

THE EXTRA O

WITH A NEW CEO AND FRESH COLLABORATIONS IN PLACE, MOOOI CONTINUES TO SURPRISE AND CHALLENGE PRECONCEPTIONS WITH AN ONGOING QUEST FOR 'THE EXTRA O'.

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IMAGES » COURTESY OF MOOOI AND SPACE FURNITURE



A naked man in a box, his body protecting a fragile globe of fibreglass strands soaked in epoxy resin.¹ A geisha-white face with surreal protrusions reminiscent of overgrown eggs.² An ornately carved chair going up in flames, its wooden frame smouldering like cinders.³ These are among the iconic images that have catapulted Moooi into the public's eye since 2001.

The story of Moooi, founded by Marcel Wanders and Casper Visser in 2001, is one in which design and business work hand-in-hand to create an enduring brand. In 1997, Wanders was a lone wolf prowling the design landscape for opportunities to market his lampshade collection. He approached the owners of The Frozen Fountain – a famous store in Amsterdam – and they introduced him to Visser, who had his own design distribution company. Visser, a self-described “businessman with a creative eye,”⁴ turned out to be a perfect foil for Wanders' eclectic creativity. The duo embarked on two years of collaborations in Holland and Belgium, the success of which cemented their partnership. In 2001, Wanders Wonders and Visser Design merged as Moooi

to bring their furniture, interior, and lighting products to a growing international audience.

The name Moooi is derived from *mooi* (pronounced “moy”), the Dutch word for ‘beautiful’. The extra O was inserted to convey the extra beauty and uniqueness of the brand. Critics seemed to agree. Soon after its debut, Moooi began garnering a string of awards, such as the 100% Design Blueprint Award for Best Product (2002) for Jurgen Bey's *Light Shade* and the FX Award for Best Furniture and Lighting (2003). In 2005, Marcel Wanders was named Elle Decoration Designer of the Year, bolstering his reputation as one of Europe's most influential creatives.

In 2006, B&B Italia bought a 50 per cent stake in Moooi, accelerating the latter's sales network. The company began to expand internationally with showrooms in key cities such as London, Amsterdam and most recently New York. In Singapore, the brand is represented by Space Furniture, whose showroom atrium is graced by a cluster of Moooi's best-selling *Raimond* lamps (designed by Raimond Puts). The original Moooi founders regained 100 per cent control over the company in January 2015.



Top: The omnidirectional spherical lamp *Raimond Tensegrity 61* was designed by Raimond Puts and released in 2014

Middle: Robin Bevers assumed the position of Moooi CEO in September 2015, taking over this role from Moooi co-founder Casper Visser

Bottom: The *Smoke Chair*, designed by Maarten Baas and released in 2002, offers the strange sensation of sitting on burnt furniture

The year 2015 saw Moooi embracing new partnerships to broaden market penetration. Even before Robin Bevers (an MBA graduate of Barcelona's IESE business school) took over as CEO from Visser (who left Moooi permanently to pursue new ventures) in September, Moooi had started working on licensed collaborations to introduce its brand to a wider consumer base. The inaugural project was a range of toiletries with Luxury Hotel Cosmetics, a large supplier of exclusive hotel cosmetics and spa products. “Moooi has become a very diverse and sexy brand, a brand that fits the lifestyle of a wide and international audience of design and art lovers,” says Bevers. “So if we meet great partners with outstanding qualities, we can consider teaming up to better serve our Moooi enthusiasts and clients with even more great products.”

The company also launched Moooi Carpets, a new company that produces high-definition carpets with photo-realistic prints. Made up of three different families – *Signature*, *Moooi Works*, and *Your Own Design* – Moooi Carpets was conceptualised by the creative team at Moooi, led by Wanders and Desirée de Jong. Thanks to the groundbreaking technology offered by the Chromojet printer, the carpets combine an endless mix of colours at accurate tones, which result in a playful illusion of depth. Bevers stresses, however, that the allure of Moooi Carpets goes

above and beyond the machine's capability. “Moooi Carpets is not about technology. It is about breath-taking designs and limitless possibilities,” he says. “The technology is just a means to an end.”

With Moooi, one can always expect preconceptions to be challenged and boundaries to be pushed in search of that extra O. But what is the secret ingredient that makes Moooi the valued brand it is today – the constant in this sea of reinvention, if any? Bevers has a most sphinx-like reply: “At Moooi, everything we do is based on the belief that design is a question about love.”

MOOOI.COM
MOOOICARPETS.COM
SPACEFURNITURE.COM.SG

Endnotes

1 'Inside the Box' is a series of photographs that portrays a Moooi product wrapped by a naked person inside a box. In one photograph, the *Random Light* (designed by Bertjan Pot) was depicted.

2 *Egg Geisha* is a photograph by Erwin Olaf, based on the *Egg Vase* designed by Marcel Wanders.

3 The *Smoke Chair* by Maarten Baas is literally burnt then sealed with epoxy.

4 Dijana Kurmurdian, 'Moooi co-founder Casper Visser on the Business of Design', *Vogue Australia* (August 1, 2014).



“AT MOOOI, EVERYTHING WE DO IS BASED ON THE BELIEF THAT DESIGN IS A QUESTION ABOUT LOVE.”

» ROBIN BEVERS



Top: The porcelain *Egg Vase*, designed by Marcel Wanders in 1997, was created with a mould of latex rubber condoms stuffed with hard-boiled eggs