

THINK DESIGN

15

COMPANIES
COLLABORATIONS
DEMONSTRATIONS
INSPIRATIONS



WALLONIE
DESIGN



Editorial

In deciding to join forces to produce this Think Design booklet, Fedustria and Wallonie Design seek to assert a shared belief: **design is an incredible tool available to all companies**, especially those working in the textile, wood and furniture industries!

We reached out to 15 companies. We asked them to tell us about the impacts of design on their activities. These 15 company/designer collaborations present the varied ways of incorporating what we believe is, above all, a work method. The impact of design is diverse by definition: it can be aesthetic or strategic, one-off or long-term, in-house or outsourced, it can shape a product, a service or a process, as seen in these 15 experiences:

- Custom production with a distinctive, recognisable style - **JOA**
- Strengthening the value proposition - **De Poortere Frères**
- The (r)evolution of a historic brand - **Kewlox**
- A core focus on the customer experience (B2B2C) - **Plu0**
- A local, responsible and modular solution - **Woodcab**
- A niche position on international markets - **Mademoiselle Jo**
- Coherence in all phases of development - **Mathy by Bols**
- A winning combination of quality and quantity - **Mobitec**
- Building a timeless environment - **Elysta**
- Sustainability as a guiding principle - **Cruso**
- A perfect blend of creativity, boldness and technical expertise - **Limited Edition**
- Structuring a corporate strategy - **ROM**
- Turning an idea into an industrial product - **Kit-Kot**
- The ability to meet the demands of luxury brands - **Jarilux**
- Translating briefs aligned on production tools and budget - **Reul Frères**

In highlighting all the ways in which design can help a product stand out, we hope to inspire other entrepreneurs to work with designers. We hope you enjoy the read!

Clio Brzakala,
Wallonie Design



Guy de Muelenaere,
Fedustria





Company
JOA

Managing Director
Olivier Doré

Sector of activity
Furniture

Products
Custom furniture (kitchens, dressing rooms, staircases, offices, bookcases, etc.)

Started in
2012

Location (head office)
Braine-l'Alleud

Number of employees
9

Website
joa-interior.be

Industrial design
Sébastien Boucquey (in-house)

JOA

A world of curves

With its distinctive style, JOA envisions furnishings through the prism of ergonomics and flow.

JOA co-founder and industrial designer Sébastien Boucquey forged his expertise in the sheet metal industry. With his associate Olivier Doré, a wood engineer trained in Nantes, he sees wood “differently from traditional woodworkers, rather as a designer would, without any preconceptions”. As such, the two felt “very free with shapes, with a preference for curves, as found in nature, and diagonals, which open perspectives. The use of noble materials contributes to the durability of the furnishings, which are made to last more than one lifetime, an important value for society.” After 11 years in business, their style is distinctive and recognisable and they aim to build the brand and make it a reference in Belgium.

A soul is born

From kitchens to bathrooms and any room in a house, JOA offers custom furnishings, “our furniture is shaped by their function and the customer’s lifestyle. It’s the flow



that inspires us, theirs and the flow of energy. We're often surprised by how diagonals and curves can enhance an interior. They open perspectives and convey a sense of softness... A soul is born! We use 3D design to create this harmony and to achieve the appropriate proportions and proposals: the space available is easy to assess and we can start designing within the bounds of what's possible." The team manufactures its products at its workshop in Braine-l'Alleud before pre-assembling and installing them: "As there is no intermediary, nothing is lost in translation between our initial discussions with a customer and the final installation."

"We're often surprised by how diagonals and curves can enhance an interior. They open perspectives and convey a sense of softness... A soul is born!"

Sébastien Boucquey,
Co-founder and designer



Living furniture

Quality and curves come at a price. "We currently also have a potential clientele that is less affluent, younger and more mobile. And we would like to open the door of our possibilities to them. Our new ITERA range turns these limitations into assets by offering a set number of modules: these units are more affordable, as they rely on standard manufacturing processes, and they are smaller and more mobile. Because we know that our customers form bonds with our furniture and could desire to pass them down to their children one day. Our furniture lives with them, ages beautifully through use and time, and never breaks."





Company
De Poortere Frères

Managing Director
Jean-Pierre Vanbostal

Sector of activity
Textiles

Products
Fabrics and velvet for upholstery, decoration and wall coverings

Started in
2010

Location (head office)
Mouscron (Hainaut)

Number of employees
38

Website
www.depoortere.com

Textile design
Julie Van Raefelgem
(in-house)

De Poortere Frères

How suddenly the creative potential of a machine is revealed

Based in Mouscron, historic maison De Poortere Frères designs and manufactures fabrics, primarily velvets, for furnishings and decoration. Since her arrival at the factory, young textile designer Julie Van Raefelgem has applied her original approach to products to update the collections, and has contributed to creating new niche markets for the company.

“From digital design to working hand in hand with our sales manager, Julie has taken on a key role in our company. Her impact can be seen in the development of new products, from fabrics to colours, and in the company’s image.

She can operate a weaving loom with our workers and is well-aware of the realities of the industry,” says General Manager Jean-Pierre Vanbostal.

The designer agrees: she knows she is lucky to be working on a product of exquisite craftsmanship, the result of years of experimentation and testing. She explains: “My work spans the initial design, the patterns, including the interplay of textures and fibres. I also develop new and trendier colour ranges. Thanks to input from the sales

manager, we can adapt our offering to address our customers’ needs, as well as surprise them with original and innovative ranges.”

Trained in textile design at the Académie des Beaux-Arts in Brussels, Julie Van Raefelgem combines her IT expertise with a practical knowledge of the workings of looms. Having mastered the digital language of weaving, she can experiment with various virtual weave patterns and yarn textures, before transmitting them to the mill’s weaving manager. “Integrating the yarns I have chosen into the pattern cards saves the company time and money!”

A mutual trust quickly formed between Julie and the weaving manager, and then to the factory’s entire staff.

Reviving Wallonia's textile industry: a major challenge

De Poortere Frères has formed strong relationships with its customers all over the world over the years. Despite renewed demand for textiles made in Europe after years of globalised manufacturing – which Covid boosted – new crises have impacted the industry: the war in Ukraine, the energy crisis and inflation have brought back the race for low-cost products, or products made in non-European countries.

Jean-Pierre Vanbostal has therefore doubled down on setting De Poortere Frères apart from its competitors: "To the development of new high-end products and new patented products, specifically for wall applications, we can now add the talent of our very first female designer. Her technical expertise, her willingness to explore new opportunities and her talent for creating patterns and colours breathe new life into our products. It's great to see the fruit of so many years of technical research evolve, thanks to Julie's curiosity and know-how."

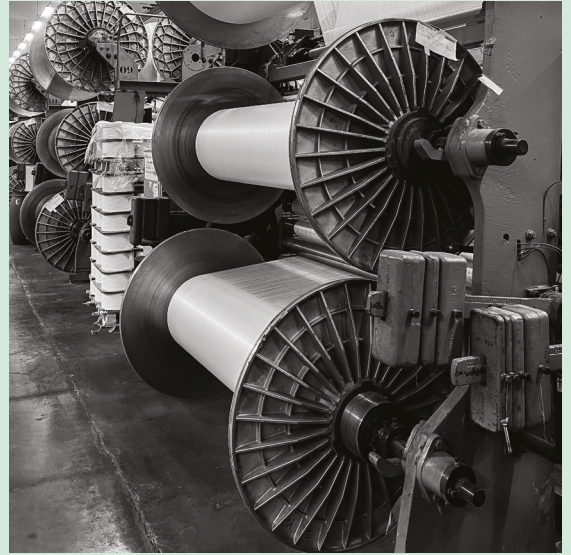


Dialogue across the board

The factory employs 6 managers and some 30 workers. Designers and technicians work together to expand the endless possibilities of the looms, and this close collaboration is furthered by input from staff in the dyeing facility and other departments.

"This collaborative approach is a true source of motivation. The workers really understand the need for renewal in the textile industry, and actively participate in the R&D process, in which our designer plays a key role," explains Jean-Pierre Vanbostal.

De Poortere Frères' customers are located all over the world, specifically in 15 countries, where it sells its stock fabrics and develops new fabrics in partnership with its customers. Two of its velvet fabrics created for the restaurant and catering market have been tested to 17 international fire standards: they are available on stock with very short delivery times, and in a range of 140 colours, with an additional 8 colours added every year.



"De Poortere Frères has responded to the crisis by bringing on board the skills of a textile designer to strengthen its value proposition: new, patented, high-end and innovative products allow us to break into new markets."

Jean-Pierre Vanbostal,
General Manager



Company
KEWLOX

Managing Director
Geneviève Le Clercq

Managing Director
Jean Feyens

Sector of activity
Furniture

Products
Modular furniture

Started in
1960

Location (head office)
Eghezée (Namur)

Number of employees
26

Website
www.kewlox.com

Design
Julien Renault

Site web
www.julienrenaultobjects.com

Kewlox

A wealth of ideas

When an under-the-radar company meets an experienced designer, it stops selling furniture and starts marketing lifestyles.

When she took over the family business in February 2015, Geneviève Le Clercq knew that Kewlox was on a “downward slope” ... and that the brand was considered, by those who knew of it, behind the times, “even a relic from the past”. HR, production, funds, inventory... She realised that everything needed to be overhauled. The first step was to find a photographer who could bring the furniture to life, “to boost our networking despite our clear lack of resources”. From suggestions to recommendations, she met Julien Renault, a photographer... and a designer.

Low tech is good tech

“At the time, Kewlox was a manufacturer with no design concept nor vision of design,” says Renault, now an external development consultant. “But everything was already there: Kewlox was gold! I am resolutely low-tech, I like the idea of doing as much as possible with as little means as possible. It’s the same with design: I like to go straight to the essence. With Kewlox, it was simply a matter of going back to the product and what had made its former success. Because as soon as you mention ‘Kewlox’, people

have stories to tell.” Julien thus chose to contact these ‘people’, to photograph the furniture in their homes, in their environment, and listen to their stories...



“Julien came to us with a very powerful proposal,” says Geneviève Le Clercq. “His photos gave our brochures a new lease of life, providing both an inspiring image bank

“Taking an idea to its successful outcome is undoubtedly what brings us together... totally and freely.”

Julien Renault,
Designer

and positive testimonials. From our brochures to the website, and from trade fairs to showrooms, including our logo, the collaboration with Julien Renault has been very fruitful, and the company has regained its dynamics, rigour and coherence.” In 2018, customers officially recognised this at the Biennale Interieur in Kortrijk, proclaiming that “Kewlox is back in fashion!”

A thousand questions a day

“All we did was reconnect with a customer base that had always loved the product: it was simply a matter of restoring a relationship broken by a series of bad decisions,” says the designer with a smile, and who is still with the company six years later.

“Every day, Geneviève and I have a thousand questions! How can we continue to improve the products, expand the range while remaining faithful to its essence, imagine new applications and novel imagery, what superfluous or unjustified element needs to be eliminated?” From what they both describe as an “atypical collaboration” and a “non-stop ping-ponging of ideas”, the entrepreneur and designer clearly have a lot of fun in the process. “Taking an idea to its successful outcome is undoubtedly what brings us together... totally and freely.”

Julien Renault, 2023 Designer of the Year

Having studied design at the Reims École des Beaux-Arts and the Lausanne École cantonale d'art, Julien Renault moved to Belgium in 2009, a country he chose out of love, experience and the opportunity to build a professional career here. “To have been named Designer of the Year is a strong sign of recognition, it means that people in the industry have been following my work all these years and they thought I was worthy of this prize. It is not an easy field of work, and it's not that easy to draw attention. This award will increase my visibility in Belgium. It's also a plus for my customers: they have trusted me, invested time and money in me, my projects, my ideas, my products... It rewards their vision, too!”





Company
PluO

Managing Director
Alain Pajot and Thomas Blake

Sector of activity
Exhibition and booth developers

Products
Booths, furniture, etc.

Started in
1977

Location (head office)
Wavre (Walloon Brabant)

Number of employees
70

Website
www.pluo.be

Graphic and industrial design
Paulo Da Maia (in-house)

PluO

Creating spaces that bring people together

Booths, pharmacies, retail stores, museums: from initial idea to installation, whether permanent or temporary, PluO's skills are mutually enriching and complementary.

"The Design department is a place that generates energy and ideas at PluO: all our employees like to meet there, discuss, check up on the progress of a project and share their opinions. I'm always amazed that our designers are able to concentrate in what is, after all, the company's interaction space!" For Thomas Blake, co-CEO of PluO (formerly ConceptExpo), one of his company's distinctive features is exactly that: decompartmentalisation. "The technical elements and costing of our projects, for example, are addressed from the start to combine creativity and functionality. Our designers are also often present for the briefing: they accompany the sales manager to get information straight from the horse's mouth, ask questions as early as possible and get answers there and then. At this stage, our design approach already sets us apart."



The desire to be there

"We start by taking care to have complete briefings: that saves us time," says Paulo Da Maia, lead designer. The team is also directly involved in the subsequent stages of designing and making the spaces. Be it for a retailer, a trade fair or any other event or venue, "we aim to offer our customers' customers an experience, an emotion, the desire to be exactly where they are. Whether it is for a temporary installation, such as a booth, or a permanent fixture, in a store, the well-being of our customers is our main goal. The two are mutually stimulating. Every contact enriches the team's experience: the points of view are all at once specific and complementary."

"We aim to offer our customers' customers an experience, an emotion, the desire to be exactly where they are."

Paulo Da Maia,
Lead designer



Agility is born of constraints

While the arrival of robots in pharmacies has had little impact on the work of designers, the same cannot be said for new trade fair formats. "Change is in the air, and can be seen in the size of booths (many of our B2B customers now want smaller booths, but more of them), and in a move towards solutions that are more modular. There's no other way: we need to be agile, in our logistics and in our teams (depending on orders and seasons, teams seamlessly shift from 3 to 7 designers). "We are currently investigating the possibility of reusing elements from our booths. We are looking to offer custom solutions based on standard components, so that 90% of a booth's elements can be reused. Including sublimation-printed banners. It's also a way of reducing our carbon footprint!"





Company
Beebox

Managing Director
Arthur Dumont de Chassart
and Cédric Nobels

Sector of activity
Construction, furniture, wood

Products
Modular garden studios

Started in
2020

Location (head office)
Brussels

Number of employees
4

Website
woodcab.eu

Spatial design
Arthur Dumont de Chassart

Woodcab

Modularity rhymes with circularity

To meet Arthur Dumont de Chassart and take a look at his Woodcab is to enjoy a day out of the office and spend time in a wooden studio in the middle of a lush natural landscape.

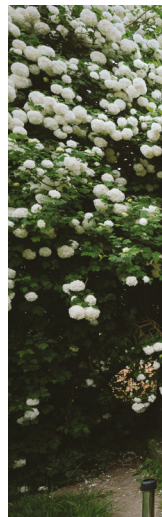
An engineering-architect graduate from the Université Libre de Bruxelles, Arthur designed the first prototype in Switzerland as a space to live or work in, and that was all at once contemporary and sustainable, ergonomic and flexible.

"I was inspired by Japanese capsule hotels, and dreamed, like many architects, of creating a modular project. My first constraint was structural: I had to work with a 110x110 cm grid, which could be multiplied in both length and height. I wanted to be able to integrate doors and windows, and play with whimsical, adaptable furniture: the multi-ply panels we use are perforated at regular intervals to make it easy to add a desk or shelves, but also to offer ideal acoustics."

Now available in five types of modules, it allows a wide range of combinations in three sizes: Tiny (6 to 9 m²), Cosy (12 to 15 m²) and Maxi (17 to 20 m²).

"At the end of its life, in some 50 years, each of its components can be 100% recycled into wood fibre: our modularity is also circularity!"

Arthur Dumont de Chassart,
Founder of Woodcab



Modular from A to Z

Music studio, workshop, office, physiotherapist's practice, a place to chill out and get away from the world, the Woodcab rapidly became the exemplification of modularity, both in its use and in its... delivery: initially designed to be literally dropped off and installed in a day ("in an average of 3 hours 47 minutes!") in a dedicated space, it was found to be trickier to set up in urban gardens located on sloping streets that can't be accessed by a crane. No matter! When Cédric Nobels joined the company, bringing with him his complementary commercial and digital vision, Arthur Dumont de Chassart designed a cabin that could be manually transported, quickly assembled and made waterproof on site in two to three days. His thinking goes even further: "Our Woodcab is 100% Walloon, which means it is produced locally, and it is 95% plant based. Mobile, it can have several lifecycles, if it is leased out or sold second hand. Constructed without glue, it can be disassembled and reassembled to make other Woodcabs or to be recycled in other building processes. At the end of its life, in some 50 years, each of its components can be 100% recycled into wood fibre: our modularity is also circularity!"

and from B2C to B2B

The concept has caught the eye of many, including multinationals: one of them, based in Lessines, ordered six 55 m² units as temporary offices. Placed on a tree-lined campus, the modules will afterwards be used as meeting rooms. Nothing is lost...



**Company**

Mademoiselle Jo

Managing Director

Joan Bebronne

Sector of activity

Furniture

Products

Small-scale, multi-functional furniture

Started in

2009

Location (head office)

Gosselies (Hainaut)

Number of employees

2

Websitewww.mademoisellejo.com**Furniture design**

Joan Bebronne

Mademoiselle Jo

When the designer is also the entrepreneur

“Creating is the only thing I know how to do!” admits Joan Bebronne, founder of Mademoiselle Jo. The woman making this modest claim is a designer who also runs her own company.

Four years ago, Joan Bebronne left the world of lingerie, where she worked as an artistic director, to launch her own design studio. With the help of her associate, she oversees all the financial and administrative aspects of her business, but above all she enjoys the privilege of creating items of furniture that align with her personal aesthetic vision. Taking care to balance as much as possible the time she spends managing her business and creating, and despite frequent interruptions, she has successfully brought finely crafted pieces to market.

The basic principle of each of her creations is to endow them with multi-functional features. The hanging table Toup, the brand's flagship product, is as practical as a storage tray as it is as a jewellery holder, and is equally at home in a living room or a bathroom. The side table Youmy

splits in two to form two small tables that can be placed at the end of a sofa. As for the Simply shelf, its modularity is due to a clever system of magnets. Each object thus invites customers to give thought to how they will use it.

A young brand already exporting far and wide

As the boss, Joan is the one who takes decisions at every stage of the marketing and selling process. Overseeing these aspects of her business informs her work as a designer and allows her to make smart decisions as to where she sells her products.

Exhibiting at trade shows gave her the opportunity to export her work. Specifically at the emblematic Maison&-Objet, where she met many international retailers. After only four years in business, Joan Bebronne now proudly exports her designs to France, Switzerland, Luxembourg, the United States and Israel. The designer's pieces can now be found in a wide range of boutiques. Customers can also purchase them on the Mademoiselle Jo e-commerce site.

“Everyone can make the object their own. They can put it where they need it and use it as they wish. It is versatile. I don’t like it when a product is assigned a single role.”

Joan Bebronne,
Founder



A passion for materials

“I love materials, the material or technique is often actually the starting point of my work.” Glass, metal, stone or wood, the objects come in many forms. Each carefully curated material exudes softness. The hanging table Toupy is available in walnut, oak and black or white stained ash. It is also made in black or white marble and travertine. Joan Bebronne can also count on artisans curious and willing to work with her, in Belgium for metalwork, wood and stone, and in Italy for glass. “The important thing is that they believe in these projects and want to be part of it, because making my designs often takes them out of their comfort zone!”





Mathy by Bols Coherence as a guiding principle

Company
Mathy By Bols

Managing Director
Jean-Marie Bols

Sector of activity
Furniture

Products
Children's furniture and displays

Started in
1987

Location (head office)
Mariembourg (Namur)

Number of employees
24

Website
www.mathy-by-bols.be

Industrial design
Manon Alves

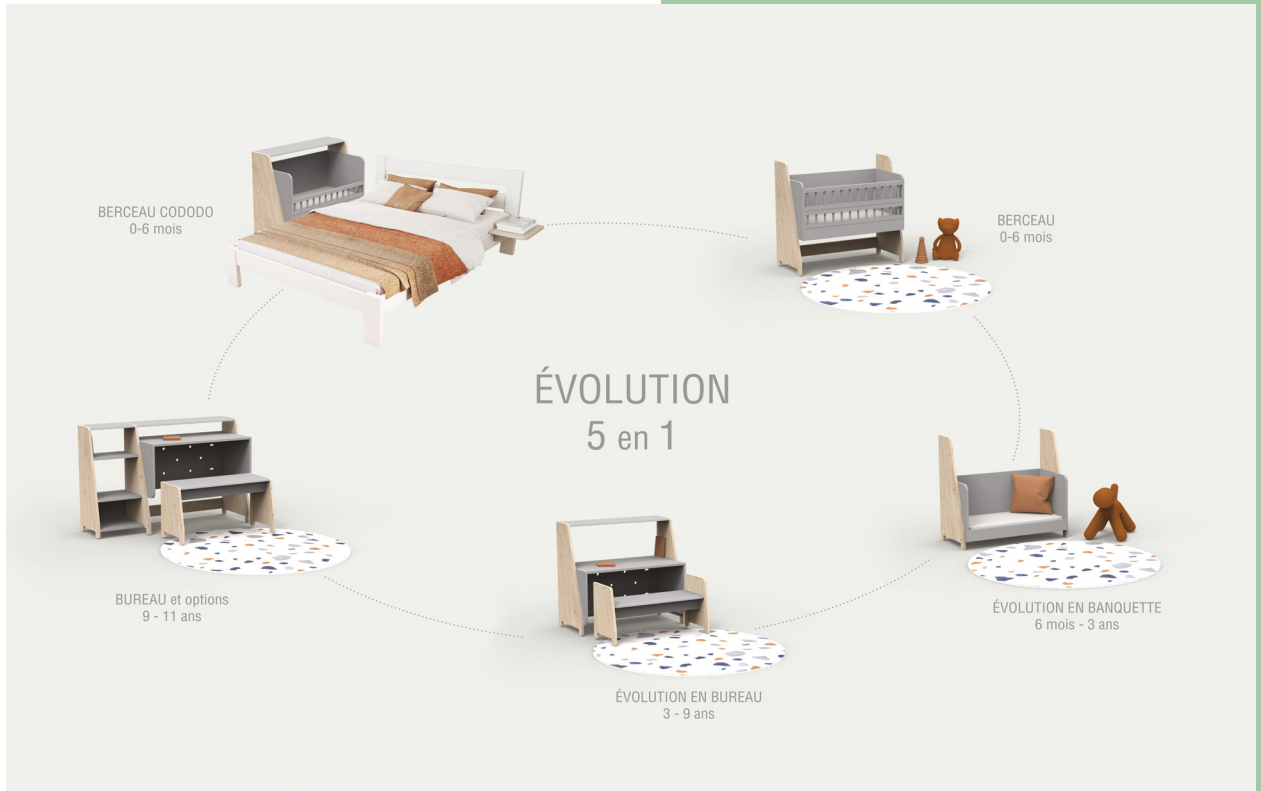
Mathy by Bols' children's bedrooms are worlds in their own. Designer Manon Alves takes care to align a product's commercialisation with the company's communications. An all-in-one designer!

Jean-Marie Bols readily admits that there is a before and an after to Manon Alves. "She has done much more than just conceive the Asymetry collection, she contributed to the development of the configurator for this range and for the box beds. She oversees the 3D visualisation of the furniture we make on demand as well as the layout and styling of our posts on social networks, the graphics for our catalogues and our booths, manages partnerships with other firms to decorate our products at trade shows..." And all remotely!

With a master's degree in Product Design, specialising in eco-design, Manon Alves worked for Mathy by Bols for a year. She returned to her native Brives-la-Gaillarde in 2020 to work from France. "I wanted to be close to my loved ones, while still continuing to see Mathy by Bols grow: every day we prove that it's possible! We communicate a lot by e-mail and meet in person at trade fairs,



where we can hear from our customers and keep abreast of trends,” says Manon. An in-house designer, she is aware of any company changes, but can also draw on her external collaborations, Manon offers the best of both worlds. “Manon’s knowledge of the company is invaluable, both in streamlining a customer’s journey and in optimising production by using existing references from our back catalogues.



Her outside viewpoint is essential to propose solutions that are more modular, more versatile and younger as well, in addition to her expertise in the circular economy,” adds Jean-Marie Bols.

An adventure that allows each party “to think individually but grow together, to mutually reinforce each other, to interact and react to each others’ ideas, to develop long-term projects and share a same entrepreneurial philosophy”: in Jean-Marie Bols’ view, this is the secret of his company. It’s no coincidence that the brand’s new baseline is “Create yours”: at Mathy by Bols, even the designer’s collaboration is customised!

“I wanted to be close to my loved ones, while still continuing to see Mathy by Bols grow: every day we prove that it’s possible! We communicate a lot by e-mail and meet in person at trade fairs, where we can hear from our customers and keep abreast of trends.”

Manon Alves,
Designer



Company
Mobitec

Managing Director
Anne Rom

Sector of activity
Furnishings

Products
High quality and comfortable tables and chairs that are customisable and unique

Started in
1990

Location (head office)
Eupen (Liège)

Number of employees
650

Website
mobitec.be

Industrial design
Jana Sarlette, Pierre Wegnez, Vincent Dejonghe, Dominique Amodei (in-house)

Mobitec
A winning combination of quality and quantity

220,000 chairs, 15,000 tables and 300 kilometres of fabric a year... and yet, at Mobitec, quality still has the upper hand over quantity.

Irreproachable. That’s how designer and head of the Design team Dominique Amodei envisions each piece. “A chair can never be too heavy or uncomfortable. It must however have character and be durable. As for what’s beautiful or not, that’s a matter of taste.”

A member of the sizeable Mobitec family since 1993, the designer remembers that, for his first collection, he had to respect “the rationalisation that was already the norm at the time: for my very first creations, I was supposed to make do with panels of a given size, wood in a given thickness... and produce as little waste as possible! We had to find a compromise: I was willing to reduce off-cuts to a minimum, but the object had to be attractive!” Dominique Amodei and Herbert Rom, the founder of the brand, went so far as to invent “a sitting machine to determine to the millimetre the best incline, seat height and degree of comfort that would set our products apart. For a whole year, we didn’t produce a single chair, but we defined comfort and elegance”.





Custom manufacturing

30 years later, the principle still applies, with a twist that makes all the difference: from the colour of the legs to the upholstery fabric and the number of pieces, every reference can be customised.

"We don't produce from stock, but on demand. Even in very limited quantities: if the customer wants just one chair, we can do it. That is truly one of our strengths," says Marie Claeys, Sustainability Manager and granddaughter of the founder.

If the design profession has evolved over the last few years, it is, she remarks, "related rather to the machinery, which allow us to work in different ways, and to the environment, which requires a few changes. For example, packaging and delivering our new model with legs and seat separate, rather than assembled, saves 4 kilos of CO₂ per chair. Given that we produce 1,000 chairs a day, that's something to tell our customers about, who can in turn inform their customers."

"For a whole year, we defined comfort and elegance."

Dominique Amodei,
Designer





Elysta

Furniture built to last

‘Plume’ cradle, ‘Chat’ bedside table or box bed: children’s dreams rule at Elysta. That’s because the company makes furniture for children, and much more than that: its storytelling is a story in itself.

They are first and foremost a couple. But they also make dreams come true. One using a pencil, the other in the handling of a digital milling machine, Maud Roegiers and Erwan Morelle complement and challenge each other, always pushing the boundaries of the environment they created when they launched Elysta. An illustrator and former designer for Prémaman-Orchestra, Maud has “a good feeling for aesthetics in general. But it’s Erwan who visualises my drawings in all their dimensions: we create everything in tandem, that’s the only way it works”.

“Erwan is also the one who pushes the limits. He loves a challenge, and will take on any request,” says Maud.

“It was Erwan who recently agreed to build a rocket for the playground of a Brussels childcare centre.” Like the company’s beds, observation towers and psychometricity modules, the rocket is made without screws, hinges



Company

Elysta

Managing Director

Erwan Morelle

Sector of activity

Furniture

Products

Observation towers, box beds, home furnishings

Started in

2017

Location (head office)

Coutisse (Namur)

Number of employees

5

Website

www.elysta.be

Furniture design

Maud Roegiers (in-house)

or metal parts. Erwan adds: "That's how furniture was designed in our grandparents' day: everything could be assembled and disassembled, and could last 100 years. I wanted to do the same."

When furniture tells stories

The result: wooden clips based on backpack fasteners, which ensure easy assembly and disassembly, and furniture that has been passed from one baby to the next since 2017. "With three children aged 5 to 13, we are our first customer: we know the needs of kids of all ages. Our own Cododo bed, designed for our eldest daughter, is also a hit with friends: it's now on its fifth baby!" That's where the idea to rent out the most specific pieces of furniture came.

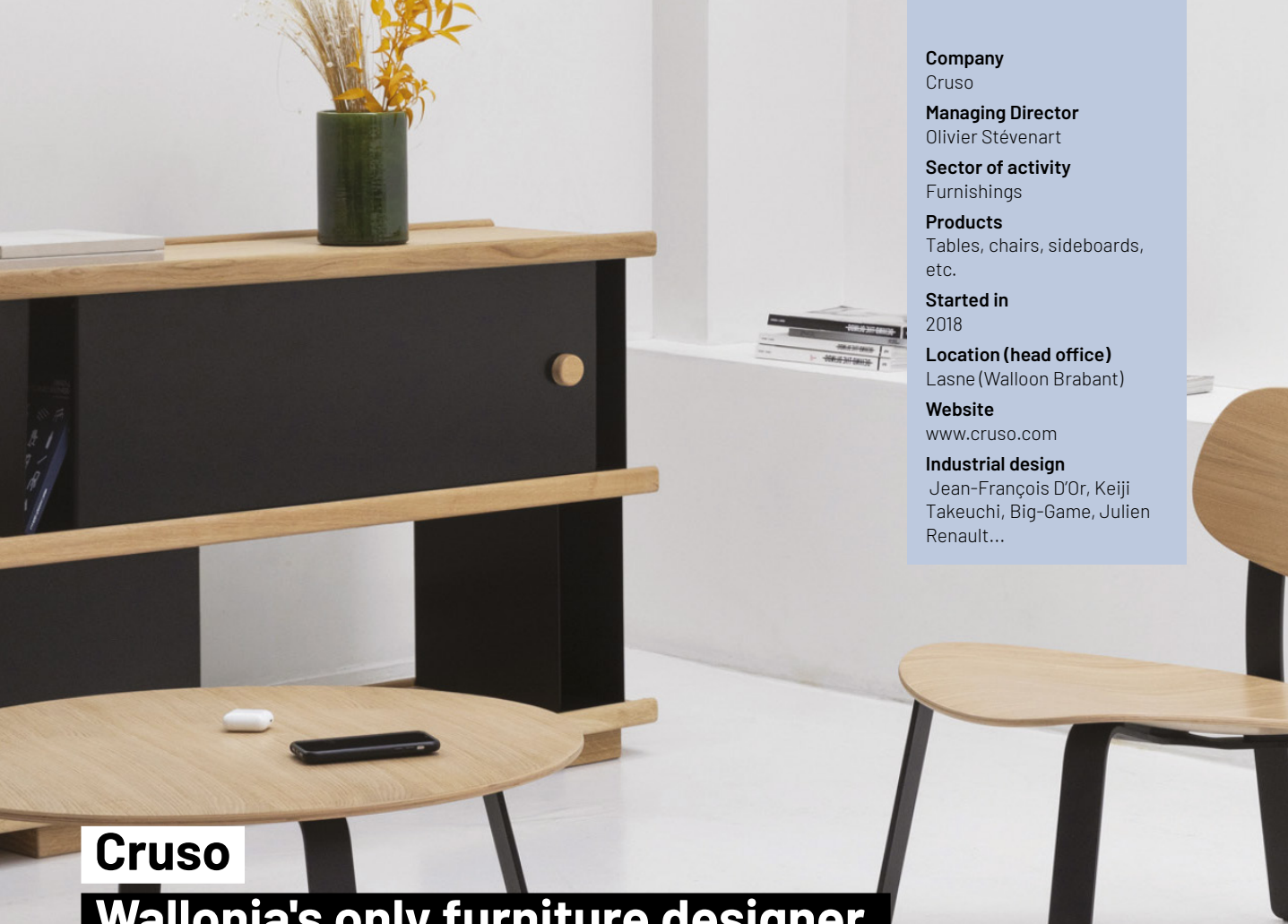
"The basic idea, of course, was that our designs should be cross-generational: that's why all the characters are figurative and timeless. But not everyone has the necessary space, and several times a year we get requests from people looking to buy second-hand. We are firm believers in this new way of doing business. And we are also believers in custom projects, which we develop alongside our own collections."

100% European, 100% wood, Elysta furniture is also 100% enchanting: it is delivered with books on the adventures of Ely, a small animal who lives not far from an imaginary, of course, forest.

"That's how furniture was designed in our grandparents' day: everything could be assembled and disassembled, and could last 100 years. I wanted to do the same."

Erwan Morelle,
Co-Founder





Company
Cruso

Managing Director
Olivier Stévenart

Sector of activity
Furnishings

Products
Tables, chairs, sideboards, etc.

Started in
2018

Location (head office)
Lasne (Wallon Brabant)

Website
www.cruso.com

Industrial design
Jean-François D'Or, Keiji Takeuchi, Big-Game, Julien Renault...

Cruso
Wallonia's only furniture designer,
going from strength to strength...

In a nutshell, Cruso's credo is to offer long-lasting furniture which does not follow trends and is eco-responsibly made.

How do you choose your designer when you want to retain external collaborations?

"We believe in simple design and conscientious manufacturing. Our aim is to continually innovate and reduce our ecological footprint throughout our industrial and commercial journey. That's why we work with highly purist, detail-obsessed designers who we think will understand the product we want to offer, as they have expert knowledge of their field," summarises Olivier Stévenart, a cabinet-maker by training and founder of the brand together with Lionel Slusny.

When the brief is to market "a small, colourful product, a coffee table or side table, which can be used for various purposes," he turns to Julien Renault. "The first attempt



wasn't quite sexy enough. Julien refined the idea by replacing the wood with Valcromat panels, to make the design more dynamic. His Ötap Table, made in Belgium with panels produced in Portugal, has been a big hit in Denmark in particular," enthuses Olivier Stévenart.

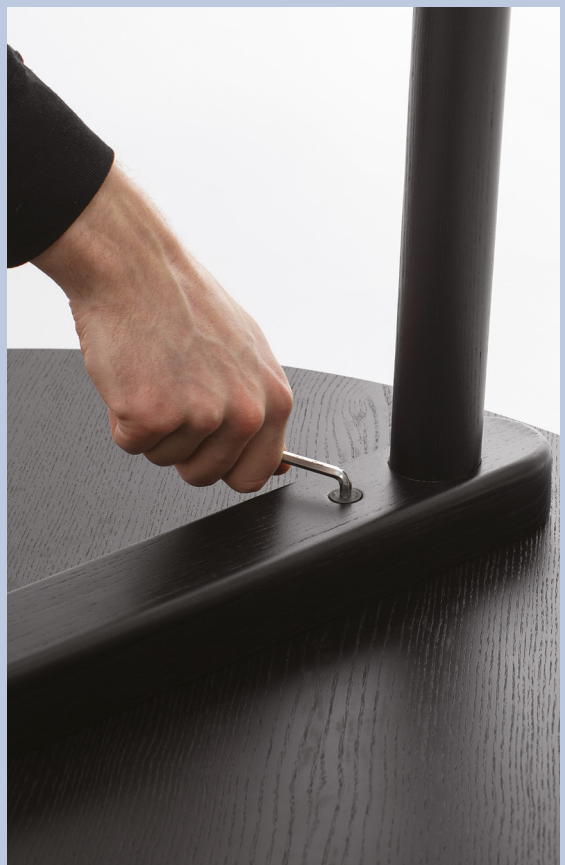
"We eschew anything fleeting or fashionable, but we still seek to evoke a sense of wonder in the details."

Olivier Stévenart,
Founder

The essence of a brand

Like Jean-François D'Or, Big-Game, Keiji Takeuchi and the late Benoît Deneufbourg before him, Julien Renault, Designer of the Year 2023, captured the essence of Cruso. Because "of course, the design of the product is important. But design also comes into play in all aspects of a product's development: technical innovation, packaging, shipping, storage, communication and quality. Not to mention the trust gained when you respect the sector and all the stakeholders in the production chain," says the founder.

Cruso also plans to continue to favour European artisans and materials (from Lithuania, Hungary, etc.), and to maintain its collaborations with socially-minded workshops. "These days, we can no longer bring something to market that is not justified. We eschew anything fleeting or fashionable, but we still seek to evoke a sense of wonder in the details." It's an art of living that is increasingly popular, from Rhode-Saint-Genèse to Iceland, via Denmark, Japan and the United States.





Company
Limited Edition

Managing Director
Katia Dewitte

Sector of activity
Textiles

Products
High-end carpets, rugs

Started in
1993

Location (head office)
Mouscron (Hainaut)

Number of employees
60

Website
www.le.be

Textile design
Collective coordinated by Anja Gruyaert (in-house)

Limited Edition

High end, high fantasy carpets

Limited Edition is set on “doing what no-one else is bold enough to do”, by offering unique, fully made in Belgium, carpets.

“In a market where everyone seeks to drive prices down as much as possible, we seek to focus on quality.” Limited Edition’s carpets are made from noble and natural materials, are always exclusive and made in Belgium “on demand only, piece by piece”. Inspired by their travels and discoveries, by their desires and finds, the team of Katia Dewitte, founder and co-CEO, and Anja Gruyaert, head of the R&D department and the Design team, create timeless and consistently elegant pieces.

“The idea is always to be different, while staying trendy,” says Anja Gruyaert. The colour catalogue thus evolves over time, and from country to country: Belgians prefer neutral colours, while Germans and Dutch prefer more colourful harmonies. The company presents a new collection every year, consisting of around 10 references in a range of harmonies, in customisable sizes, offering infinite options.



The sky isn't the limit

Limited Edition also makes custom carpets that start with an idea, the colours of a room or those of an existing painting. "A custom-made carpet begins with a blank frame. We then add in colour, types of yarns, shapes and graphics," explains Anja Gruyaert. "Our customers tend to believe that the 'sky isn't the limit': it's up to our designers (four specialised in tufted carpets, three in flat-woven) to translate their boldest ideas into rugs that can actually be made with our production equipment, with the varied technical constraints that that entails!"

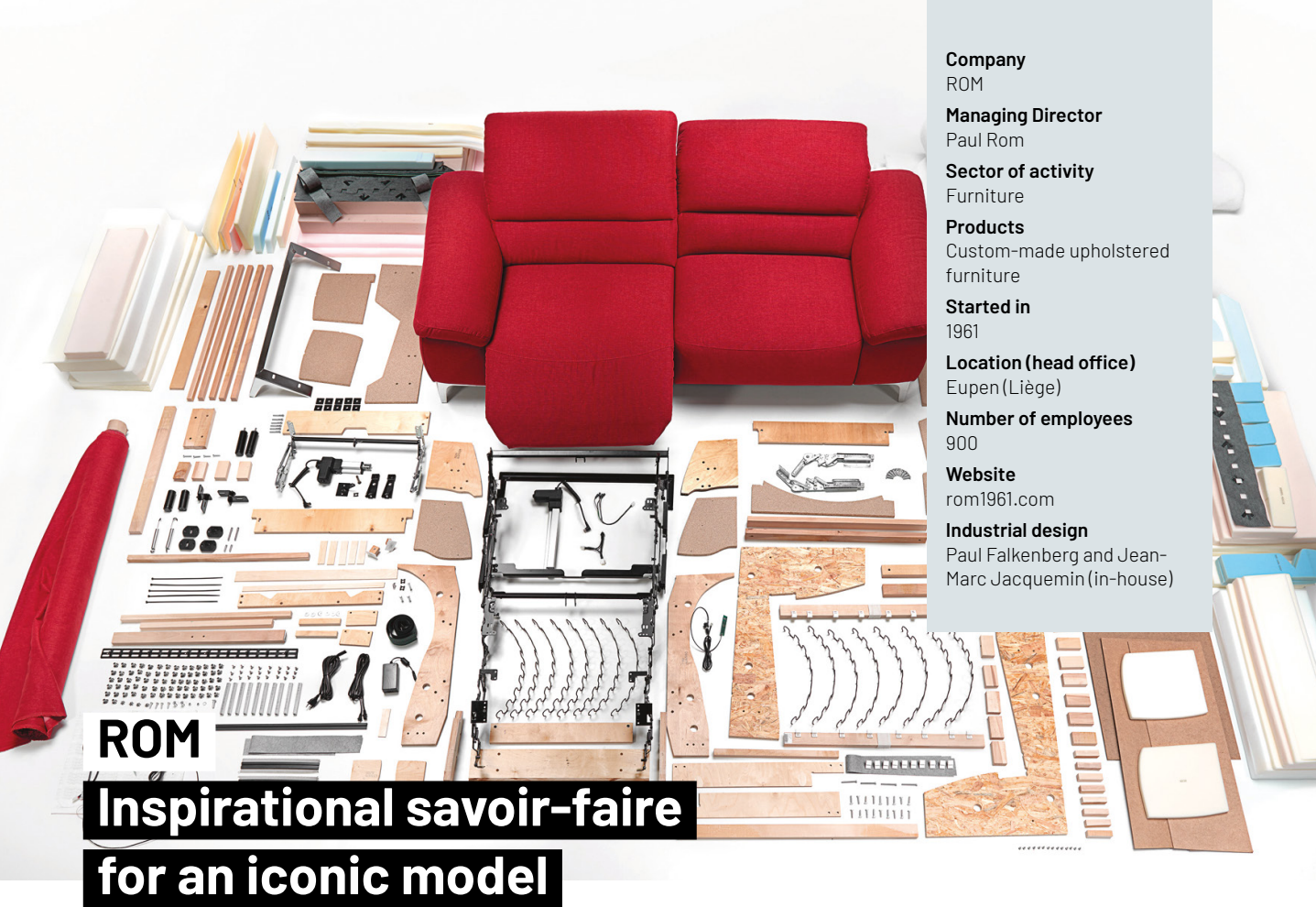


The process starts with a first sketch, followed by a 'rendering' to give an idea of how the final result will look in the dedicated room. "We also send swatches, which help visualise the materials and colours to ensure that the result matches the customer's expectations," the designer explains. Producing a sample is the final step before manufacturing. A few weeks later, the customer will receive the carpet of their dreams: one of a kind the world over.



"Our customers tend to believe that the 'sky isn't the limit': it's up to our designers to translate their boldest ideas into rugs that can actually be made with our production equipment, with the varied technical constraints that that entails!"

Anja Gruyaert,
Head of R&D Department



Company
ROM

Managing Director
Paul Rom

Sector of activity
Furniture

Products
Custom-made upholstered furniture

Started in
1961

Location (head office)
Eupen (Liège)

Number of employees
900

Website
rom1961.com

Industrial design
Paul Falkenberg and Jean-Marc Jacquemin (in-house)

ROM

Inspirational savoir-faire for an iconic model

Since 1961, Eupen-based family-run company ROM has been designing and developing a wide range of customisable, modular and intuitive sofas, ultimately offering its customers made-to-measure solutions. Its long-standing tradition of collaborative work draws on the ingenuity and creativity of a team of in-house designers.

For over 30 years, Paul Falkenberg has dedicated his savoir-faire to Belgium's largest sofa manufacturer. As a young industrial designer trained at ESA Saint-Luc Liège, he gradually made his mark in the company as head designer and product portfolio manager. The company has clearly come a long way. From production to marketing, it has become more complex to manage: "My work is no longer purely manual. Despite this, I'm happy to have been able to maintain its essential creative dynamics," points out the man who also oversaw the creation of ROM's manufacturing facilities in Tunisia and Poland.

Breaking with tradition to stand out

ROM owes its success to its ability to quickly stand out by pivoting to a high-quality, made-to-measure offering that filled a gap in the market. The Miller is an extension of this ability to anticipate, as it breaks away from the industry's usual design process based on a mechanism, common in

this sector, which dictates shapes, chassis and functions. "We chose to break away from this system to develop our own mechanism and preserve our freedom of design," says Paul Falkenberg. "With the existing mechanism, we couldn't respond to changing market demands we had identified." With the Miller, ROM can offer customised sofas, from start to finish, with a flexible relaxation function that doesn't sacrifice aesthetics. "Despite its simple appearance, the Miller is the result of various complex constraints. Its strength lies in this paradox," the designer adds.

Innovation has, step by step, changed the company's entire operations, from fabric cutting to booth design for shows, and from digital design to production. "Now, when an order comes in, we can plan production, cut the materials, prepare the fabrics and upholster them. Everything is just in time: we have no stock!"

Justifiably proud

With the Miller, the result of a unique R&D feat, the company introduced an innovative solution to the market. The success of this model is now applied to all of its references and mechanisms: "This was a major decision, because developing such an exclusive mechanism at the heart of product design represents a significant R&D investment. It also the result of our collaborative approach," points out Managing Director Paul Rom. A feat of mechanical engineering, the award-winning sofa* is the perfect illustration of interdisciplinary teamwork, "just like when we launched our custom-made sofa 20 years ago. We spent months crunching numbers to find a system that worked. We needed to offer a product we could be proud of, to move things forward and make a difference. Various ideas were put forward before testing a mock-up on the field, and then developing the prototype on site before the woodworkers and upholsterers took over". ROM's functional prototypes are always a two-person model. "We can then engage the 'quality' process, based on a variety of tests. Next, we consult a few privileged customers to assess its feasibility before the actual launch."

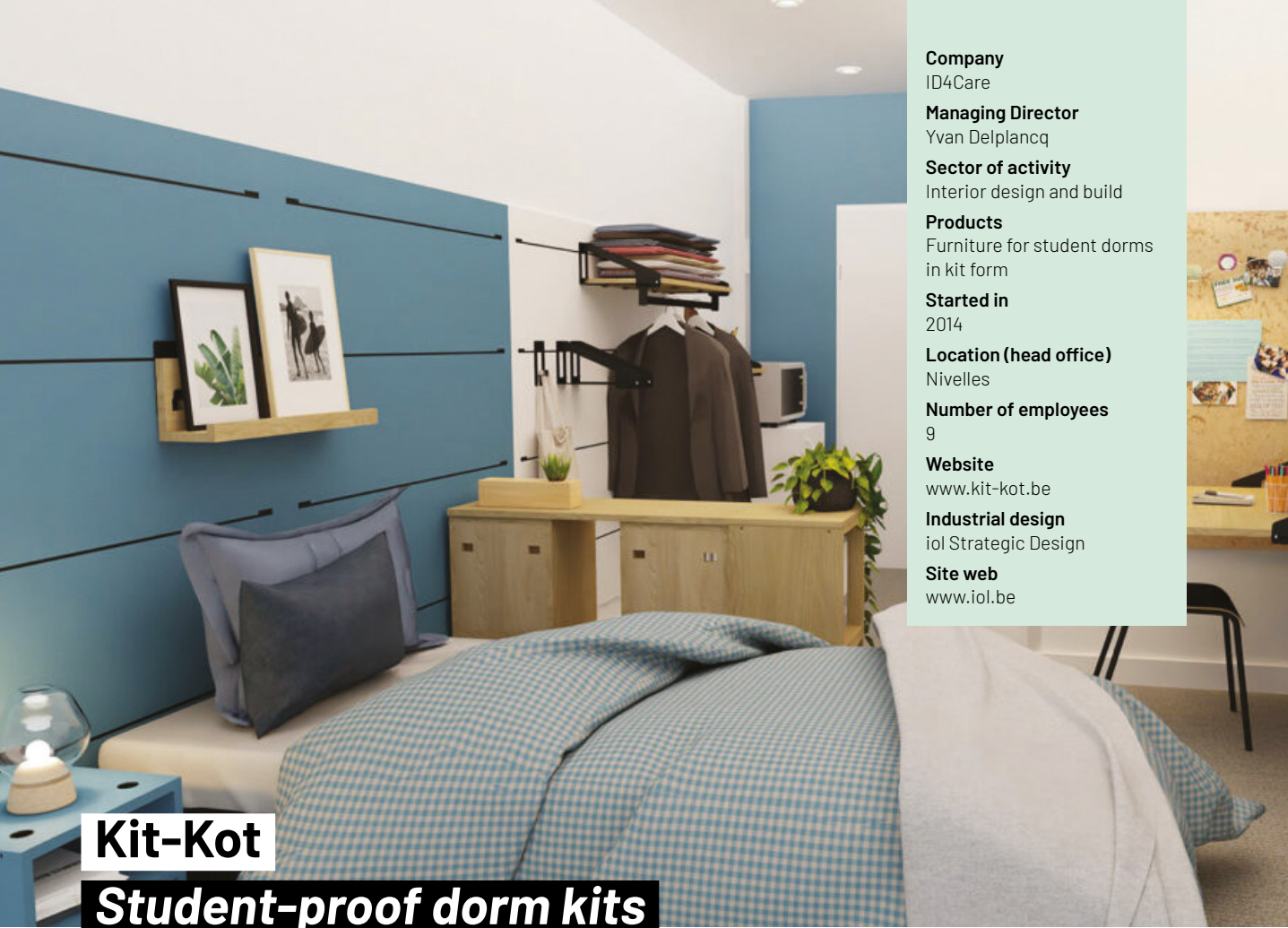


* ROM won the Red Dot Design Award 2022 for its custom-made sofa, the Miller. This award is regarded as one of the most prestigious in the world of design.



"Innovation has, step by step, changed the company's entire operations, from fabric cutting to booth design for shows, and from digital design to production."

Paul Falkenberg,
Head Designer in-house



Company
ID4Care

Managing Director
Yvan Delplancq

Sector of activity
Interior design and build

Products
Furniture for student dorms
in kit form

Started in
2014

Location (head office)
Nivelles

Number of employees
9

Website
www.kit-kot.be

Industrial design
iol Strategic Design

Site web
www.iol.be

Kit-Kot

Student-proof dorm kits

From wall panels and sideboards to coat hooks, rods, storage units and worktops, Kit-Kot offers a solution for student dorms that is both standard and modular.

“At ID4Care Interior Design & Build, we develop custom-made interior solutions for hospitals, nursing homes, assisted-living facilities, schools, nurseries and businesses,” summarises Managing Director Yvan Delplancq. “The day we met a property developer specialising in student dorms, the idea of extending our expertise to this domain, and positioning ourselves from the outset as initiators of the project, seemed essential to us.”

Our intention was to create an eco-responsible, sustainable, pleasant, flexible and inclusive environment that can evolve with the needs of successive students. “It took us three months to model this space. The first prototype confirmed that the idea was good, but it didn’t work, so we decided to call on iol Strategic Design. We had a feel for design and functionality, and we knew that we needed



a partner with technical expertise that could help us industrialise the product,” explains Yvan Delplancq. The first 100 dorms were delivered in September 2023.

“Design was instrumental in making this project feasible.”

Myriam Carbonnelle,
Industrial Designer



Form and function

“I understood the concept and agreed with the choice of materials, panels, laminates, sheet metal and so on. But they weren’t applied or used properly. We needed to combine form and function, incorporate a few aesthetic tricks, and ensure that they were compatible with the production possibilities,” notes Myriam Carbonnelle, iol’s administrator and product designer.

The eighth prototype hit the mark: with its washable and replaceable panels to protect walls, its stackable storage cubes, its sideboards and shelves, Kit-Kot makes it possible to personalise and configure any space in one go. To get to this point, “we had to calculate the size of the panels; design rails to attach and support the various wall fittings; opt for self-drilling screws, as drilling the panels doubled the cost of certain elements; avoid glue in favour of screws to stay true to the eco-responsible approach; in the same vein, we designed cubes with interchangeable sides, so the module wouldn’t need to be thrown away if only one side was damaged; and think about transport... Design was absolutely instrumental in making this project feasible,” stresses the designer





Company
Jarilux

Managing Director
Thierry Van Damme

Sector of activity
Textile weaving for fashion and furnishings

Products
Decorative fabrics, stoles, scarves, shawls, plaids, cushions, etc.

Started in
1925

Location (head office)
Herseaux (Hainaut)

Number of employees
10

Website
www.jarilux.be

Textile design
Marine Delmoitiez (in-house)

Jarilux

Weaving jacquard for leading fashion houses

Located at the intersection of historic textile regions (Flanders, Hainaut and Picardy), Jarilux weaves connections with Europe's leading fashion houses.

Although the company joined B&T Textilia in 2022, it retains all the distinctive features that have been part of its DNA for close to a century: jacquard, a fabric in which motifs are created by the weave patterns; natural fibres such as silk, wool, cashmere, alpaca and linen; its savoir-faire; along with its storied and promising collections and archives.

"We primarily weave stoles, scarves, shawls, plaids, decorative fabrics... generally on an exclusive basis for haute couture houses and fabric suppliers. The luxury goods sector is currently mad about Europe: it is very demanding in terms of materials, traceability... and prices," notes Thierry Van Damme, CEO. "It's therefore a question of striking a balance between the realities of the market and the final cost." A challenge that textile designer Marine Delmoitiez, Head of Style and Development, strives to meet.



"It's a challenge for any designer: to ensure, long before execution, that a project is beautiful, appealing, refined, innovative... and cost-effective!"

Permanent dialogue

While Marine makes the most of her curiosity and affinity for fabrics, her love of craftsmanship and “things well done” on a daily basis, she also enjoys engaging with customers in inspiring dialogues. “She understands where I want to go as a business owner, and she picks up on what customers want, even when they’re not themselves sure,” points out Thierry Van Damme.



“We have two approaches to our work: either we present new products that are likely to appeal to our target audience or become part of a collection and adapt the selection of yarns and colours; or, based on a given design, we translate it into a textile (in its weave pattern and yarn density). At times, compromise may be necessary, or we may need to come up with an unexpected twist,” explains the designer. “For example, we work with a producer who wanted to weave metallic yarns for jewellery boutique decors: we acquired a special loom that offered a solution for his project.

This flexibility, this ability to make very small production runs, and to accompany designers in their specific domains, is one of our great strengths.”

“This flexibility, this ability to make very small production runs, and to accompany designers in their specific domains, is one of our great strengths.”

Marine Delmoitiez,
Textile designer





Company
Reul Frères

Managing Director
Eric Reul and Hervé Reul

Sector of activity
Interior woodwork,
furnishings

Products
Custom furniture

Started in
1985

Location (head office)
Baelen (Liège)

Number of employees
25

Website
www.reul.be

Space design
Stéphanie Brüls and Lydie Hausmann (in-house)

Reul Frères

A harmonious family adventure

From Herve chairs to fittings for kitchens, bathrooms, dressing rooms, offices and boutiques, and from freehand drawing to 3D design, the Eupen-based company moves with the times.

In 1984, the two Reul brothers, Marc and Eric, started cabinetmaking, building their first Herve chairs in their parents' basement. These were followed by more furniture for family and friends, before the official launch of their company: Reul Frères.

Current managing partner Hervé Reul sees no reason to remove the word 'brothers' from the name: "What my father [Éric] and my uncle [Marc] created is still relevant today. Of course, techniques have evolved, as has the team: today, we can no longer simply propose a design based on



a sketched drawing for custom-made fitted furniture," he observes.

"We hired one interior designer, and then a second. They use the same software as their external colleagues, not in a spirit of competition, but because nothing similar has been created for woodworkers."

Lydie Hausmann and Stéphanie Brûls have received in-house training in the company's techniques and in project management, so as to facilitate not only the furniture's production, but also its assembly, painting and on-site installation, within the constraints required by some sites. They can thus ensure that the customer is never disappointed: "They are both interpreters and guarantors of the initial brief; they are responsible for its implementation on time and on budget. That's probably what's needed most in design schools at the moment: budget assessment," says Hervé Reul.

Trained as a cabinetmaker, he attributes customer satisfaction above all to design: "The visual result is always what counts! Interior designers understand customers' desires and needs, advise them where necessary, and put their ideas on paper. We take care of the technical facets, we make it possible. It's a virtuous circle: external architects who solicit our services sometimes push us to the limit, and we challenge them, as a team, on the changes needed from a technical perspective."

"Our designers are both interpreters and guarantors of the original brief."

Hervé Reul,
Managing Partner





Wallonie Design is the reference body in Wallonia that encourages the use of design to bring innovations to fruition and anticipate societal changes, for the benefit of all.

We promote design as a driver of sustainable and economic development. Our aim is to increase the use of design and its methods among Walloon companies.

Design anticipates society's evolving needs and uses. It makes your products and services more attractive and easier to use. It allows you to develop a strong, coherent image that engages your users. Design contributes to your company's performance! Wallonie Design was founded in 2005 and currently employs 13 people.

www.walloniedesign.be

Fedustria is the federation representing companies in the textile, wood and furniture industries, as well as the wood import trade.

Together, these sectors generate sales of €12 billion and 36,237 direct jobs within 1,666 companies in Belgium. It is one of the most important sectors in the Belgian industrial landscape.

Fedustria's mission is to assist companies in the textile, wood and furniture industries to be successful, by maintaining and strengthening their competitiveness. This includes acting as the representative of these sectors, actively defending the common interests of its members, offering a wide range of specialised services, the creation of a shared training and meeting space for members, and disseminating information accurately and rapidly.

www.fedustria.be



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“We eschew anything fleeting or fashionable, but we still seek to evoke a sense of wonder in the details.”

Olivier Stévenart, Founder - Cruso

Giving shape to your innovation through design,

Innovating for sustainable entrepreneurship,

starts with us:



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DESIGN

THE COMPANY-DESIGNER CONNECTION

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Fedustria

FEDERATION OF THE BELGIAN TEXTILE,
WOODWORKING AND FURNITURE INDUSTRIES

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