



INEKE HANS



CONTEMPORARY: FURNITURE, LIGHTING + PRODUCT

**Dutch (active UK)
b. Zelhem, The Netherlands 1966**

Ineke Hans, like many Dutch designers working today, takes an eclectic approach to design and making, and enjoys experimenting with age-old craft skills alongside high-tech manufacturing processes. Her research-based designs often possess a thought-provoking rhetoric, while also having an engaging mutant quality. Through her work, Hans invites us to reflect on the socio-economic issues surrounding globalized contemporary design, while her human-centred approach to design-and-making shows how resources can and should be used more efficiently. As she notes, 'Many of my designs are rooted in questions on techniques and materials and human habits. Exploring these is often a conscious choice.'¹

Hans initially studied art and design at what is now ArtEZ, in Arnhem, graduating in 1991. Two years later she took an MA in furniture design at the Royal College of Art, London. After completing her studies in 1995, she was hired as a furniture designer by Habitat and, while there, branched out into the design of accessories. She stayed at Habitat for three years and around 20 of her designs made it into production, including her Rondo ceramic outdoor stool (1997). Hans created her first Furniture as Pictograms collection, which she exhibited in 1997 at a self-initiated show in The Tramshed, a then-derelict building in London's East End. The range included her felt-covered Johanna I and blow-moulded Johanna II stools, which cleverly employed three identical legs to form a single seat. At that show she also showed her Tête à tête table set (1997), which 'started off with a wish to design furniture that would not look over-designed but be an ordinary product. A simple construction based on trial and error, like our ancestors used to do when they needed a table or a chair.'² This design was the first of her Ordinary Furniture sets,

which are made from a robust, UV-resistant recycled plastic plank material that has a sort of *faux* 'wood grain' that is a result of its production process. Hans realized that this industrial material, which is frequently used along canals in Holland because it is able to withstand wind, water, salt and acid, would also be perfect for making outdoor furniture thanks to its impressive resilience. Having a curious handcrafted aspect, yet utilizing an emphatically manmade material, Hans's Ordinary Furniture sets were subsequently nominated for the Rotterdam Design Prize in 1999.

Since then, one of the main themes running through Hans's work has been the idea of re-use, with many of her designs utilizing recycled materials and themselves being devised so that they can be efficiently recycled. For instance, her award-winning Ahrend

380 chair (2010) comprises two injection-moulded 100-per-cent-recyclable elements for easy assembly and disassembly, with its flexible back section being moulded from Xenoy, a polymer made from recycled PET bottles. Another theme found in Hans's work is space-saving efficiency. The two elements of her Ahrend 380 chair, for example, were cleverly devised so they would stack together when unassembled for more efficient transportation. Similarly, her practical and playful Plektra stool/table/storage container for Iittala boasts an impressive multifunctionality within its compact form. As she notes, 'To me there is a practical functionality where things have to work and do their jobs and there is mental functionality where products are poetic or in another way nice for your mind. Functionality can give products a longer life and add to their durability.'³

