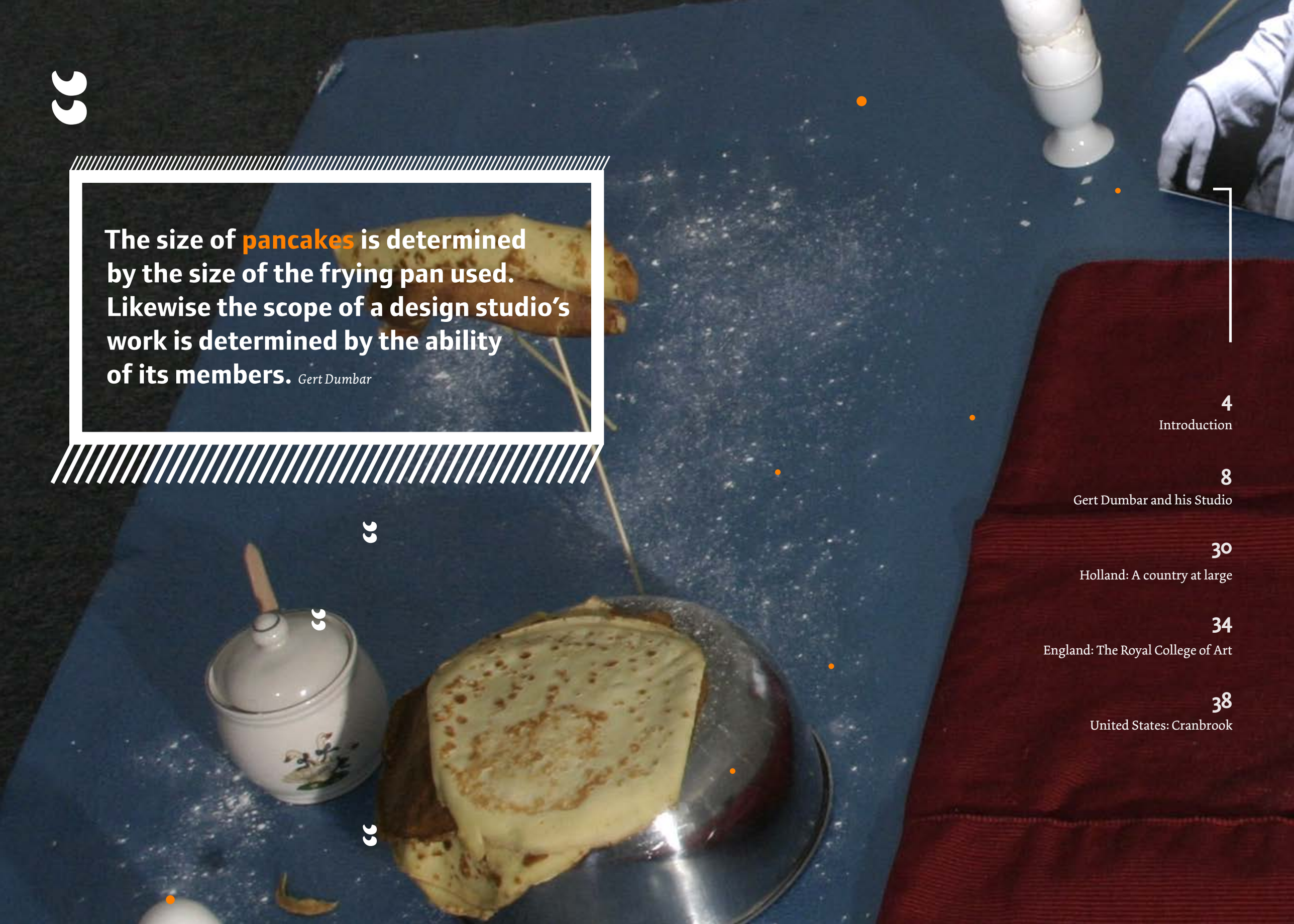


The size of pancakes is determined by the size of the frying pan used. Likewise the scope of a design studio's work is determined by the ability of its members. *Gert Dumbar*

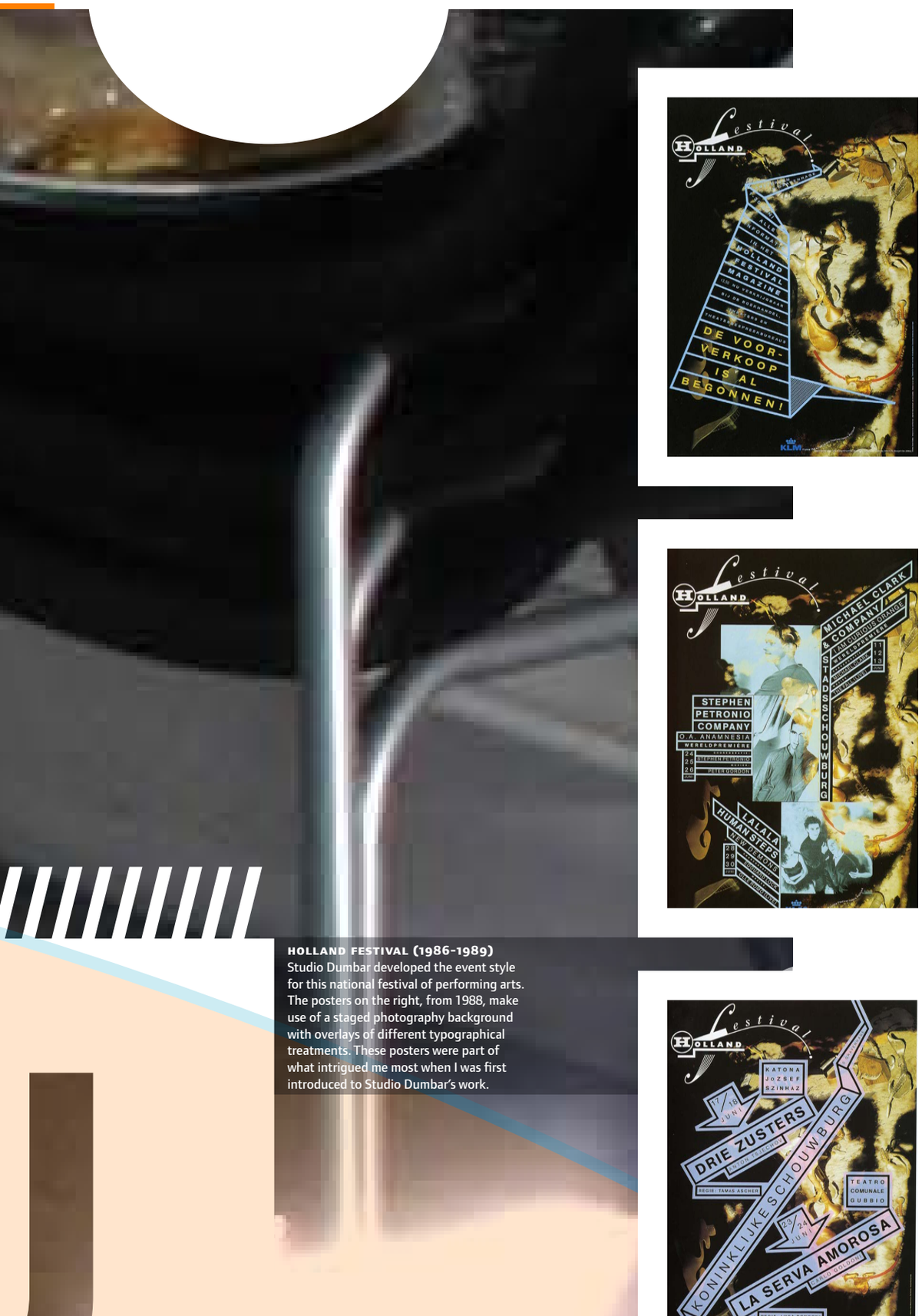
4
Introduction

8
Gert Dumbar and his Studio

30
Holland: A country at large

34
England: The Royal College of Art

38
United States: Cranbrook



HOLLAND FESTIVAL (1986-1989)
Studio Dumbar developed the event style for this national festival of performing arts. The posters on the right, from 1988, make use of a staged photography background with overlays of different typographical treatments. These posters were part of what intrigued me most when I was first introduced to Studio Dumbar's work.

Introduction. When I first became familiar with the work of Studio Dumbar, I was immediately drawn to the darker, atmospheric, expressive work like the Zeebelt Theatre posters and the pieces for the Holland festival. I was deeply impressed by the beautiful and mysterious photography which provides a stage for forceful and energetic typographic experimentation. Even now, looking at these pieces makes me aware how exciting it is to be a graphic designer.

Yet, when I set out to explore the full body of Dumbar's work, my excitement grew slightly muted. Compared to the extremely experimental cultural project, the identity work for governmental and corporate institutions seemed much blander. Some of the overtly eighties work, complete with widely spaced type, sprays of airbrush and colorful doodles, felt even cheesy.

I had to look closer in order to appreciate this kind of work. I was missing the historical context in which it was created. At a time when Holland was reigned by cool Swiss Modernism, Gert Dumbar began to introduce personal feelings into his work. His mission was to free graphic design from the slavery of objective thinking. For this he was constantly criticized as being frivolous, decorative, random and irresponsible, and it was suggested that he should rather become an artist. But by continuing his idiosyncratic ways he instead moved graphic design into the realm of fine art.

In my interview with Martin Venezky, he describes Gert Dumbar, who Venezky was able to get to know during his short residency as an intern at the studio, as a "magic elf" who would float around the studio in merry spirits, eager to "mess things up." This playful and free-spirited personality of the man Gert Dumbar and the joy and excitement that manifests itself in his work, represents an incredible inspiration for me. It is what excites me most about Gert Dumbar and his Studio. *Roman Jaster, March 2006*

Gert Dumbar, the "free-spirited elf," in a photo from 1993.

ARTIFORT (1984)
Extremely intricate die-cuts give these posters for a furniture manufactures a certain flair. At first sight, however, the overly spaced out typography and the air brush marks make these posters seem quite dated today.

STUDIO DUMBAR & IN FLUENCES

ROYAL COLLEGE OF ART

ENGLAND

- Phil Banes
- Hannah Tofts
- Why Not Associates

HOLLAND

A COUNTRY AT LARGE

- Irma Boom
- Barlock
- Mevis & van Deursen

CRANBROOK

UNITED STATES

- Robert Nakata
- Allen Hori
- Martin Venezky

POSTER FOR MONDRIAN PERMANENT COLLECTION (1971)

POSTER FOR PIET ZWART EXHIBITION (1974)

POSTER FOR DE STIJL EXHIBITION (1986)

Dumbar's early signature style is demonstrated in these well-known exhibition posters. Stage photography and a playful ironic attitude define these pieces.

Gert Dumar was born in Indonesia in 1940. He moved to Holland at the age of six. In 1967, he graduated from the Royal College of Art in London. Ten years later, shortly after he left his previous agency, Tel Design, where he had headed the graphic design division, he founded Studio Dumbar in The Hague. For almost 30 years, he and his diverse group of partners, colleagues and interns, have been on the forefront of Dutch and international design, and have greatly influenced a whole generation of graphic designers.

Gert Dumbar makes it clear that he does not merely want his own creative pursuits to be recognized, but those of his studio as a whole. He regards the studio as a family, being generous in recognizing the accomplishments of his staff. Dumbar refers to the importance of the members of his studio as the "pancake structure." He says, "The size of the pancakes is determined by the size of the frying pan used. Likewise the scope of a design studio's work is determined by the ability of its members."

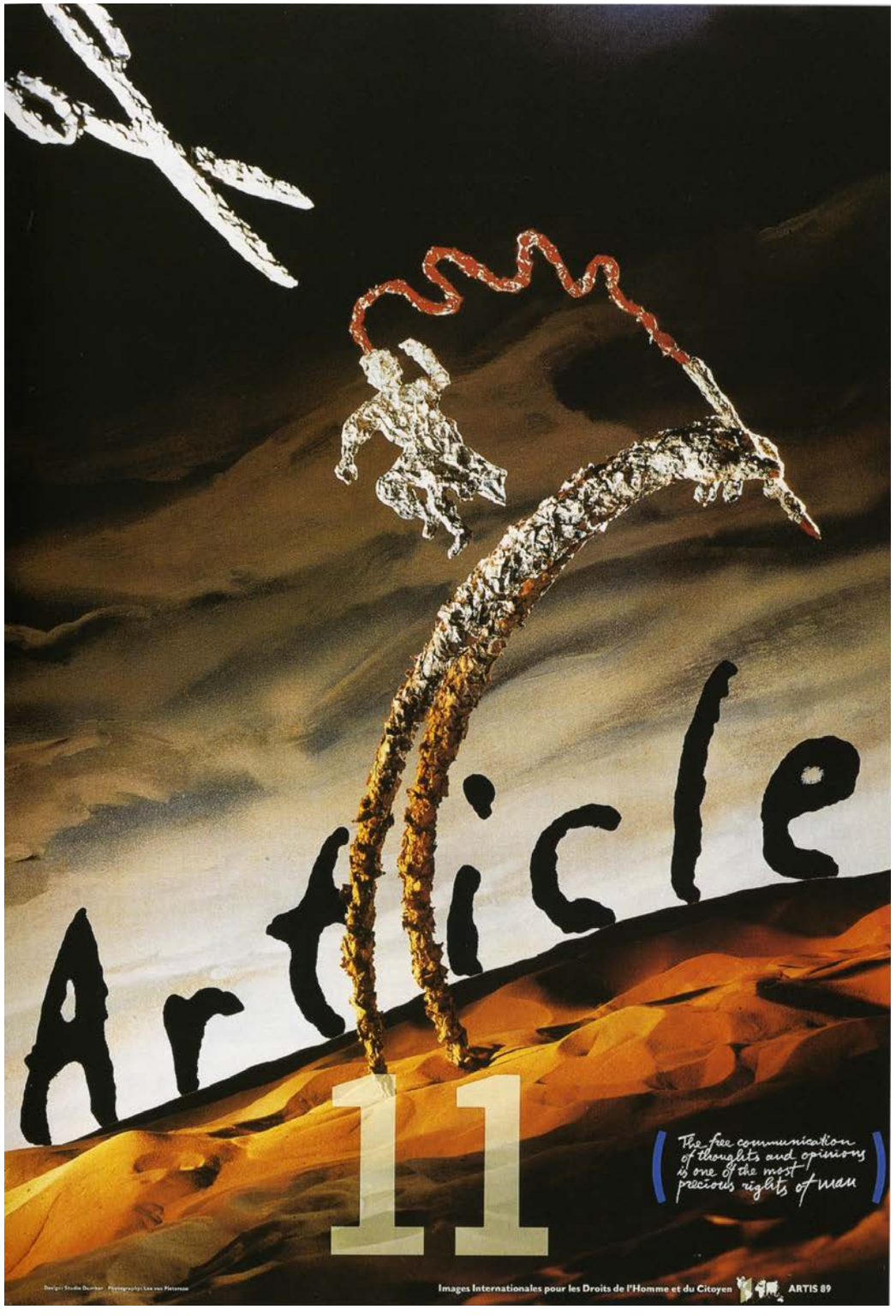
At the studio, teamwork and dialogue are important, as are individual approaches. There is very little bureaucracy. Dumbar's relationship to the young people he invites to work with him is both of a giving and taking nature. His own ways of thinking are shared and expanded by his staff. Their youthful naiveté and cheekiness question established forms and concepts. Merged with Dumbar's ironic attitude and decades of experience, the work created is structured and functional, but always pushes the boundaries of the expected.

Gert Dumbar might be the leader of his tribe—in fact the studio bears his name—but he manages his people democratically. To me, he gives the impression of a liberal father—somebody to have respect for, but who is not at all intimidating. In Martin Venezky's experience, even though Gert Dumbar was older than most people in the studio, he appeared to be the youngest in spirit. He has a gentle, joyous and quirky personality, and he tries to spread it to the people he works with. "We like to laugh," he comments on the atmosphere at the studio. In the words of Max Bruinsma, "Dumbar might be a king, but a king who is also his own court jester."

INVITATION CARDS (1980)
Simple cut-out shapes demonstrate the fun activities that await guests at Studio Dumbar's open house party.

Generally it is difficult to pin point a specific style of Studio Dumbar. There are a few visual clues: In the tradition of Alexander Rodtschenko and Piet Zwart, Gert Dumbar advocated the use of stage photography, a technique of setting up and photographing still lives with found objects, paper mache figures, sculptures and random trash. Tiny, spaced out type, delicate sprays of airbrush, and extremely complicated die cuts are found in much of the work from the eighties. Primary, bold colors often provide a lively and cheerful feeling.

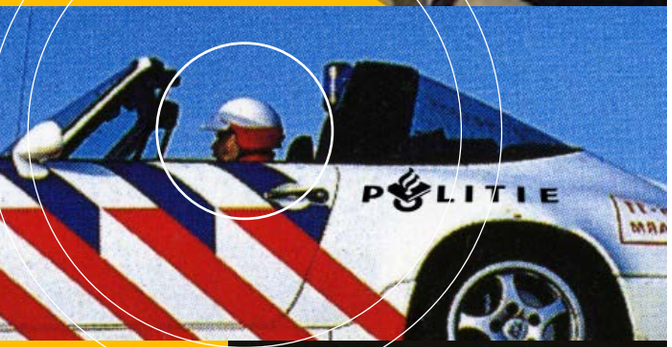
Yet, it is more of an attitude that defines the output of Studio Dumbar, a style that Gert Dumbar has called "styleless". Strong ideas are communicated in a subtle, but outspoken formal language. There is an insistence of adding a playful touch to even to the most serious commissions. Humor and elements of fun and play are valued. One can always see that the designer who worked on a particular project has had fun with it.

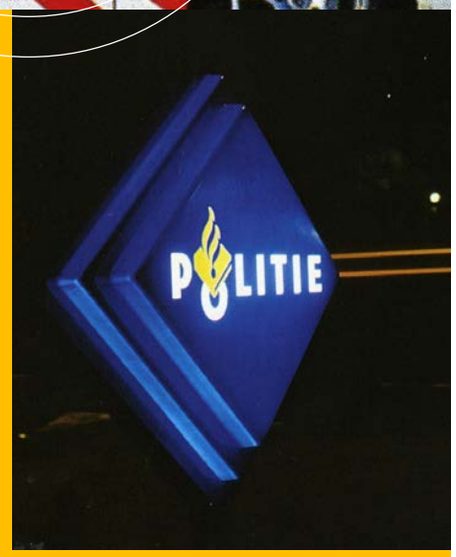


POSTER (1989)
Commemorating 200 years of human rights in France, this poster presents an example of using figures built from paper mache.

WESTEINDE HOSPITAL IDENTITY SYSTEM (1980)

Studio Dumbar developed a complete set of (often surprisingly funny) pictograms for the interior and exterior signs of the Westeinde hospital in The Hague. The symbols depict information for various kinds of hospital users in a straight forward way.
The physical system was designed for easy revision for hospital maintenance staff, providing much needed flexibility. The Westeinde hospital, in fact, became the first to use a sign system with interchangeable symbols.
In cooperation with the hospital, Studio Dumbar offered the pictograms copyright free for non-commercial applications. Since then this medical pictogram language has been assimilated into common use throughout the world.





Yet, for all the admirers and followers that Gert Dumbar has gathered over the years, he has also earned much criticism. Traditionally, Dutch art and design have been characterized by coolness and an effort not to get involved too emotionally. Some people claim that this rational approach suited the sensibilities of the Dutch people, many being stoical Protestants. In the 1960s and 1970s, when Gert Dumbar started his career, the country was under the influence of the Swiss style: strictly rational and objective. Many designers of the time, among them Wim Crouwel, felt that Dumbar's work mocked and undermined sacred principals of order and clarity with pure emotions.

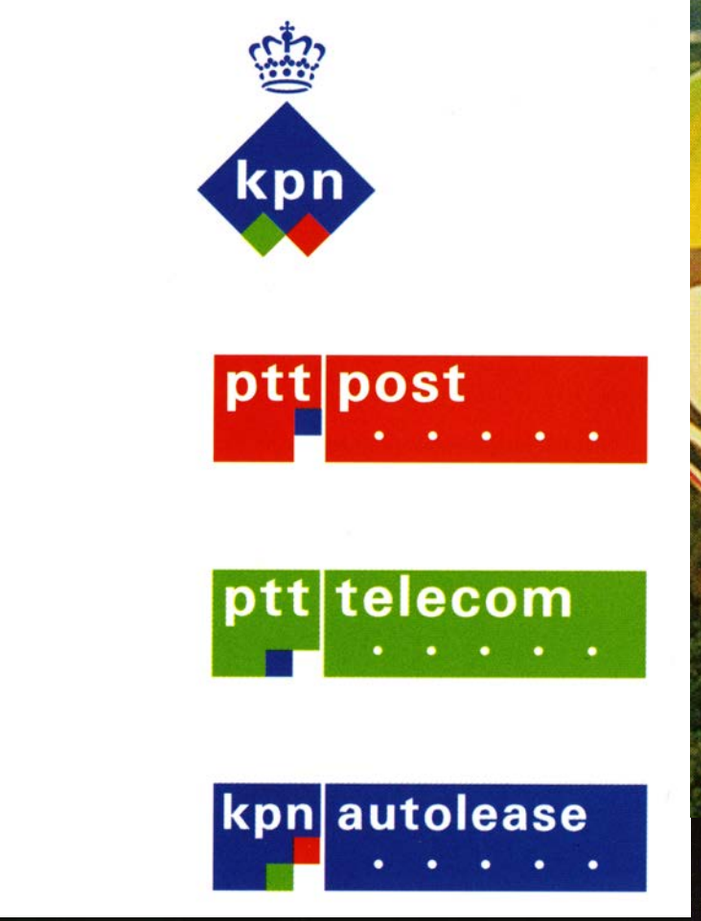
Criticizing the flamboyant redesign of the Dutch police, Chris Vermaas warned that Dumbar threatened to turn Holland into Legoland: "The Dutch policeman seems attached to his motorbike sitting on one big plastic peg and has a head that can spin around 360 degrees and come off in one piece."

Detractors of Dumbar have even invented new words. The verb, *to dumbar*, means "shamelessly decorative." *Dumbarism* is the proclivity for national over design.

To such accusations, Gert Dumbar responds: "Except for a few enlightened moments in the twenties, the rational image ruled supreme in graphic design. We have discovered since that there is more between heaven and earth. To be able to communicate (and that's what it's all about, isn't it?) emotion, enchantment, spontaneity and theatre must all be characters in the play. The strictly rational has lost its function. If it ever had one. Look around and see for yourselves!"

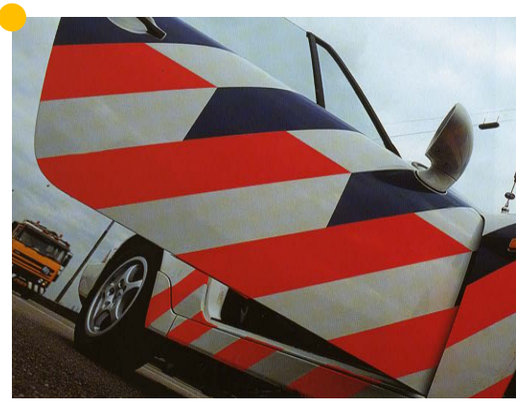
DUTCH POLICE IDENTITY (1993)
Studio Dumbar developed a new visual identity when the Dutch national and municipal police forces were combined into a single one. The old authoritarian and militarist logos (consisting of law book, sword, and exploding grenade) were translated into a friendly beacon. The subsequent identity system promotes the optical visibility of the police force, but also communicates a friendly, anti-authoritarian attitude to the Dutch public.

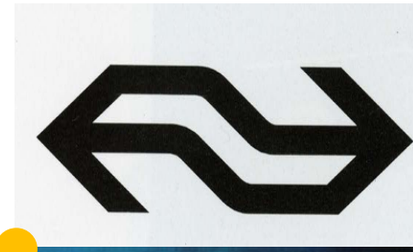
POLITIE



KPN – ROYAL PTT NETHERLANDS (1989)
In 1989, Studio Dumbar was asked to design the identity for the newly privatized post and communications agency PTT, renamed to Koninklijke PTT Nederland, or KPN. The studio developed a logo family for the new holding company and its two subsidiaries, Dutch Post and Dutch Telecom. The logos are applied according to strict and uniform rules for the purposes of formal identification, such as stationary and signs. However, for objects that appear in everyday life, such as telephone booths, vehicles, buildings, and equipment, the studio developed techniques for applying recognizable identities that represent a much looser visual character. In each case, the elementary shapes that form the logo—the circle and the square—are rearranged to the logo's underlying grid. Thus, the identity can be applied from a coffee cup to a train.

Selling such personal work to clients requires a person with intelligence and wit. Gert Dumbar often stresses the functional aspects in his idiosyncratic designs. For example, the stylish, exuberant stripes for the **Dutch police** were explained to the client as a life-saving quality in dangerous situations. This is certainly true, but one cannot deny that the design also carries a sense of anti-authoritarian niceness. An earlier example can be found in Dumbar's redesign of the **Dutch National Railways**. Dumbar persuaded his client into painting the trains bright yellow not by arguing his personal reasons, which might have raised suspicion with a board of government bureaucrats ("When a bright yellow train comes into the station, it's as if the sun rises in these dark and hollow caves" or "Wouldn't it be great to see a bright yellow train gliding through the green landscape under the Dutch blue sky – like a moving Mondrian"). Instead, Dumbar offered a more pragmatic explanation: "The bright yellow will greatly enhance the visibility of the trains and thus improve the safety of stations and railway crossings." The client agreed that this was a sensible thing to do and the trains were painted in bright cadmium yellow. An even more recent example provides the logo that Studio Dumbar designed for the Dutch presidency of the **European Union** in 2004. The argument goes as this: "The typeface-based logo has a clear, straightforward, and at the same time calligraphic and elegant quality. The imaginary square gives it its strong appearance while the surroundings suggest neutrality." Sure. But the logo also uses the lowercase initials 'nl' (for Netherlands) turned on its side to substitute the 'E' in the EU initial. A small visual pun injected into one of the most serious commissions the studio has produced.

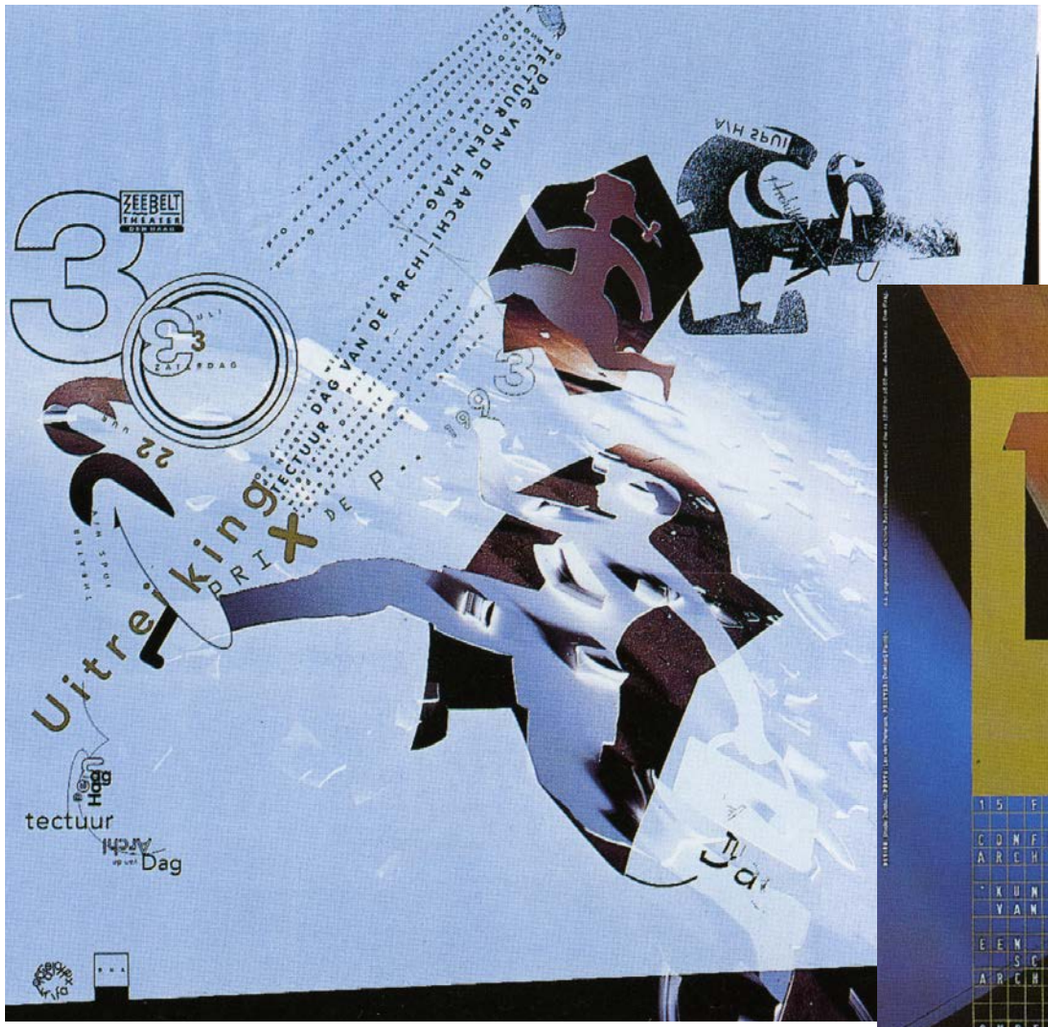




IDENTITY FOR DUTCH PRESIDENCY OF THE EUROPEAN UNION (2004)

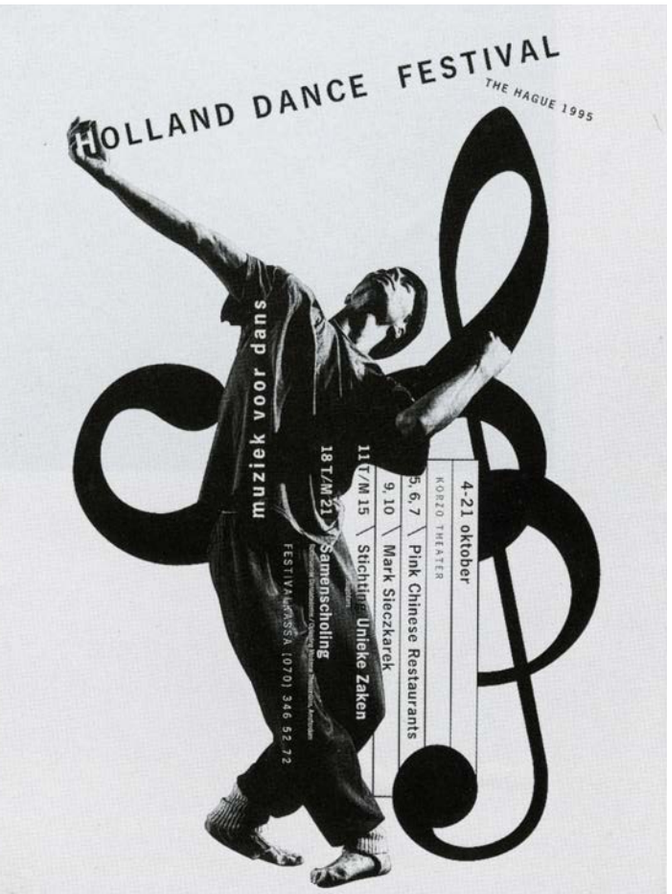
IDENTITY FOR DUTCH POLICE (1993)

IDENTITY FOR DUTCH NATIONAL RAILWAYS (1968)

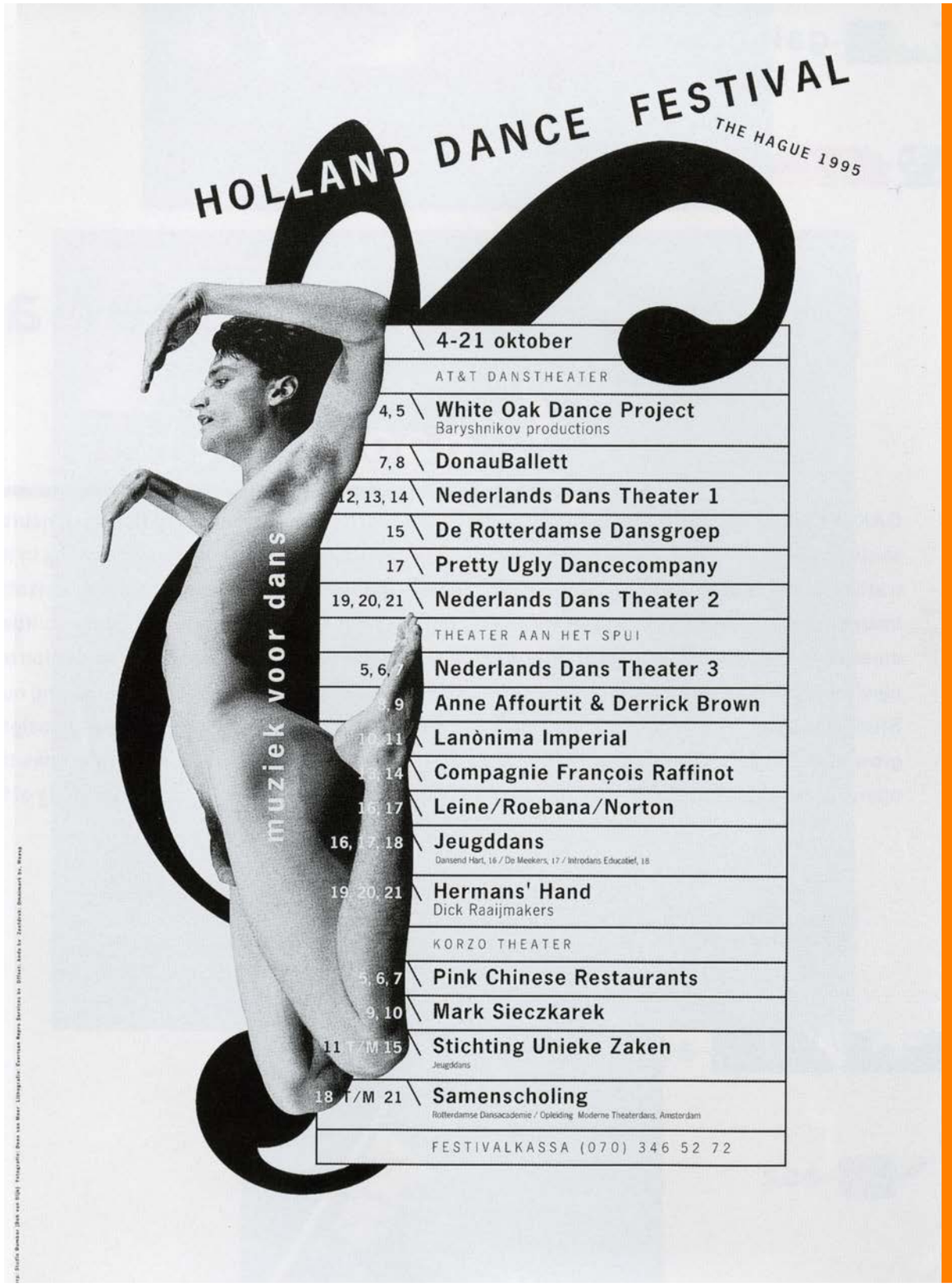


ZEEBELT THEATRE POSTERS (SINCE 1982)
The graphical output for the local cultural center of Zeebelt represents the playground for Studio Dumbar. Gert Dumbar, who is a co-founder of the theatre, sponsors the group by providing posters and other promotional material free of charge. In return, he receives total creative freedom. "We can experiment with images and typography in a way that is sincerely informal," says Dumbar. For economical reasons, posters are preprinted with images and then overprinted with various announcements. These typographic compositions drastically engage the image, sometimes to the effect of transforming the very nature of the original image.

Querying the magazine literature of the past years, one realizes a noticeable drop in interest about the Studio Dumbar. The hype seems to have waned. Most recent articles merely mention Gert Dumbar as an influential designer of the 80s and 90s. But maybe this is the point. His design philosophy has been passed on to a new generation of designers. Much of it has even been incorporated into main-stream design and culture. (After all, moving away from modernist rationalism, Dumbar can be credited as one of the designers that introduced post-modernism into graphic design.)
The height of the influence of Gert Dumbar and his Studio has passed, but his legacy is indisputable. His biggest accomplishment might be that he opened up the graphic design world from an applied or commercial art to one that can be self-expressive and subjective. For this, many young designers working today can be immensely thankful.



HOLLAND DANCE FESTIVAL POSTERS (1995)
The Holland Dance Festival is held every two years in The Hague. Dumbar's approach for the 1995 festival was to examine the relationship of music to dance. Solid forms derived from a musical keyboard merge with photography of dancers to create beautiful and powerful compositions.



Irma Boom

Barlock

HOLLAND

A COUNTRY AT LARGE

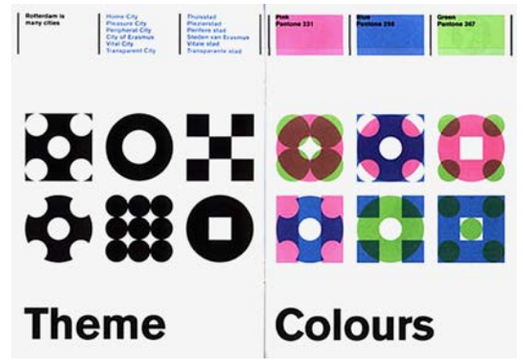
Mevis & van Deursen

IN FLU EN CE

The Dutch culture embodies two important paradoxical aspects: communal order and planning on the one hand, individualism on the other. The former characteristic materializes from the fact that Holland is a country with very limited space where every square centimeter must be meticulously planned. The latter is rooted in a long tradition of democracy and the anti-authoritarian role of the Dutch government.
Studio Dumbar perfectly combines these two aspects of the culture at large: individual freedom and underlying order. At the studio, designers act entirely on their own discretion, but there is also great care taken to prevent disorder or isolation. Studio Dumbar is Dutch Design, and in many ways Dutch Design is Studio Dumbar. There is no city or village in Holland where one is not confronted with Dumbar designs. If it isn't one of their posters, there will be a post office or a telephone booth nearby. Or a police car driving past.

Likewise, there is hardly a Dutch designer who is not affected by Studio Dumbar's work. In fact, many significant Dutch designers, such as the designer pair **Armand Mevis and Linda van Deursen**, started their careers as interns at Studio Dumbar. Mevis and Van Deursen were deeply impressed: "We learned a lot about the mentality of the Studio and especially Gert's way of stimulating the designers in the studio. The studio mentality was not to be afraid of coming up with original and sometimes controversial ideas. That mentality inspired us to start our own office in 1986. It gave us confidence that design could be fun and that we could follow our own interests."
Hélène Bergman and Marc van Bokhoven, who later started as partners in the design firm **Barlock**, were influenced by the Dumbar's approach to identity programs. During their time at Studio Dumbar, they worked on the PTT identity program. This helped them in creating long term design solutions with a coherent system of visual elements for their clients at Barlock. Nevertheless, it is not Dumbar's design style that is credited as the most important influence, but his "spirit."

The most important aspect of Gert Dumbar's influence might be on the Dutch society at large. Thoughtful and provocative design is everywhere; it is deeply encoded into the consciousness of the Dutch people. This, no doubt, inspires many young people to become designers themselves.



BARLOCK:

39 EURO CENT STAMP (2005)
Visualising the theme "Groundbreaking Enterprises."

ACADEMIE VAN BOUWKUNST ROTTERDAM (2002)
Two-sided poster for the Rotterdam Academy of Architecture and Urban Design. One side showcases the most important event of the month, the other a calendar containing information for students and professors.

MEVIS AND VAN DEURSEN:

ROTTERDAM EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE (2001)
The city of Rotterdam was awarded the "European Capital of Culture" title for 2001. As a basis for the identity, Mevis and van Deursen started with a simple circle and a square. They then proceeded to combine these two elements in various combinations. Adding color resulted in a stunning variety of visual themes.

ROYAL COLLEGE OF ART

ENGLAND

INFLUENCE

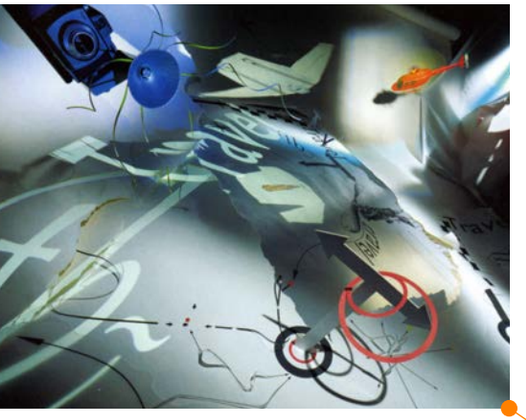
Phil Banes

Hannah Tofts

Why Not Associates

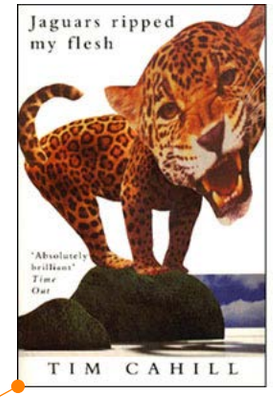
WHY NOT ASSOCIATES:

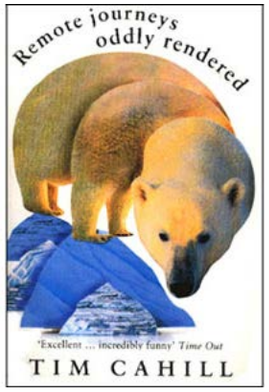
TED BAKER MEN'S WEAR POINT OF SALE (1987)
This early piece shows Dumbar's influence on set building and staged photography.



Gert Dumbar's influence in England (and more specifically in London), stems from the short period when he was the Professor of Graphics at the Royal College of Art from 1985 to 1987. Jocelyn Stevens, the school's newly installed rector at the time, was on a mission of profile raising for the school. Gert Dumbar, who by the mid-eighties was gaining a considerable international reputation, presented a great opportunity to add a celebrity designer to the staff. Yet, Stevens got more than he had bargained for. Dumbar's hands-off teaching methods, giving a large amount of freedom to his student, and his insistence to keep working in his studio in Holland (he only spent one day a week in London) created a rift that would prompt Dumbar's firing only 17 months after he started. "You're all unemployable," Stevens told Dumbar's student just 3 months before their graduation. This, as it would turn out, was entirely false. In actuality, some of the most influential designers emerged from Dumbar's class of 1987. Much of it was due to Dumbar's style of teaching. He would urge student to "think with your heart." He encouraged them to explore the curious and the absurd, and to question the established standards of efficiency and legibility. "I treated my students as my future colleagues," says Dumbar who would frequently refer to them as "Professor Baines Phil" or "Professor Tofts Hannah." Dumbar admits that "meeting them on equal ground and challenging them to express themselves conceptually" may sound like the ideal way of teaching. But he explains that it is only ideal "for those with the creative potential to accept the challenge." At the Royal College of Art, Dumbar was lucky to find many such extraordinarily talented individuals.

Among them was Phil Banes who went on to become typographer, teacher and writer. His work is characterized by careful use of typographic structure, sometimes organic, sometimes highly 'engineered', but always deriving from a respect for the material. Another student, Sean Perkins, joined the design studio North. He uses Swiss style typography with a sideways slant. **Hannah Tofts'** frenzied, imaginative and colorful collaged illustrations can be found many books. Rico Lins went on to become art director at CBS Records in New York and later founded his own studio "Rico Lins + Studio" in Sao Paulo, Brazil. Most celebrated, perhaps, are Andy Altman, David Ellis and Howard Greenhalgh who went on to form the extremely successful **Why Not Associates**. Dumbar's influence can be seen in their use of set building, still-life photography, the use of die-cutting and the active participant typography plays in their designs. For Andy Altman, one aspect stands out among all others: "It is the spirit of fun and experimentation, more than anything else that I think we share with Gert Dumbar."





HANNAH TOFTS:

BOOK COVERS FOR TIM CAHILL

WHY NOT ASSOCIATES:

SMIRNOFF (1990)
Part of set of posters displayed in the London Underground.

BITE (1998)
Yearly season of international theater events held at the Barbican Centre in London.

IN FLU ENCE

Robert Nakata

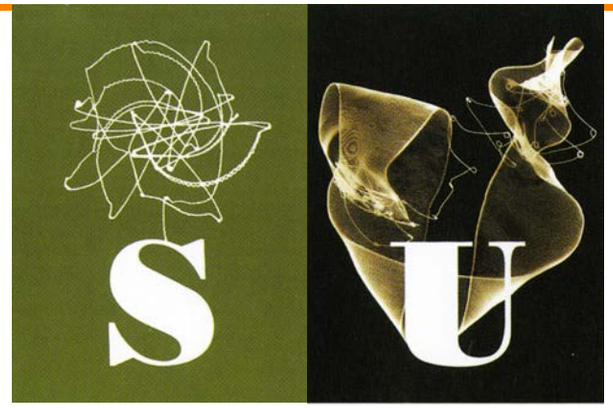
CRANBROOK

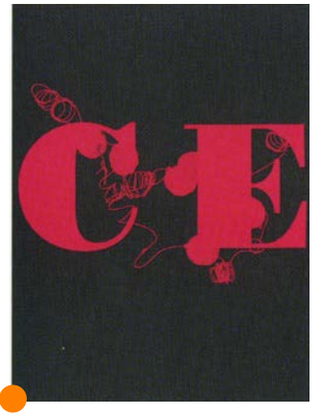
Allen Hori

UNITED STATES

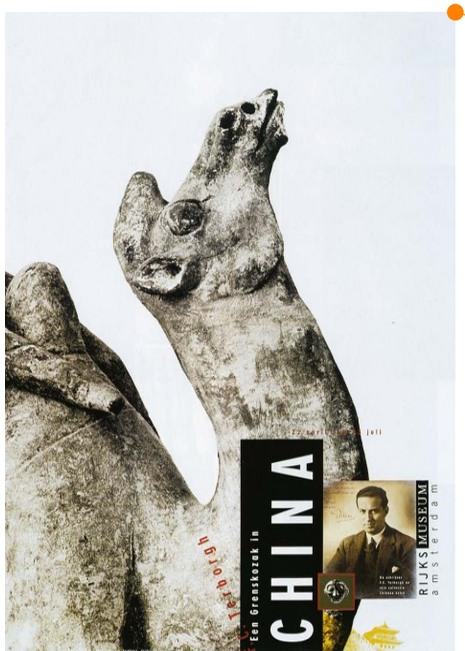
Martin Venezky

The story is often told and has reached mythological proportions: In 1983, the graphic design program director of the Cranbrook Academy of Art, Kathy McCoy, set out for a journey to Europe with her husband Michael. When they returned they carried among their possessions an impressive tube of posters from the Netherlands. This work had never been seen in the US and became the center of discussion at Cranbrook, greatly influencing the work of the students. Many of these admired posters were created by Gert Dumbar. His subsequent lecture visits (among visits from two other Dutch designers, Rick Vermeulen and Anthon Beeke) created a strong bond between the Dutch design community and Cranbrook.
The significance of Dutch design at this particular time is explained by Kathy McCoy in 1984: "At a time when American designers are searching for ways to expand on the ideas of the Swiss School, the Dutch offer a refreshing insight into how designers of all types might synthesize a number of diverse elements appropriate to their audience and culture." A frequently quoted line from Gert Dumbar at the time was "a lot can be used."
There was another reason why the introduction of Dutch design at Cranbrook at this particular moment was fruitful. Cranbrook students like Jan Jancourt, Jeffrey Keedy, Ed Fella and Edward McDonald were dissatisfied with the "New Swiss" typography and were already searching for new models. They were turning their attention to theories of "Deconstruction" and "post-structuralism." Post-structuralist thought argues that an artist cannot fully control visual or verbal language because language is created of an unstable system of signs whose meaning cannot be fixed by the author. This prompted some Cranbrook designers to embrace the personal and self-expressive in their design. Although most Dutch designers were not very interested in philosophical discussion (Gert Dumbar once said: "The ideas in Dutch design are rarely verbal. They are visual.") their work still presented an association of parallel values.
When he visited Cranbrook in 1985, the students were impressed by Gert Dumbar. And he, in turn, was impressed by the students. He invited them to work as interns in his studio. Among the first to accept this offer were David Frej, Jan Jancourt, Edward McDonald and **Robert Nakata**. David Frej speaks of his experience: "Gert Dumbar's emotional expressiveness inspired me, not his formal aesthetics. Because he encouraged my formal approach (versus anyone else's) as it pertains to interpreting a client's needs, I was able to grow as a graphic designer with an independent point of view." Robert Nakata, in fact, ended up staying in Holland becoming a full-time employee at Studio Dumbar.





MARTIN VENEZKY:
SUNDANCE FILM FESTIVAL (2001)
Experimentation with a broken Spirograph toy provided the basis for this set of postcards for the Sundance Film Festival. The use of various experimental techniques for this project exemplifies Martin Venezky's joy of formal discovery.



ROBERT NAKATA:
EXHIBITION POSTER FOR THE RIJKS MUSEUM (1989)
Nakata designed this poster while working at Studio Dumbar.

Martin Venezky, after graduating from Cranbrook in 1993, also embraced the opportunity to move to Holland for three months. In his work one can see elements that strongly parallel Dumbar's ways of working: themes of constant experimentation & discovery, building sets for staged photography, an emphasis on active typography and a general sense of joy and energy. For Venezky, the freedom of experimentation was most impressive: "The courage to approach one's vision with confidence and fearlessness, and the freedom to change and embellish the work as it is being conceived is what I will remember most from my all-too-brief moment at Studio Dumbar."

Interview with Martin Venezky
on March 3, 2006

Which aspects of Gert Dumbar's work have influenced your own work?

Having been there, one of the things is the force of his personality, which you don't really know until you meet him. You may hear stories about him, but it's hard to understand how it all manifests itself in this kind of wild, fun guy. But he was fun in a very gentle way. He wasn't obnoxious – maybe some people thought of him as obnoxious, I never did – but he was a kind of prankster all the time. He likes to do things in the spur of the moment. He likes to surprise people. Even though he was older than most of the people in his studio, I think he was probably

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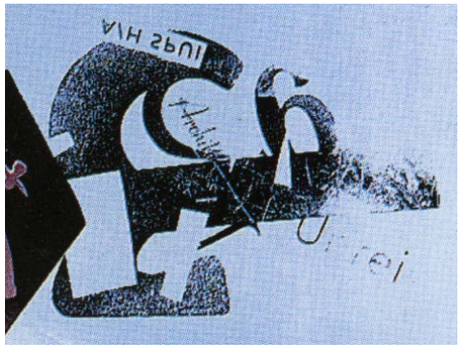
Martin Venezky



Detailed area above.

ZEEBELT THEATRE POSTER (1993)
This Zeebelt poster was Venezky's first assignment during his internship at Studio Dumbar. The detailed area was a result of Gert Dumbar's mischievous actions that he performed around the studio.

the youngest as far as the spirit. Where other people where kinda stogy sometimes, he was this magic elf that went around and messed everything up. I was working on one thing and he would take some trash he found around and just scotch-tape it right onto the middle of what I was working on. "There, it needs that." And off he'd go to somebody else's desk to scribble on something. It was really interesting to see the idea that even though he was running the huge studio – he was doing annual reports for Shell at the time – it never changed his mischievous personality. It doesn't mean that when you move into business and you become very important you suddenly have to become very sober. Understanding that the personality can maintain itself was very important for me.

When Dumbar talks about his process as "open-ended working," he talks about spontaneity and taking calculated risks, experimenting to the risk of failure, I see that in your work and your design process.

Yeah, I think that's right. I don't know that I necessarily got that from there, because I wasn't there long enough. But the idea of just trying materials, trying things and seeing what happens, I think there were employees that took this to heart. So they would spend all day working on pieces of wood on the ground that they were going to photograph just to see what would happen with the chance that nothing would.
Gert worked with a lot of photographers. Lex van Pieterson was one of them. For the Zeebelt posters, they created a theater space and would just act on this makeshift stage. They would bring in props and create a story, and they would just goof around and Lex would take pictures. This technique was more improvisational than it was random. And Lex is a good photographer. I think that idea of setting up situations, having skills and then improvising is a real important trade.

And something you teach…

Yeah, and that is the nice thing about teaching motion here. A lot of what I'm suggesting to my students is to create sets and to film that set moving. But it's something that is hard for them to understand and even in motion houses it isn't done very often. I'd be very curious of how the computer has affected what they do at Dumbar. Because when I was there they had maybe 3 computers.

Do you still have contact with any of the people you met at Dumbar?

Every now and then I hear from someone who worked there. A lot of them have moved on to other places. But people kept returning while I was there. People that used to work for him would often just pop in and hang out and see what was going on and have lunch. Which was nice to see that it was a real open door. He didn't make very many enemies it seems. And that all part of his personality, too.

Dumbar had a tremendous impact on Cranbrook design in the middle to late eighties. You went to Cranbrook in the early nineties and in your book you describe it as a time of tremendous change and transition. I'm wondering if there was still a lot of talk about Dutch design and Dumbar.

I don't think as much. Because it mostly came from Kathy and Mike McCoy who went there in the 80s and brought all that stuff with them that had never been seen. When I was at Cranbrook there wasn't much general talk about Holland, but you would find out a lot about it because designers that were referred to were often Dutch. I knew that there was that connection mainly because I saw the work of Robert Nakata and Allen Hori and often some of their most interesting stuff was from their time at Studio Dumbar. But a lot of it I had to look up on my own. And when I had the opportunity to go there, I chose that because I really had an affinity of what they were doing.

You talk a lot about "top-down" and "bottom-up" design, and your preference for the latter, the more unofficial stuff. From what I have read and from talking to people, Holland seems like such a "top-down" country in terms of design. Everything is designed to the max. Michael Rock even uses the term "Dumbarism" for Holland's nation-wide over design.

Well, not everything is brilliant design there. There's a lot of junky stuff around if you look for it. One of the nice things in Holland is that things are not designed to be generic. In the US, too, most things are designed if you look at shopping areas and their beige colors, over and over again all across the country. It's design, but design to the lowest common denominator, a kind of blandness. In Holland, the government sponsors a lot of unusual designers and encourages them to be bottom-up, to be iconoclastic, in their postage stamps and the phone cards. So it's coming from an official source, but people that they're inviting are some of the unofficial people, the "prankster" types. I think that looses up what could be a strangle-hold, if everything was official and very dogmatic. It's not that way, at least I didn't find it. But to have the opportunity as a young designer to do a postage stamp – that's pretty incredible. And you don't have to make it look like any other postage stamp, you do what you wanna do. They get applauded for their quirkiness, for their individuality. In the US, if you were to do a postage stamp, the first thing you would do is to look at all the other stamps to make sure it kinda fell in line. In Holland, it seems to be often just the opposite. And I think that's a really nice way for the government to work with the arts and not regulate the arts.

SPEAK MAGAZINE (1998)
For this spread, Martin Venezky had to create a set of type cut out of paper. He explains, "There is a huge threshold between 'let's pretend it happened' and 'let's do it and see what happens.'"