

Telos PRIMO PIANO

Liesbeth in't Hout graduated in fashion design at the Fine Art Academy in Arnhem, The Netherlands. From 1978 to 1988 she worked as curator of the modern graphics collection in the Department of Art and Design of the Dutch Post. In collaboration with Ravage Paris she then designed corporate clothing for companies such as the Dutch Railways and Telecom.

In 1999 she became director and board member of the Eindhoven Design Academy.

Since 2006 she is the Dean of Amfi - Amsterdam Fashion Institute, at the University of Amsterdam.

Liesbeth is the President of the **Design Den Haag** Foundation established with the ambitious aim of exploring the cultural, economic, and social relationship between Design and Government. One of the first initiatives of Design Den Haag was *Bright Flags A new symbol for Europe*, the flag of the European Union, with its golden stars on a blue background, designed in 1955. Society has changed enormously since then, so perhaps it's time to think of a new symbol. Of the projects submitted by 1400 designers from 63 Countries who answered this question, 12 will be selected.

Police- Polizei- Carabinieri... A single European police force? Every law enforcement agency in the EU has its own visual identity, but there are many fields where they collaborate. Is it possible to find common visual images? At least the same sign on their cars?

Editorial

April 2010, Milan Design week. Primo Piano Scala c would like to input into the debate, but by focusing on a topic more relevant to our issues: the relationship between Design and Governance. Our chosen centre of excellence and innovation is the Design Den Haag Foundation officially founded in 2010 to explore and study all the multifaceted aspects of this relationship.

The relationship between art and power is a centuries-old issue with a basic premise: the arts - poetry, music, painting, sculpture, and architecture - are used to commend and eulogise power. But what does power mean today? It is an abstract dynamic, the hidden engine of the visible world. You can find it in relationships, in the uninterrupted flow of information and resources, in signs, symbols, and ideas, or else it can be pre-established in a reference environment. Undoubtedly visual media has the power to influence the public, but it can also represent power itself. Representing power is a way to interpret and understand it. And this knowledge can in turn provide the tools with which to challenge it. Design can be used to describe and identify power, to put pressure on those who hold it and, ultimately, to generate a power which makes it easy to involve individuals. Design can play an important role in communicating events and arousing tangible reactions.

In Italy, of course, design is often a synonym of furnishings, but there are many sectors which display unique examples of research and innovation: healthcare, services, and the complex and multifaceted sector of institutional communication. As a result designers can play a new role as a 'link' between these demands, or as professionals who understand the political, economic, technical, as well as aesthetic and formal mechanisms involved. Designers are equipped to deal with very different issues. Today they are at the centre of 'cross-pollination', and many disciplinary fields are currently requesting their input. Not only to think-conceive-design objects, but also to develop scenarios and strategies. The question is: are they also asked to assist Governments in managing change, or to become known and recognised by communities? The gauntlet has been thrown down: Design Den Haag has answered the challenge.

Mariella Palazzolo

Liesbeth in't Hout: Strategic design. The magic of diffused creativity.

Telos: Design and power, a never ending story. Governments were and are important commissioners for the design sector. Can you please outline today's interconnection between design and policy making and how this relationship can be enhanced?

Liesbeth in't Hout: The Netherlands has a good tradition in design commissioned by the Government. Important former governmental companies like Post and Telecom (PTT), the Dutch Bank and the Dutch Railways had important design Departments. Interesting and innovating design for their products and communication was made by well known or promising young designers, architects and artists. They gave a fresh visual identity to the Netherlands especially abroad and made history with the Dutch governmental products like money and stamps but also the design of industrial products such as trains. They stood at the cradle of what later became known as Dutch Design. Today all those companies are privatised. The economical situation makes costs and pace the most important indicators for the choices made for design produced in commission. It is a very difficult time to give priority to the cultural values and that shows. On the other hand, however, the Government becomes more and more aware of the importance of creativity for the visualisation of products and communication but also in more immaterial ways. There is attention for the creative way of thinking to solve problems and create strategies for changes in society and business. The foreign attention for Dutch Design, Fashion and Architecture made the Ministries of Economics, Education & Culture and Foreign affairs work together to create a Fund for the internationalization of those three cultural disciplines.

Why and how Design Den Haag was set up?

Design Den Haag was set up with the mission to make clear on a broad scale, the value and importance of a good governmental policy for design and the use of creativity. Design Den Haag 2010-2018 assesses the relation between Design and Government in Europe within an international context, from cultural, economic and social viewpoints. Starting summer 2010, Design Den Haag will organize a total of five public events biennially in the field of design, architecture and visual communication, with exhibitions, publications, lectures and debates, workshops and documentary films. Each edition will entail a collaboration between Den Haag and a European Government. The capitals involved are: Berlin (2010), Stockholm (2012), Paris (2014), London (2016) and Rome (2018). Each edition will be evaluated. The final evaluation of the five editions will be submitted to



Identity, perception, and knowledge sharing, coupled with visual communication, are crucial for a public administration wishing to create a contact with its citizens and build a trusting relationship. It helps people to feel part of the same society. The challenges faced by Governments and administrators is to understand the need for clarity, transparency, and attractiveness, in their communication strategies and image-creating strategies. They have no choice. And designers are crucial if Governments and administrators want to achieve their goals.

the European Union at the end of 2018. The report will contain recommendations concerning the betterment of relations between design and governance, and on governmental funds for the quality of design, architecture and visual communication. Responsible for the first edition of Den Haag Design and Government is Ed Annink (design studio Ontwerpwerk, Den Haag).

Diversity and constant changes of our society influence design, architecture and visual communication. In this field Italy is always thorn apart between tradition and innovation. How does Italy fits in your project and what suggestion would you give to solve this dilemma?

Italy fits in perfectly in the project with its own interesting traditions and use of design. There is no other European Country in which life and good design in all its disciplines forms such a natural combination. It is very interesting for the Italian edition of Design and Government 2010-2018 to pay attention to the very different combinations of lifestyle and good design in the two countries. We are really looking forward to that.

Actually the Italian Dilemma is a pleasant one that all other Countries would be happy to face. Good design should be able to create original shapes stemming from a combination of new technology and traditional techniques, talent should manage such complexities.

Can design change the world? Phil Hamlett's statement that designers have fallen behind the business community in their efforts to become sustainable is very interesting. Do you share this view?

Design can change the world in many ways. Not only in the material and technical solutions for saving life and planet but also to change social behavior and ways of doing business. Design has a social purpose. Thanks to design everyone can understand the changes in technology, in science and in the rules of society, converted to images. The Internet without design would be a set of unreadable strings and obscure codes, appliances would be skeletons of meaningless functions... and what about the human genome? It would be incomprehensible to most people without the translation of the visual design. This all will take a lot of time but we must never give up the efforts to do it. There are very interesting generations on their way. I am convinced that it would help a lot when creativity could be imbedded in any educational program from primary school till university.

Identity, perception, sharing knowledge can be the key words for a public administration to build trust with its citizens. How can design, in our increasingly visual oriented society, help the administrators to understand and be understood by the community? Do you have any story to share with us?

It is absolutely true that identity, perception, sharing knowledge and good (visual) communication is very important for a public administration to have contact and built trust. It can help people feeling part of the same society. You see it already happening: all media are extremely important in the communication between Governments and community, also in influencing a change in political behavior. There is so much diversity and so many possibilities to communicate that it can also work the other way round. People can feel lost and even menaced. The task of the Governments and administrators is to take care for clearness, transparency and attraction, as well in communication strategy as in visualisation. They have no choices. Designers are necessary to reach these goals.

The background: Rijkshuisstijl

The choice of the Dutch Government to come up with a unique visual identity is an important example of Design and Governance; it will eliminate all the fragmented identities of the various ministries which have only generated confusion. The project is called Rijkshuisstijl, and is expected to change everything – letterheads, websites, uniforms, official cars, etc. In fact, the various bodies which make up the central Governments currently use 200 different logos and styles. This heterogeneity confuses citizens who can't understand that they are all Governments institutions; and this impacted negatively on the public perception of Governments. A single visual identity will promote awareness and accessibility and convey the idea that, although these organisms all have different tasks, they all have the same mission: to safeguard the interests of the nation. The idea that they do not work for the individual, but for society at large. Many different kinds of services are involved: building roads, granting loans, collecting taxes, and protecting fundamental rights. The new logo is not just window-dressing, it reflects much deeper and more complex issues.