

# m o o o i



Sydney Morning Herald  
March 2007  
Australia



## Sit down, this is serious

Leading Dutch designer Marcel Wanders re-imagines the sofa.

### Words Stephen Craft

Some designs are so practical they have never been changed. But according to the Dutch designer Marcel Wanders, that is no reason not to try.

Famous for such classic design items as the Knotted Chair and the Set Up Shade lamp, Wanders is renowned for thinking laterally.

"I think these designs display a love of making, rather than showing what technology is capable of," he says.

The Dutch designer is the creative director of the Netherlands company Moooi (pronounced "moy") which is Dutch for beautiful spelt with an extra o. And while he is happy to speak about his previous designs, he's particularly keen to talk about his latest project, Moooi Boutique, which focuses on the sofa.

Launched with Space Furniture, Moooi Boutique aims to reinterpret the ordinary lounge suite. "There are hundreds of sofas out there. What's the point of simply doing another one just the same?" Wanders says. "Why can't a sofa be as desirable as a designer bag? Or the latest shoes?"

Now Wanders believes he has found a solution. The trick is to make it

instantly changeable, at least visually. Rather than having a lounge trapped in the same old uniform, which costs thousands to replace and update, Wanders' Moooi Boutique range comes as 15 covers that tie into a standard Moooi lounge, armchair or footstool.

Customers can choose between vibrant reds with hand-drawn scenes, or white with silvery flowers. For the more adventurous, there are naked women flying across a suite.

"It can be frustrating for people to wait three to four months for their lounge to arrive from Europe," he says. "These covers can be delivered in a week."

And changing them isn't a problem, either.

"Even when you send off the cover to the drycleaners, you won't feel undressed. We've perfected the hardware of the furniture. Our naked sofas look quite beautiful."

Wanders says he constantly imagines new products and ways of satisfying his customers.

"Mostly I just think about new designs," he says. "Sketching out the idea is really only a way of remembering things."

For Wanders, the importance of design stems from a love of making objects.

"Things should be imperfect. I think that's why the knotted lounge chair made its mark," he says. "People were tiring of the perfection associated with the minimalist aesthetic of the '90s."

Wanders compares his design to the imperfections in children.

"We love our children. But they're not always perfect," he says. "Things should also be imperfect, even sometimes appearing amateurish."

This focus on the "human" aspect of imperfection has been evident in all his work, which spans some of the great furniture houses of Europe including B&B Italia, Flos, Cappellini, Moroso and Droog Design (also based in the Netherlands).

Mixing old with new and taking classic items from history is one of his trademarks.

He believes one of the problems with a lot of modern design has been its focus on the future, as opposed

to drawing inspiration from the past. "I think it's important to pull things together from the past, showing a respect for it, while connecting to the present," Wanders says.

As a result there is familiarity in his designs, with an emphasis on poetic detailing and sumptuous fabrics.

Wanders also enjoys making connections with the human condition, whether it's dressing a lounge or referencing a body part. His Airborne Snotty vase (a most unappealing name), made of resin, was based on flying mucus. He magnified a photo of someone sneezing, enlarging each particle. The result is a slightly strange amorphous shape.

"It's almost gravity free," says Wanders, who clearly appreciates the humour in what he does.

To this end, he believes it's important to know your audience, whether you are designing a building, an interior, a piece of furniture or an object.

"People need to be able to tap into ideas as well as being able to reference the designs. Everyone sneezes and most people have come across macramé in their childhoods [as in the Knotted Chair]," he says.

Marcel Wanders will be speaking at the Art Gallery of NSW on Sunday, March 11. For details, phone Space Furniture, 9667 8224.



'Why can't a sofa be as desirable as a designer bag? Or the latest shoes?'

Marcel Wanders, designer

Perfect to a fault ... Marcel Wanders and his Bottini Red Flower sofa (top), Bottoni Single Grey (right) and VIP Chair (below).

