



MEET THE
MAKER

ENJOYING THE JOURNEY WITH JANNEKE VAN DER HEIJDEN

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JOIN DESIGNER-MAKER AND
FOUNDER OF ALL THINGS WE
LIKE JANNEKE AS SHE SHARES
HER INSPIRING STORY

Janneke van der Heijden is one of those people that radiates positivity and joy. Her gorgeous homewares lift any room, and her plant-filled studio and colourful camper totally echo the playful aesthetic of All Things We Like, her homewares brand based in Utrecht, The Netherlands.

But, those feel-good vibes don't stop there. Janneke's passion for sustainability and fair working practises lie at the heart of everything she does, from sourcing planet-friendly materials to working with local artisans to make her nature-inspired products.

Since leaving art school to work as an art director at a creative agency, eco-design has had Janneke's heart, and over the last 10 years she's built a hugely successful brand while staying true to her original ethos. She now works in a team of two but collaborates with a whole host of talented creative pals to make her products, handily located right next to her studio space within VechclubXL.

We chat to her about staying true to your passions, the importance of community, and taking your business worldwide from the back of a campervan – ultimate maker goals.

What gave you the push to start selling your work?

The first creative market in Utrecht in 2011. I really wanted to take part so I signed up for the next one and experimented with laser cutting some wooden necklaces – a new technique back then. They almost all sold out which I didn't expect at all, but it made me think I should do more.

How did you expand the business from there?

I did more markets, got featured in magazines, and stores asked to resell my collections. Then I shifted from selling to customers to selling directly to stores. I studied marketing strategy while working as an art director, so I knew if I wanted to grow more, I should do more international trade shows. I love presenting my work at expositions like Maison&Objet in Paris, travelling around »



Sustainability is at the heart of everything Janneke does, from sourcing eco-friendly materials to working with local artisans.



and meeting people there. Showing more of myself and my creative process on Instagram helps, too.

Sustainability is a massive part of your ethos – what does that mean for your brand?

From the start I decided I only wanted to design products and put more ‘stuff’ out into the world if it wasn’t harmful to the planet and the people making it. Nature is a huge inspiration to me, so the idea of putting more plastic out there or using overseas production wasn’t an option. It’s not easy, but it is possible to make products that contribute to a better world, and I like telling my story and educating people on the impact of the choices they make in a playful way.

You also work with local artisans and social workplaces, is that right?

Because my designs involve experimental techniques and new materials it’s hard to find help with production, and I didn’t want to import products from overseas. When looking for a woodwork shop I came across a social workplace where people with disabilities, or people reintegrating into society, make wooden items. For example, a man with no arms got a machine that only he could operate to saw my frames. He was so proud, it made me want to sell more as he loved making them! There are also people with autism illustrating my ceramics, and it makes them very happy to have a job.

Tell us about the factory that your studio’s based in

VechclubXL is a creative factory that’s home to around 150 other entrepreneurs. There’s a ceramics studio where I produce some of my ceramics, a product designer who does my laser cutting, a woodwork shop where I try out new things for upcoming collections, and photographers and illustrators I work with. It’s like having creative colleagues and endless inspiration around me!

Sounds amazing! Do you find you have enough time to experiment with new ideas?

I make sure to have ‘Creative Fridays’ where I play around in my studio, experimenting and sketching, which leads to the new collections. I relax, repot some plants, draw, visit a museum or read a book – just empty my mind to get all the creativity flowing. I try not to get caught



01

01 Everything Janneke makes solves her own design problems, like these colourful plant hangers. 02 “Nature has always been a big inspiration to me”. 03 All Things We Like’s products usually involve

experimental new techniques and materials. 04 Shelves filled with ceramics, ready to brighten up new homes. 05 Even Janneke’s window inspires: “I believe if you are open to it, beauty is in everything.”



02



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things
we
like

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“I only wanted to put more ‘stuff’ out into the world if it wasn’t harmful to the planet.”

up in answering emails or administration then, which is hard sometimes as the more success you have, the more emails you get! That’s why I now have an employee to help me with production and admin, so I have a bit more time for my creative process and new opportunities. My challenge isn’t having enough ideas, it’s having enough time to realise them all!

What do you love most about running All Things We Like?

Having the freedom to work full time on any creative project I make up! Being my own boss is a big plus. And I love the fact it makes others happy and inspired, from those making the products to the store owners selling them and the people using them. It feels like positivity radiating out.

Have you experienced tough times on your business journey?

I didn’t really, or maybe I have the gift to stay positive in tough times. During the »



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01 “My studio is perfect, the long windows along the side make it a **bright and sunny place** - like a greenhouse.”

02 Janneke’s restored VW Campervan doubles as a **mobile office** and holiday home on wheels.

pandemic, I was one of the first to design face masks, and had the opportunity to design a special collection for the Rijksmuseum Twenthe. With the help of Syrian refugee tailors we printed all the artworks from the Rijksmuseum Twenthe on fabric and made all 350 employees of the museum a face mask. It made me realise you can’t wait for work to come to you, you have to get up and get going.

And now you’re literally up and going, in your amazing campervan!

I enjoy living in the city but missed being outside more and I always loved Volkswagen campervans, so it seemed like the ideal solution. It takes me and my designs to the trade expos around Europe, but also takes my sons, my friends and myself into the wild for the weekend. I just bring my laptop or my jewellery making things with me, and I can work from anywhere.

Would you say you and your brand have grown together?

In art school the focus is on developing creative skills, not running a business, so I learnt a lot by figuring it out and making mistakes along the way. I still feel like someone just making some necklaces sometimes, then realise how much my company has grown over the last 10 years – I never dreamt I’d be shipping my designs to the most prestigious museums and stores all over the world!

“I never dreamt I’d be shipping my designs to prestigious museums all over the world.”

Can you share a peek into any upcoming products?

Recently, I’ve been working a lot with porcelain, so new ceramic designs are on the way. I also finally designed illustrations for the porcelain pots and tableware. The inspiration was actually the new tattoo on my back! Before I got the perfect one, I had a whole sketchbook full of leafy patterns. Since my personal life and work blend so much into each other, my tattoo design’s on my tableware.

Do you have any words of wisdom for makers starting out?

The best advice I got was from a teacher who endlessly repeated: ‘Find your own personal hysteria!’. It’s so true. In the long run, finding your own fascinations and working from your authentic self it takes you so much further. Then you’re at your best and truly original, so follow your heart and go for it!

Janneke runs eco-friendly interiors brand *All Things We Like*. Combining playful design with a sustainable ethos, their products have a positive impact on your mood and a minimal impact on the environment. www.allthingswelike.com