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IN CONVERSATION WITH
PIET BOON

Typical to the Dutch no-nonsense design sensibilities, designer Piet Boon on his love for Scandinavian simplicity, redesigning the former Palace of Justice in Amsterdam and everything in between

TEXT BY **ANKITA RATHOD** PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY **IRIS OOMS**

“I BEGAN IN CONSTRUCTION, LIKE MY FATHER, BUT DESIGN WAS MY PASSION. I STARTED TO BUILD KITCHENS, WHICH WERE COPIED MANY TIMES BY OTHER DESIGNERS”

Piet Boon may be the name behind bringing super-prime minimalism to some of Holland’s most decadently designed modern villas. But besides his Hollywood looks and signature monochrome interiors concealed behind the 17th-century facades of Amsterdam canal houses, his status as a ‘design virtuoso’ is on the rise world over. Groundbreaking Paris penthouses, revolutionary New York condominiums and custom yachts designed to perfection act as testimonies to his impeccable craft, lending him the title of a Dutch master of design.

For the uninitiated, exterior, interior and product designer Boon—pronounced Bone—was born in Zaanstreek, in the vicinity of Amsterdam in 1958. He started his career as a contractor, developing a keen eye and understanding of structure and function. “I began in construction, like my father, but design was my passion. I started to build kitchens, which were copied many times by other designers,” says the self-taught designer. His own Amsterdam house was his final construction project before he turned to design, marking his career transition from developer to designer. Soon after, Boon launched his studio in 1983 with his then wife, Karin Meyn, and they are still co-founders and colleagues. Meyn is the creative director and Boon, the designer.

It was not long before Boon’s popularity toured far beyond the Netherlands, steadily coming to be a favourite among the global design cognoscenti. He made his Manhattan debut in 2005, where he redesigned the Fifth Avenue apartment overlooking Central Park that subsequently sold for eight figures, breaking records at the time. “It is about the perfection of simplicity, which goes beyond time,” reflects Boon. Considering his origin for having lived by the waterland in north Holland, if anyone understands the fractious relationship between

homes and water, it’s Boon. Back in 2010, he master-planned a floating neighbourhood in the Dutch town of Almere. “You’d think that in a country like the Netherlands it would be something we do all the time, but it’s harder to get permission to build on water here than it is on land,” he says. Moored in a beautiful and tranquil spot in a typically Dutch landscape, the houseboat is surrounded by open water on three sides with uninterrupted views to the horizon.

‘Understated-chic,’ is how he likes to describe his style. His style can be seen through the transformation of the chapel of a former military hospital in Antwerp, Belgium, into the award-winning Jane restaurant, run by chefs Sergio Herman and Nick Bril. The restaurant features an enormous 39 ft wide black starburst chandelier that weighs nearly a ton, tall quilted wall panels in muted sage and contemporary stained-glass windows by Studio Job beneath a soaring vaulted ceiling left in its time-damaged state, showcasing a rock-n-roll aesthetic in all its sobriety intact.

Over the last three decades, together with a team of 65, Studio Piet Boon has tackled a surprisingly diverse portfolio of commissions, including a special-edition vehicle for Land Rover every year, a bespoke furniture line, various private homes world over, spectacular hotels, and numerous villas in the Caribbean (some of which are available to rent by the week). Among his 40 or so current commissions is the soon to be opened Caribbean resort of Half Moon Bay in Antigua, the Rosewood Hotel in Japan and the magnificent former Palace of Justice that will be converted into another Rosewood property in Amsterdam.

It means a lot to him to be creating landmark places in his hometown—in the former Palace of Justice overlooking the Prinsengracht canal. Speaking of which Boon elates, “It is

such a beautiful iconic building. And the Rijksmuseum—designed by Dutch architect Pierre Cuypers in the early 1880s—has been an influence for the hotel. The design play is such that while you want to be invited to walk in. “The reception stands like a barricade at the entrance. I was inspired by the Hall of Fame of the Rijksmuseum. As you enter, you experience the entire hall and Rembrandt hangs at the very back. ‘The Night Watch’ becomes my reception desk,” reveals the design maven.

When quizzed about the future of design, Boon strongly believes it is the connection of the interiors and exterior with nature that will go far beyond. “We have become more aware of life outside and want to be a part of it. We bring the outdoors inside by applying layered and subtle colour nuances, but also art from nature in the interiors. By using natural materials, with different tactile properties, you create a piece of nature at home. We are bringing the outdoors inside by layering and applying subtle shades of colour from nature to the interior. By adding efficient design solutions, such as verandahs and smart heating technologies like our DISC heater, we make it possible to enjoy the outdoors all year round. As a result, the lines between inside and outside are increasingly blurred,” Boon signs off. >>

**WORKING WITH
TADAO ANDO**

For a project in Korea, we once had the opportunity to work on the same project as the Japanese autodidact architect Tadao Ando. Truly a privilege and source of inspiration to see his incredible eye for detail.

Piet Boon, Netherlands
Website: www.pietboon.com



THE JANE, ANTWERP

Boon has transformed a former military hospital chapel into a high-end and contemporary fine-dine restaurant that imbibes a rock-n-roll aesthetic with dining chairs by Flexform, artwork by Studio Job and tableware from Piet Boon by Serax. Photograph courtesy Richard Powers

SNEAK PEEK INTO

Piet Boon's polymath practice and some of his much cherished works...



BEACH RESIDENCE, ANTIGUA

Featuring a set of two Belle armchairs, one of the few rounded pieces from Piet Boon's furniture line—the lush low seater is modest in size and unstinting in proportion. Photograph courtesy Richard Powers



COCOON BATHTUB

The bathtubs, developed in partnership with COCOON are part of the Piet Boon by COCOON collection consisting of kitchen and bathroom taps, shower sets, washbasins, chests of drawers and an outdoor shower model. Photograph courtesy Thomas De Bruyne



FIFTH AVENUE APARTMENT, NEW YORK
Boon's Manhattan debut redesign project in 2005 is an apartment overlooking Central Park. It showcases an artwork by Rachel Hovnanian with exquisite and bespoke detailing, including specially designed mouldings adorning the bedroom ceiling and a door collection in collaboration with exclusive door producer Bod'or. Photograph courtesy Mathijs van Roon



OAK VALLEY RESIDENTIAL RESORT
Destined to become the most sought-after private golf course community in Gangwon Province of South Korea, Boon was commissioned to develop a collection of 200 luxury residences of various sizes and layouts, but the same interior and exterior design aesthetic. Photograph courtesy Richard Powers

QUICK WORD

A QUOTE THAT HAS STAYED WITH ME... Let me know the rules so I can ignore them

MY FAVOURITE MATERIAL... Wood. A beautiful, timeless and durable material

A CITY THAT INSPIRES ME... Tokyo for their unsurpassed eye for detail and beauty

THREE PRINCIPLES OF DESIGN I ALWAYS FOLLOW... Functionality, aesthetics and individuality

A PLACE IN INDIA I'D LIKE TO VISIT... It would be great to combine a kitesurfing trip on the west coast of India with the beauty of nature in Wayanad

DUTCH FLOATING HOME

A houseboat surrounded by open water from three sides, Boon designed a jewel box, finished in black-stained red cedar. Despite strict building regulations dictating its height, he was able to realise two storeys. The bedrooms and basement lie below the waterline. Photograph courtesy Richard Powers

