



Like Father Like Son

Gijs and Aldo Bakker in Hyères

Yes, Aldo Bakker is 'the son of'. For the opening weekend of the 5th Design Parade in Hyères, Gijs Bakker - designer and teacher, co-founder of Droog Design and above all, the father of - followed the trail of his son to the south of France, where he shows an overview of his work. In a personal narrative he reveals his admiration when confronted for the first time with Aldo Bakker's exhibition 'Creatures, studies for existence' at the Villa Noailles.

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photos WALTER BETTENS except where mentioned otherwise

Looking down from the entresol into the squash-court of the Villa Noailles, an intriguing landscape with creatures unravelled before my eyes. Of course, I know the object but this installation gave a completely new layer to it.

A group of creatures positioned in a kind of military straight order, another group of creatures moving like animals in another direction, glasses filled with different coloured drinks, three big photographs mounted directly on the wall, which gave the impression of a room with a view.

A Father's Role

I was so struck by this first view that I felt tears in my eyes. How strong. How individual. How far away from any fashionable influence, from the international design scene. Yes, this is my son. Who has, through a heavy struggle, created his own path beyond the jewellery designs of his mother Emmy van Leersum and myself. We all know how difficult it is to be the son of. ...Nowadays it happens the other way around, that people ask me 'What are you doing, is it in the same profession as your son?' It always puts a smile on my face.

It has been difficult for both of us. Especially round his teenage years. He blamed me for being able to discuss

the qualities of the designs of my students and that I never gave any reaction to his work. At a certain moment I even had to ask a colleague to take over my role.

Dutch design is always based on a strong concept with a rational form. It gained international fame that soon created a generation of followers. The problem with followers is that they kill the original. As a result, products become jokes and gadgets. I myself believe very strongly in conceptual design in context. Where the context, such as the local culture and geographical diversity, dictates the form.

In the Nineties when friends asked Aldo 'Why don't you work for Droog?' he always answered with a smile 'That is my father's hobby.' Now looking back I admire that he already knew this was not his cup of tea. And what is his cup of tea? A strong interest for the meaning of form; the meaning of function; the meaning of tactility. The meaning of the expression of materials and all these aspects have to be treated 100 per cent, in his opinion, to reach a result that in the end feels and looks so natural as if it could have been there always.

Looking for Beauty

The word 'function' has been in discredit for the last

Aldo and Gijs Bakker shoulder to shoulder in the courtyard of the Villa Noailles during the opening weekend of Design Parade 2010.



20 years and he gives it a new ritual meaning. For instance, his copper project with the watering can. When he showed me the result I was shocked and later confessed that my only concern was that this product could be out of balance and topple over. I then dared to tell him this. He simply said: 'Dad you don't understand, this watering-can is able to lie down, as the opening has a little rim inside to protect it from dripping.'

By the way, we never show each other our work until it is completely finished. This is because we like to discuss deeply but never listen to each other. His work deals with beauty, a word that has long been forbidden in the design world. But now, time is on his side. Think of the Venice Architecture Biennial this year, where SANAA architect Kazuyo Sejima is the director. She said, 'When I select, I look for beauty.' The Dutch architect Florian Idenburg, who was her project manager for the New Museum in New York, also stated in an interview with the Dutch newspaper, de Volkskrant 'The ambivalence fascinates me, I discovered the mystic side of architecture, the art of seduction. I learned the intuitive method, not with a prefabricated image but from my tummy.'

This is as if I hear my son speaking.

2010 Design Parade Contest

A jury made up Naoto Fukasawa, Aldo Bakker, Antoine Boudin, Didier Grumbach, Tejo Remy and René-Jacques Mayer recognised three young designers in the 2010 Design Parade Contest, with François Dumas nominated as the winner of the Grand Prix, Eléonore Nalet for the SEB Group Design Award and Jonathan Muecke for the Veuve Clicquot Award. The Villa Noailles is open throughout the summer and visitors can see a number of exhibitions, including Aldo Bakker's, until 26 September.

www.villanoailles-hyeres.com/designparade
www.aldobakker.com
www.gijsbakker.com

Scenes from Aldo Bakker's exhibition 'Creatures, studies for existence' - limited edition series in the swimming pool (both images)
 © Photo: Olivier Ansellem (right image)

Facing page:
 Scenes from Aldo Bakker's exhibition 'Creatures, studies for existence' - production units in the squash court (top, both images)

Tête-à-Tête between Marie-Claude Beaud and Jerszy Seymour. (middle left)

French designer and Design Academy Eindhoven graduate François Dumas in his Sealed chair, created through a homemade production system for small batches of affordable plastic chairs, winner of the Grand Prix of the Design Parade Contest. (bottom left)

Naoto Fukasawa revealing his series of Metro Vases in collaboration with Sévres - Cité de la céramique, its skin reflecting the pattern of the tiles in the Parisian underground corridors. (bottom right)