opening of Arts and Crafts, that Prikker made 'a step from the sublime to the ridiculous' with his arbitrary furniture designs constructed from all sorts of 'pieces of wood' and the 'most distasteful combinations of lines' and 'impossible forms'.

What Berlage himself stood for was shown in Paris by the Amsterdam-based company J. B. Hillen.[33] This was a medium-sized firm industrially producing furniture. In Paris, however, Hillen presented a unique and robust wall unit in oak, eight metres long, designed by Berlage and decorated in flat relief carving by A. C. Oosschot. Furniture was supplied in Paris by two other companies: the studio of Van Wisselingh in Amsterdam, with unique and extremely luxurious, handcrafted objects designed by the artists



Johan Thorn Prikker (Workshop of Chris Wegerif, Apeldoorn), oak bench, 1898.

C. A. Lion Cachet (Scheltema & Holkema Amsterdam), Rembrandt portfolio, batik on linen and parchment, 1899.

Carel Lion Cachet, Theo Nieuwenhuis and Gerrit Dijsselhof, and the workshop of Pierre Cuypers in Roermond.

To complete this survey of the Dutch offerings in Paris, objects in precious metals chiefly came from the silver firms of Van Kempen and Sons in Voorschoten and Begeer and Brom in Utrecht. Van Kempen was the oldest and largest silver manufacturer in the Netherlands and had an imposing artistic and artisan tradition.[34] The firm had been one of the few Dutch participants at the Great Exhibition in London in 1851. Around 1900, this company, alongside its traditional designs in historic styles, made products

A. F. Gips (C. J. Begeer silver factory, Utrecht), silver coffee and tea service, 1900.

in the then modern, floral international Art Nouveau style. Among the items shown in Paris by C. J. Begeer, participating for the first time at an international exhibition, was a coffee and a tea service in a similar style designed by the architect A. F. Gips. Several smaller silversmith companies were also represented. The firm of Hoeker & Zoon, for example, displayed exceptional designs by the metalworker and craftsman Jan Eisenloeffel, who made strikingly simple tea services clearly influenced by Japanese applied art.[35] Frans Zwollo showed pitchers, vases and dishes in silver and copper.

Decorative Art in Turin, 1902

The trend for artistic handcrafted products was evident throughout Europe. Two years after Paris, Turin organized a major international exhibition devoted to this 'modern decorative art form'. International competition in this field was immense and the Netherlands decided that 'typically Dutch' should be the starting point for their entry. The nation had shown in Paris that it had great capacity 'on this new territory', but in Turin it could demonstrate that 'decent work of sober conception and good taste would in the end be more valuable and enjoy a better reputation then the more pompous and capricious work of our neighbours' – such, according to the organizing committee, were also the opinions one could read in magazines.[36]

The experienced Karel Sluyterman again designed the Netherlands stand, but this time, at the express request of the other committee members, it was in a completely different style. Now the design had to be plain and

C. J. van der Hoef (Pottery Amstelhoek, Amsterdam), small bowl (1902), vase (1906) and saucer (1900–03).

M. Duco Crop (P. Fentener van Vlissingen & Co. Helmond), hand-printed cotton, *c.* 1896; photo from *Bouw-en Sierkunst*, 1901.

restrained, in keeping with the new image with which the Netherlands hoped to distinguish itself from all the anticipated excess of the other nations' pavilions. The truth is, however, that at the heart of this request there also lay an extremely tight budget. With the help of an exhibition stand made of wooden slats and canvas, an attempt was made to make a virtue out of financial necessity.

Despite the completely different objectives and approach, there were still striking parallels with the Paris exhibition. Most space in Turin was

again reserved for the Rozenburg and De Porceleyne Fles ceramics. In view of the character of the exhibition, it comes as no surprise that the Maastricht factories were still unrepresented. Rozenburg once more pulled out all the stops with its eggshell porcelain, much sought after internationally. Whether this work fell within the organizers' objectives is a different matter, since just how 'plain and simple' were these refined decorative objects? Nonetheless, Rozenburg was one of the few manufacturers to do good business in Turin. Amstelhoek, however, a small pottery with its simple vases and cups by Chris van der Hoef and Lambert Zijl, did not go unnoticed, while work by the potter W. C. Brouwer also sold rather well.

The Netherlands' two largest silver manufacturers again participated, although it was obvious that Begeer had not taken the aim to exhibit 'honest' and 'simple' design too seriously. As well as two new, decorative Art Nouveau vases, the Utrecht company again displayed the successful floral decorated service by Gips. The metal workshop of Hoeker & Son submitted work by Jan Eisenloeffel once more, while the traditional working silversmith Frans Zwollo again participated with richly chased, silver decorative objects. Drawn towards Theosophy, Zwollo was now designing according to geometric systems. Additionally inspired by Japan, this led to a highly personal design idiom. The Delft firm of Braat was present with objects of base metal, while H. P. Berlage submitted a brass clock made by Becht and Dijserinck of Amsterdam.

Again, as in Paris, the textile industry was poorly represented, although considering the specific character of the Turin exhibition this is not so surprising. One notable entry in this context, however, was by the Helmond textile printers P. Fentener Van Vlissingen.[37] This firm showed modern cretonnes by the artist Michel Duco Crop, inspired by English Arts and Crafts fabrics. In 1894 when Crop made his first design, Veth had translated into Dutch Walter Crane's *Claims of Decorative Arts*, in which the mechanized printing of cotton was lauded as an inevitable modern development. Thus the Duco Crop-designed curtain fabrics for Van Vlissingen are probably the earliest examples of a fundamental and deliberate collaboration between artist and manufacturer in the Netherlands.

Four furniture companies were each invited to design a complete room for Turin: these were J. B. Hillen, which once again displayed H. P. Berlage's robust designs; Arts and Crafts from The Hague, also present in Paris; plus two recently founded companies, 't Binnenhuis from Amsterdam and Onder de Sint Maarten from Zaltbommel. The new firm of 't Binnenhuis, founded by Berlage in 1900 as a 'cooperative for the sale and design of furniture and other applied arts', was intended as a downright provocation

H. P. Berlage ('t Binnenhuis, Amsterdam), cherry-wood chair with moquette upholstery, *c.* 1900.

Jan Eisenloeffel (Amstelhoek, Amsterdam), copper enamelled tea service, 1900.

to Arts and Crafts.[38] As we have seen, Berlage was among those who had levelled unusually harsh and hostile comments at the Hague gallery. Not only did he loathe the 'affectation' of the products on sale but he also condemned the firm's international and purely commercial basis. In total contrast, 't Binnenhuis was to propagate in a non-commercial way the supposedly 'healthy rational' Dutch principles and thus challenge the 'falseness' of the un-Dutch products of Arts and Crafts.

In setting up his own retail outlet, Berlage had gained the backing of the Amsterdam jeweller W. Hoeker, the book dealer H. Gerlings and the Hague financier Carel Henny. Through their new company furniture by Berlage, as well as by such designers as Willem Penaat and Jac. van den Bosch, could be purchased or made to order. Berlage made it known he wanted to design everyday furniture for 't Binnenhuis, products that were affordable for ordinary people. His furniture makers were allowed to use only straight pieces of native Dutch oak and Berlage asked them to leave the joints clearly visible, even occasionally giving them decorative accents. Other decoration was applied sparsely in shallow relief or with contrasting wood inlay in the flat parts of the objects. Berlage believed fittings had to be sturdy and clearly emphasize their specific function. He looked to early seventeenth-century, Old Dutch (*oud-Hollands*) furniture design as his chief source of

inspiration. Honesty of materials, simplicity and 'rationality' were no doubt the most important starting-points of the Golden Age.

The vases, pots and dishes by Van der Hoef sold by 't Binnenhuis were traditionally made at Amstelhoek from native types of clay. They were decorated with simple, flat, inlaid clay motifs in a contrasting colour or with traditional *ringeloor* or slip decoration. Jan Eisenloeffel's silver and copper services were created from plain, geometric shapes firmly secured to each other with rivets. The finished result was then decorated with unfussy lines, simple openwork patterns or with inlaid decorative motifs in enamel. Frans Zwollo's metal objects were traditionally embossed and chiselled with stylized natural motifs.

Within a few months it was already clear that these designs, mainly traditionally handcrafted to lofty principles, were in practice far too expensive for a wider public. Moreover, the cooperative principles on which 't Binnenhuis was based had proved unworkable. Most of the firm's affiliated artists turned away from Berlage, blaming him for putting his own commercial interests above those of the company. In fact, during the Turin exhibition, apart from Berlage himself, only the furniture designer Jac. van den Bosch was still officially attached to the company.[39]

Since the Paris exhibition much had also changed at Arts and Crafts. The designer Johan Thorn Prikker had left and in Turin the gallery displayed a striking interior by Chris Wegerif, who originally was responsible only for financing the company. This self-taught designer had combined elements of

C. Wegerif, hall at the International Exhibition of Decorative Arts in Turin, 1902.

Jan Toorop, poster advertising *Delft Salad Oil*, 1895.

modern English and Austrian furniture design in a delightful and eclectic manner. These costly, very un-Dutch designs were decorated with linear motifs of contrasting and expensive inlaid woods. Wegerif completely ignored the dogmatic Amsterdam designers who feared commercialism – besides, the foreign press was quite taken with his designs.

The fourth complete interior was submitted by Onder de Sint Maarten, a workshop and selling outlet in Zaltbommel, set up just the previous year, that sold furniture and copper work in a style clearly inspired by Berlage and his Binnenhuis.[40] Remarkably, the simple furniture designs were by Karel Sluyterman, a designer who had recently forsaken his earlier, effusive Art Nouveau style.

Van Wisselingh did not have a complete interior but submitted individual furniture designs. Gerrit Dijsselhof was represented by, among others, a dividing screen that was prized by the reviewer of *The Studio* as one of the most noteworthy of the Dutch exhibits: 'the grand polyptych, with several panels . . . on which are represented various animals, such as roe deer, peacocks, cranes, storks, fish etc, admirably drawn by Mr Dysselhoff, printed by the Batik process, and finished off with remarkably clever silk embroideries by Mme Dysselhoff'.[41] Carel Lion Cachet had a very expensive chair and tea-table inlaid with ivory and ebony, with the seat and back of the chair covered in costly batik parchment. Karel de Bazel showed some individual items of furniture that had been designed for 't Binnenhuis. It is likely that the conflict over policy at 't Binnenhuis had led to De Bazel not showing his designs in Turin under that firm's name.

As well as entries from companies, much work by individual artists could be seen in Turin. Committee member Philip Zilcken had made sure that entries were also received from graphic designers. Thus Theo van Hoytema's exquisite lithographs for the children's book *Uilengeluk* (Owls' Fortune) could be admired, as well as a lithographed calendar by Theo Nieuwenhuis, posters by Jan Toorop and book covers by Johan Thorn Prikker, Antoon Derkinderen and Chris Lebeau. The last submitted a beautiful batik velvet copy of the novel *De Stille Kracht* (The Hidden Force) by

Louis Couperus. One of Toorop's posters submitted was an advertisement for the Calvé Oil Factory, Delft, executed in delicate colours in a curvilinear style and featuring two women with long hair and elaborate garments pouring oil into a large bowl of salad. After this poster appeared in 1895, Art Nouveau in the Netherlands was often mockingly dubbed 'the salad-oil style' and the entry itself is not exactly an example of the organizers' declared desire for 'honest' Dutch design.

Many of the artists participating in Turin had begun their careers as painters. Thorn Prikker and Toorop, for instance, turned to the decorative arts only during the 1890s. This was more than simply a shift in artistic direction: the artists had undergone a development that had consciously led them to want to use their artistic talent for the benefit of the community.[42] In this they had been inspired by the romantic ideals of the Gothic Revival and the social ideas of the English reformist movement. Specifically, they had come into contact with the social and political ideals of John Ruskin and William Morris via Henry van de Velde and other Belgian artists.

Gerrit Dijsselhof had taken a similar route. After some years at the Academy of Fine Art, The Hague, he enrolled in 1884 as a pupil at the Amsterdam Rijksnormaalschool, which, like the National School of Applied Arts, was located in the Rijksmuseum. Here he trained as an art instructor. It was quickly apparent that the decorative arts appealed more to Dijsselhof. The classes of Pierre Cuypers and Jacob de Kruyff inspired him to study medieval and Eastern art and ornament, and the romantic image of the Middle Ages he then acquired formed the basis for his high ideals regarding the artist's duty to society. This had been an era when artists and artisans still worked with great conviction on major joint projects, peacefully and in an environment untainted by commercialism. Thus, Dijsselhof saw his exciting watercolours of fish, with which he made his debut in 1891, more as decorative applications for a wall than as autonomous art works. Three years later, in 1894, Dijsselhof devised the illustrations and the exceptional cover for Veth's translation of Walter Crane's *Claims of Decorative Arts*. Shortly after its publication, Dijsselhof was commissioned to decorate a room in a doctor's house in Amsterdam. For this he produced batik and embroidered wall panels depicting stylized birds and deer, wood panelling and doors with highly original flat-relief carving, as well as the room's furniture. After various diversions and modifications, this unique interior was finally installed as the 'Dijsselhof Room' at the Gemeentemuseum in The Hague in 1935. It is the earliest Dutch example of an interior in the 'modern' style in which all the components are in keeping with one another.

G. T. Dijsselhof, chimney piece with large water-colour, five cut and painted wooden panels and mirror, 1892.

Admired by many of his contemporaries as much for his immense literary and historic knowledge as for his serious and idealist attitude, Dijsselhof was responsible for a shift in thought among several fellow artists. His decision to make completely handcrafted products as a matter of principle also changed their manner of working. They too were now convinced that their products should not only be available for a rich elite. Everyone should be able to experience the 'purifying' influence of the 'art of everyday life'. Simple domestic objects did not really have to be decorated with expensive ornament. The artistic aspect and the – just as important – personality of the artist were also recognizable in the simple painted motifs of a vase, in the ordinary carved ornament of a wooden cupboard and even in the hammered surface of a copper dish. Thus, mass-produced industrial products, which had none of these attributes, were loathed by them as being cold, impersonal and 'art-less' objects.

Break or Continuity: Berlage and the Forming of an Image

Was the Dutch entry in Turin successful? Did it conform to what the organizers wanted and did the new Dutch image come across sufficiently? The reviewer of the Dutch section in *The Studio* (see above) observed that the Dutch were more hostile to the naturalistic decorations than any other people and stated: 'With very view exceptions, a pronounced tendency will everywhere be found for geometrical forms, combined with certain decorative elements culled from the barbaric art of the savage races of the remote East.'[43] The Netherlands press itself was very happy overall. In a detailed account of the exhibition in the monthly current affairs magazine *Elsevier's Maandschrift*, one critic wrote: 'when the department was finished it was exactly as it should have been, plain and understated. No screaming nonsense with shrill colours and whimsical lines, but unpretentious and uncompromising, with warm tones in calm rooms.'[44] In the foreign press, however, there was little mention of this particular Dutch quality – instead, the more opulent art objects were admired. The sales accounts showed that foreign visitors were just as interested in Rozenburg eggshell porcelain and Chris Wegerif's designs for Arts and Crafts as in Berlage's plain and robust furniture, Amstelhoek's and Willem Brouwer's 'archaic' pottery or Jan Eisenloeffel's simple tea and coffee services.

Long after the Turin exhibition, the Netherlands continued to cherish the image of a successful reversal in the applied arts in favour of a more simple and restrained Dutch New Art (*Nieuwe Kunst*). What is more, this

has been carried over into design literature to this very day. This is probably related to an all too easy and barely critical analysis of the contemporary debate about design of that era. Only recently have people begun to realize how art historians have largely allowed themselves to be led by the prejudicial way in which Dutch critics discussed *Nieuwe Kunst* at the time. It is now becoming evident just how much the image forming during this period was manipulated by its major theorist and spokesperson, H. P. Berlage. Just how 'new' the supposed *Nieuwe Kunst* was is also open to debate. Is it not more appropriate to describe this movement, with its nostalgia for old crafts and medieval ideals, as 'old' or at least 'old fashioned'?

H. P. Berlage was trained according to the classic principles of Gottfried Semper.[45] He was even one of the few Dutch students to attend the Polytechnikum in Zürich (from 1875 to 1878), where Semper himself taught until just before Berlage's arrival. Consequently, his earliest designs in the 1880s are distinguished by an abundance of Renaissance motifs. In the 1890s Berlage's views and style evolved slowly, partly under the impact of Pierre Cuypers and the writings of Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc, and later the ideas of the English Arts and Crafts artists. Thus the designer became increasingly convinced of the importance of the constructive principles of Gothic architecture and furniture from the Dutch Golden Age.

H. P. Berlage, boudoir of the Villa Henny, The Hague, *c.* 1900.

From 1898 it was possible to see the concrete result of Berlage's desire for greater simplicity in design, linked to his growing abhorrence of 'useless' detailing, rising skywards in the form of his uncompromising, linear and sparsely decorated Koopmansbeurs (Stock Exchange) in Amsterdam. Through his involvement in this acclaimed project of all manner of artists, who provided sculptures, ceramic panels, paintings and even inscriptions for the exterior and interior, Berlage promoted a new form of *Gemeenschapskunst* (community art).[46]

During the same period Berlage designed two residences in which his ideas on interior and furniture design were expressed in virtually the same demonstrative manner. The first house, the 'Henny Villa' in The Hague, was for the banker Carel Henny, who later financed 't Binnenhuis, and his family. The other house, 'Parkwijck', was built in Amsterdam for Leo Simons, the idealistic

publisher of the *Werldbibliotheek* (World Library).[47] Both houses were spectacular due to their unconventional asymmetric design and the functional placing of the windows. The Henny Villa was remarkable for its yellow roof, while Parkwijck had a striking chimney of unusual design. Berlage's new and rational design principles were much more to the fore in the interiors of both houses. Thus the living rooms epitomized the requisite 'honesty of materials' with their exposed brick walls and furniture designed in an uncompromising and Spartan style. We do not know what Leo Simons and his wife thought of such an interior, but Carel Henny's wife and children did not find their new home that comfortable or 'cosy', even though Mrs Henny was 'allowed' by Berlage to plaster the walls in her own 'boudoir' and to furnish it with a settee, some small foot-cushions and a Persian carpet on the floor, and even to hang one on the wall.

Berlage regularly set out his views in great detail in print. They first appeared in book form in 1904 in *Over stijl in bouw- en meubelkunst* ('On Style in Architecture and Furniture Design') and some twenty other publications followed. All his published works have undoubtedly contributed to Berlage being considered the leading figure of the reformist movement in Dutch design. Time and again this version of design history has been affirmed: 'The guardian of new Dutch architecture and applied art; the founding father of new construction; the "synthetician" who unravelled and filtered the past in his own powerful spirit and brought it together in a new unity', was how, in 1926, the designer Harm Ellens linked the supposed revival of Dutch applied arts primarily to Berlage.[48] In 1929 the writer Jo de Jong gave Berlage a place of honour in her survey *De nieuwe richting in de kunstnijverheid in Nederland* (The New Direction of Applied Art in the Netherlands). Looking back at the turn of the century, she wrote:

> At this time, while all design outside the Netherlands, be it furniture or book covers, buildings or chandeliers, is overrun with the eternal coiling, whiplash lines of Art Nouveau or Van de Velde style, Berlage exposes bare materials and honest construction and puts forward functionality and simplicity as the first requirements of a domestic object.[49]

It was only in the late twentieth century that this 'personalized' historiography based on a deliberately constructed image was put into perspective. In particular, Berlage's image as the great Messiah who revealed and perfected the process of design reform in the Netherlands begun by Pierre Cuypers was gradually laid to rest.[50] Art historians have

often hardly looked beyond the writings by Berlage himself, or those of his kindred spirits and devotees, just as the various biased discussions about the Turin exhibition were followed in a relatively uncritical manner. So again the question arises: how innovative was Dutch decorative design in Turin? Was there really a fundamental distinction between the entries in Paris and Turin, as contemporaries would like us to believe? Was it a question of a breakthrough around 1900, or rather one of continuity?

We have established that in a certain sense 1900 represents more the apex of a development that had already been under way for a few decades, in which a rethinking of artisanship and the democratization of the applied arts was pivotal. Thus 1900 chiefly marks the beginning of a period in which the design debate was led more by artists, architects and skilled artisans and less by industrialists, technicians and consumers. It was an age in which the artist-craftsman was central and in which, for the time being at least, there was absolutely no sign of a new, twentieth-century industrial design style. In other words, while industrial products were undoubtedly being produced, even at a steadily increasing rate, for the moment their design was hardly a theme for serious consideration in the worlds of art and architecture.

The Society for the Elevation of Craftsmanship

It was not just the romantics and applied artists drawn to medieval ideals who wanted a return to the values of the Dutch crafts tradition. The decline of small workshops and the disappearance of crafts people was also lamented by other groups in Dutch society, and the government itself had begun to see it as a major social and economic problem.

For these reasons the Society for the Elevation of Craftsmanship (Vereeniging tot Vereedeling van het Ambacht, VVA) was founded in 1897 on the initiative of Arti et Industriae.[51] The ever active Boersma had been appointed chairman of Arti et Industriae in 1890, the first Dutch society aimed at bringing art, industry and architecture closer together. Initially founded as a local Hague organization in 1884, it became a national society after Boersma joined the board. He saw several basic characteristics of the traditional Dutch work ethic united in the artisan, namely a sense of responsibility, versatility and autonomy. New, straightforward, mechanized devices were welcome as far as he was concerned, and even essential if work done by hand was not to degenerate into a mind-numbing competitor of industry. The Netherlands Society for Trade and Industry, at that time the major society for manufacturers, trade representatives, engineers, lawyers

and politicians, supported the new society both financially and by being represented by certain of its leading members. Generally it was viewed as socially important that crafts people should continue to exist as a kind of buffer between the ruling class and the steadily growing proletariat. Thus, woodworkers, ornamental painters, potters, Delftware painters and silversmiths were increasingly regarded as a typical and indispensable group within Dutch society. On the basis of these social considerations alone, it was felt that crafts should be protected and cherished.

The VVA came up with a plan in which workers could take a master examination similar to the medieval guild system. This was fully supported by various established designers, including Karel de Bazel, Antoon Derkinderen and Pierre Cuypers. Between 1900 and 1907 De Bazel, as a member of the VVA technical committee, often drew up the designated assignments for the master examination for furniture makers, including 'a mirror frame from mahogany with inlay work', or 'an armchair with a curved back'.

The system was in place for only a few years, during which about one hundred craftsmen a year took the master examination. Not everyone was enamoured with the idea by any means. The artist Richard Roland Holst, for example, expressed his criticism in the socialist magazine *De Kroniek*, and its editor J. F. Ankersmit closed ranks behind him. Both felt that it ultimately made little difference whether you had machine or handcrafted production. What mattered most was improving the lot of workers. In the end the inevitable modernization of industrialized production meant that the VVA's idealistic plan never came to anything.

The Founding of the VANK

Developments in design education and the attendant emancipation of the artist-craftsman led shortly after 1900 to the establishing of their own professional body. Designers felt increasingly less at home in painters' societies or architectural associations, to which they had often belonged until then. So in 1904 the Association for Crafts and Industrial Art (Vereniging voor Ambachts- en Nijverheidskunst, VANK) was founded, the first professional body for designers in the Netherlands.[52] Most of the artists and designers who joined the association were those who carried out work in their own studio, or had their designs made up in small workshops where they usually had direct control of the production process. Pattern designers in carpet factories or cotton print-works, Delftware painters in pottery companies and cabinetmakers in furniture factories were not as yet members.

Willem Penaat (De Woning, Amsterdam), 'Farmer's Chair', 1899.

Chairman Klaas van Leeuwen had originally had the ambition to become a painter, but towards the end of the nineteenth century he met Mathieu Lauweriks and Karel de Bazel and was struck by their reformist views on design.[53] Along with De Bazel and Oosschot, Van Leeuwen set up the small-scale furniture workshop De Ploeg in 1904, while also teaching at various applied arts schools. In 1910, however, tired of the many conflicts with his colleagues and disillusioned by the scant return on all his efforts, Van Leeuwen turned his back on applied arts and began painting again. Other founding members included Jac. van den Bosch, who was also assistant manager of 't Binnenhuis, Amsterdam;[54] Chris Lebeau, who, with Jan Eisenloeffel, had founded De Woning, a production collective and selling outlet as well as an offshoot of 't Binnenhuis;[55] typographer Sjoerd de Roos, who would become the leading type designer of the first half of the twentieth century in the Netherlands and whose Hollandsche Mediaeval of 1912 was the first complete Dutch font;[56] and Herman Hana and R.W.P. de Vries, who were both decorative artists but ultimately wrote about and lent critical support to the ideals of the new applied arts.[57]


DE JONGE KUNST

ORGAAN DER NEDERLANDSCHE VEREENIGING VOOR AMBACHTS EN NIJVERHEIDSKUNST

SCHOONHEID

ARBEIDE

NO. 1

REDACTIE-COMMISSIE: K. VAN LEEUWEN, VOORZITTER; H. ELLENS, H. HANA, R. W. P. DE VRIES JR. EN JAC. PH. WORMSER, SECRETARIS

UITGEVERS: H. KLEINMANN & Co., HAARLEM

MEI 1905

STUKKEN VOOR DE VEREENIGING TE ZENDEN AAN DEN 1STEN SECRETARIS, DEN HEER H. HANA, GROENMARKTKADE 1, AMSTERDAM — STUKKEN VOOR DE REDACTIE TE ZENDEN AAN DEN HEER JAC. PH. WORMSER, SINGEL 239, AMSTERDAM — ALLES DE ADMINISTRATIE BETREFFENDE AAN DE UITGEVERS: H. KLEINMANN & Co., SPAARNWOUDERSTRAAT No. 3, HAARLEM — ABONNEMENTSPRIJS ƒ 6.50 PER JAARGANG (12 AFLEVERINGEN), — PRIJS DER ADVERTENTIEËN 20 CENT PER REGEL.

Herman Hana, frontispiece of *De Jonge Kunst*, magazine of the VANK, 1905.

Finally, there was the industrious Willem Penaat, who trained as a design teacher and became head of Amstelhoek's furniture workshop in 1900, becoming involved with 't Binnenhuis in this capacity, and then joined De Woning as a co-worker.[58] He was one of the few designers who, with his version of the traditional Culemburg peasant chair, took seriously the aim of making affordable, well-designed, machine-produced furniture. Within the VANK, after a few turbulent early years of internal friction, Penaat's level-headed and decisive chairmanship managed to bring the conflicting views and totally different personalities of its members into line. He also did useful work within VANK as a member of the Committee for Artistic Ownership and was involved in settling issues relating to plagiarism and design protection. His efforts in this led to the groundbreaking Copyright Act of 1912.

The ideals of the founders of the VANK were expressed in *De Kroniek* by the socialist journalist and politician P. L. Tak.[59] He described the group of designers as 'artists' and 'forerunners' who, in tandem and solidarity with the socialist movement, proclaimed the 'dawning of a new age'. With their striving for 'truth, honesty and realism' in their designs, they rejected the 'spiritless historic styles' that, according to Tak, no longer belonged to the modern age. He also mentioned the success of Berlage's Beurs and, allied to this, the 'clay pots, brass and simple furniture' he had no doubt seen in 't Binnenhuis. To him these were products with a logical construction, meaningful lineation and harmonious dimensions. He predicted that there would be many problems in putting across these new design principles since the wider public was not yet ready for them. He also admitted that it was impossible to make good, simple designs for people on a tight budget. Thus Tak gave a political dimension to the new movement in applied arts – he recognized a patently obvious resistance to capitalism. For these reasons, it was a matter of conscience for the artist-designer whether to use machines or not; by doing so one ran the risk of becoming a 'capitalist' manager of a factory.

Less politically charged, but just as idealistic and impassioned, were the words of Pierre Cuypers at the opening of the VANK's first national exhibition at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, in 1911. The elevation of craftsmanship and industry by bracketing them together with art should be the aim of the society, he believed. Every product could be an art work providing it was 'good, true and beautiful': 'good' if it could be used for the purpose for which it was made; 'true' if the design properly expressed this purpose, and 'beautiful' if pleasing to the eye.[60]

While most of the industrial artists who joined the VANK in 1904 still worked according to traditional methods, the organization's two-part name was not entirely misleading. The need to create better conditions for

working with industry was certainly a major issue from the start. As early as March 1905 the board member Herman Hana had broached this important subject, feeling that his fellow board member Klaas van Leeuwen was far too negative about machines. Hana regarded the machine expressly as a tool of the modern age. He argued that 'machinalism', as he described the new machine-based aestheticism, should also have repercussions for decoration: an ornament machine, based on a kaleidoscope and a projector, was the result of this idea. In 1910 Hana invested all his money in the first Dutch house completely made from concrete, an experiment he carried out with a cousin from the United States and with aesthetic advice from Berlage. Although the project was a success, it was a financial disaster.[61]

The VANK's objectives included serving the interests of its members and the professionalization of the field. Repeatedly confronted with the cheap imitations of their designs by more mechanized firms, the struggle that eventually led to the establishment of the Copyright Act in 1912 was considered a success. Among its other duties the VANK also sought to draw up better regulations for competitions and improve design education through the publication of a trade journal, yearbooks, lectures and exhibitions, and by promoting its views on other social issues with one voice.

The backgrounds and ideals of its members, however, were to remain divergent for as long as the organization existed. Not all members were as politically aware and not all shared to the same extent the romantic, social idealism projected by Tak or Cuypers. Alongside members who regarded the VANK as part of the socialist democratic movement were others who saw it primarily as a modern trade union to serve their interests. Yet membership always remained low: in the first year this was 85 and never rose above 300. The first design exhibition in the Stedelijk Museum, which ran for six weeks in 1911, attracted only 3,500 visitors; a sharp contrast to the tens of thousands of people drawn to the major industrial exhibitions in the second half of the nineteenth century.

The possibly exaggerated image of the importance of the VANK and the radical changes it supposedly brought about is partly due to *De nieuwe richting in de kunstnijverheid*, written by the textile artist Jo de Jong to mark the association's twenty-fifth anniversary in 1929. As she explains in the Preface, the book was intended as 'a guide for teaching modern applied arts'. It was apparently felt necessary to provide future designers with a solid historical and ideological basis by giving them an overview of twenty-five years of 'crafts and industrial art'. In her zeal to give the developments more weight, she sketches a wide chasm between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In this respect the difference between this and the *Arti et*

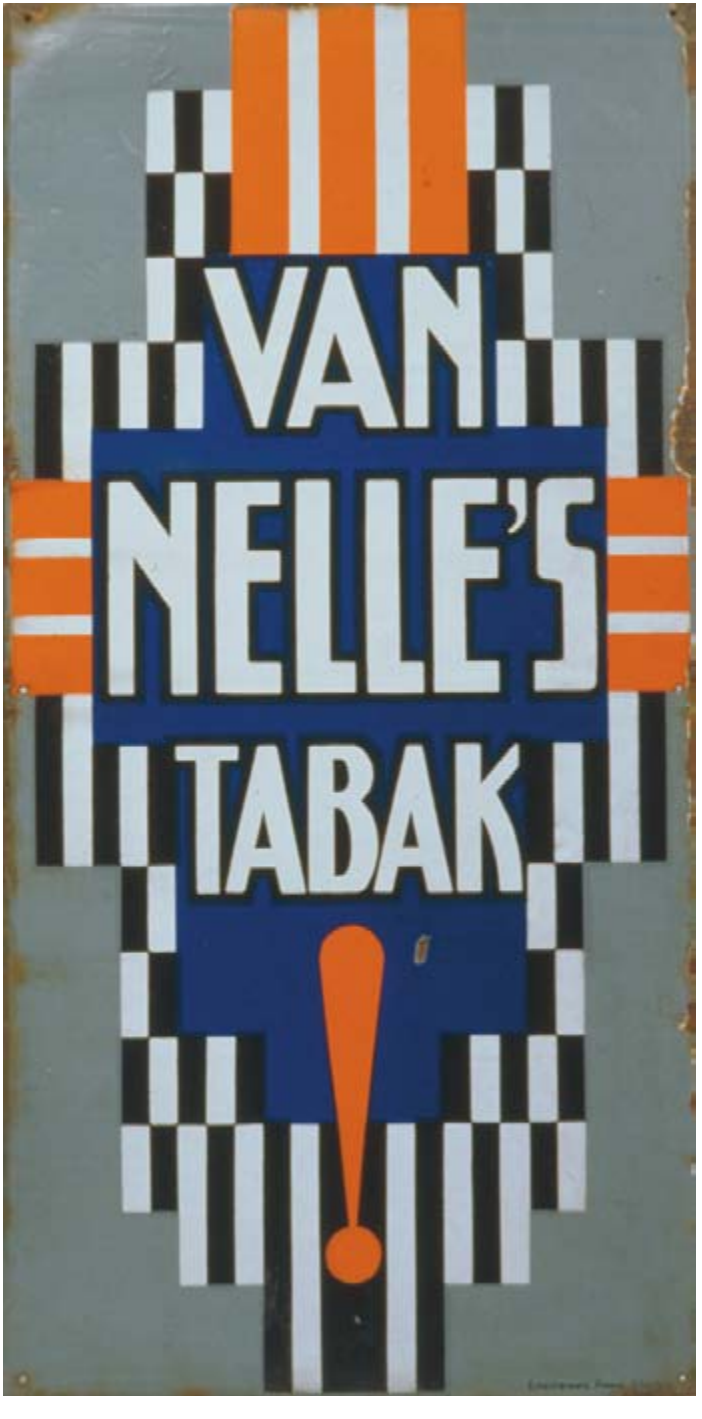
Interior of a shop for lighting and electric domestic articles, 1913.

Industriae jubilee book, written in 1909 by Karel Sluyterman to mark its twenty-fifth anniversary, is striking. Sluyterman more realistically recognized design in the early twentieth century as a logical continuation of developments that had already begun in the mid-nineteenth century: 'When, almost at the same time as in the other European nations, after the London Exhibition of 1851, one cheerfully looked for effective means to improve the industrial arts, even in our country the first signs of a revival were revealed.'[62]

The VANK certainly set the tone for the design debate in the early twentieth century, since it was its colourful members who made their presence felt, who taught at the schools of applied arts, who exhibited their work, were written about and often enthusiastically put pen to paper themselves. However, the hundreds of draughtsman in the burgeoning industry, the engineers with new ideas and the many foreign designers whose designs were purchased by Dutch companies formed a much bigger group. In one sense they were the actual precursors of the later industrial designers. Advertisements had become increasingly important since the turn of the century and determined the streetscape. The first Dutch cars were seen on the road and the number of bicycles increased exponentially. An increasing variety of kitchen and household goods could be bought that were partly from Dutch manufacturers and at some point had been 'conceived' by someone. Then the first electric ovens, vacuum cleaners, irons and heaters began to appear on the market. These too had been designed. The mushrooming chain stores were stuffed with tempting fashionable gadgets, which at a time

André Vlaanderen, page of advertisements in *Het Huis Oud en Nieuw*, 1905.

of increasing prosperity were eagerly snapped up by many shoppers.[63] All this determined the image of the Netherlands at the turn of the twentieth century far more than the hand-painted tea services, the beaten ashtrays and batik tea cosies of the VANK members.



Jacob Jongert (NV De Vereenigde Blikfabrieken, Amsterdam), enamelled advertisement plate for Van Nelle's tobacco, 1925.

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