



# Acquisitions

## from the Interwar Years

• DIRK-JAN BIEMOND, ROBY BOES AND LUDO VAN HALEM •

- 1 ANONYMOUS DESIGNER, executed by the Utrechtsche Fabriek van Juwelen, Zilverwerken en Zilveren penningen N.V., Amsterdam  
*Box with Abstract Geometric Decoration*, 1919  
Silver and enamel, h. 6.5 x diam. 7 cm
- 

Marked, on the underside: lion statant quality mark with 1 (= first quality silver (934/1000)), date letter 'b' in a shield (= 1919), maker's mark italic 'b' in an oval below a crown (responsibility marks 1997, no. 50267) = Utrechtsche Fabriek van Juwelen, Zilverwerken en Zilveren penningen N.V., crowned city arms of Utrecht (supplementary mark).

On 7 May 1919 an exhibition of the silversmith's art opened in the galleries of a fine arts society, the Maatschappij voor de Beeldende Kunsten in Amsterdam. For the first time the work of modern Dutch artists in silver was contrasted with their sources of inspiration – seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Dutch works of art, and Indonesian and Chinese pieces from ancient times. The exhibition curator, Carel J.A. Begeer (1883-1956), also looked to the future. Fine artists and architects were asked to provide designs and manufacturers to sign up to produce them. We know that this initiative bore fruit, but we do not know exactly who supplied designs, nor which firms undertook to put them into production. Some of the objects were still not ready even when the exhibition closed on 31 May 1919.

According to the marks, this box was made in 1919 in a company that until 1 July 1919 was part of the NV Koninklijke Utrechtsche Fabriek van Juwelen en Zilveren Penningen C.J. Begeer. After a transitional period it merged, as the parent

company had previously done, with the Koninklijke Nederlandse Edelmetaalbedrijven in Voorschoten. There is every reason to link the object with Carel Begeer's initiative. In the same context, Carel Begeer's firm made designs in gold, silver and enamel by the Utrecht artist Erich Wichman. The firm run by Carel's half-brother Cornelis L.J. Begeer (1868-1945), de Stichtse Fabriek van Zilveren Werken van Corn. L.J. Begeer in Utrecht, had close contacts with modern architects. In April 1919, for instance, Cornelis Begeer commissioned Gerrit Rietveld to design his shop in Oud Kerkhof.

Stylistically the decoration is akin to the work of various artists and architects in the circle around *De Stijl* magazine. The stepped construction of rectangular blocks calls to mind, for instance, a newel post designed by architect Robert van 't Hoff in 1918 and a now lost garden sculpture by *De Stijl* editor Theo van Doesburg made in 1919. There is also an affinity with the paintings Chris Beekman was making around 1919-20. In his output – in the short period in which he worked in the abstract idiom of *De Stijl* – arrangements of ascending planes and right angles created by (seeming) overlaps occur frequently.

To date we do not know of any silver objects that can be attributed with certainty to artists from the *De Stijl* School. In view of the early date – two years after *De Stijl* magazine first appeared –

fashionable and superficial imitation seems out of the question. The fact that we know of no comparable objects seems to indicate that it was a one-off test piece or was made for strictly personal use.

DJB/LVH

PROVENANCE:

...; purchased by Mr Jan Tor; purchased from his heirs through art dealer Rob Driessen, with the support of the Ernst Nijkerk Fonds/Rijksmuseum Fonds  
(inv. no. BK-2013-17).

- 2 GERRIT THOMAS RIETVELD (Utrecht 1888-1964 Utrecht),  
executed by Meubelmakerij Rietveld  
*Child's High Chair for the Van Boven Family*, c. 1919 (design), executed c. 1922-23  
Wood and leather, 90 x 45 x 42.5 cm
- 

Gerrit Rietveld's furniture for children is a special category in his oeuvre. The adjustable child's chair with which he made his first appearance in the magazine *De Stijl* in 1919 is one of the many designs in this category, which also include children's pull-along wagons, a cot, a playpen, a child's bed, a toy wheelbarrow, a washbasin, a dolls' house and various other children's chairs. It is not surprising that these items of furniture and toys occupy such a prominent place in his oeuvre, as Rietveld himself was the father of five children, who were born between 1913 and 1924. His growing clientele was also from the generation that had started families in the 1910s and 20s.

His customers included Willem van Boven (1892-1955) and Jeanette Tielkemeijer (1889-1975), who married in Utrecht on 20 October 1921. Tielkemeijer was born in Leiden but at the time of her marriage was working as a nurse, possibly in or near Utrecht, where Rietveld had his original furniture workshop. The fact that she died in De Bilt – where Rietveld's assistant furniture maker, Gerard van de Groenekan, eventually set up shop – suggests a long association with this area. Willem van Boven worked as an architectural draughtsman for the Building Inspectorate and Housing Department (or the Municipal Housing Department) in Rotterdam, where the young couple were living. He read the magazine *De Stijl* and may also have worked with *De Stijl* architect J.J.P. Oud, who was employed by the Municipal Housing Department

as the city architect. In 1920 Oud asked Rietveld to furnish a model home in a social housing project in the district of Spanghen with his slatted furniture. Van Boven may have seen Rietveld's furniture there.

Soon after their wedding Willem and Jeanette van Boven were expecting their first child, a daughter who was born on 23 September 1922. When she was just able to sit, she was proudly portrayed in her ultra-modern chair. This means that Rietveld must have made and supplied the child's chair at the end of 1922 or the beginning of 1923 at the latest. The design appears to be older, however, because it belongs to the family of slatted furniture in which the famous *Red and Blue Chair* made in 1919 was the centrepiece and the start, and which was soon expanded to include the upright chairs, the table and the sideboard that were on show in Spanghen.

Every other documented example of this type of child's chair suggests that the design had still not been fully worked out when this piece was made. The armrests had been placed so close together that Van Boven found it necessary to saw them off (they were replaced during a restoration) to make room for his growing children. In the other comparable examples the back legs were inside the frame and the armrests outside, creating more space for the child to sit in. The fact that the slats in these examples were rounded off would likewise appear to be the



result of advancing insight. Such indications justify the cautious assumption that the child's high chair for the Van Boven family was one of the first examples of this furniture design.

LVH

LITERATURE:

Sale cat. *20th Century Decorative Arts*, Amsterdam (Christie's), 6 November 2001, p. 69, no. 199 (bought in)  
 Peter Vöge, *The Complete Rietveld Furniture*, Rotterdam 1993, p. 56, cat. no. 37 (1971 replica in the collection of the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam)

Marijke Kuper and Ida van Zijl, *Gerrit Th. Rietveld 1888-1964. Het volledige werk*, Utrecht 1992, p. 82, cat. no. 48 (similar example)  
 Theodore M. Brown, *The Work of G. Rietveld, Architect*, Utrecht 1958, p. 166, cat. no. 15 (similar example)

PROVENANCE:

Commissioned from G.Th. Rietveld by Mr and Mrs van Boven-Tielkemeijer; by descent to their daughter Mrs M.C.W. Jonker-van Boven; purchased from her son with the support of Pon Holdings B.V.  
 (inv. no. BK-2016-89).

## 3 JAN DEN DRIJVER (The Hague 1903-1993 The Hague)

*Five Interior Drawings and a Design for a Sideboard, 1923-35*

Pencil, watercolours, 282 x 350 mm (RP-T-2015-43-1); 470 x 354 mm (RP-T-2015-43-2); 365 x 355 mm (RP-T-2015-43-3); 261 x 320 mm (RP-T-2015-43-4); 295 x 207 mm (RP-T-2015-43-5); 301 x 340 mm (RP-T-2015-43-6)

The six drawings by Johannes Hendrik Bastiaan (Jan) den Drijver that the Rijksmuseum has acquired show interiors typical of the modernistic ideas of living in the nineteen-thirties. What is unusual in these drawings is the layout with contemporary tubular furniture in combination with a colour scheme that evokes associations with *De Stijl*. We do not know whether the drawings were designs for specific rooms or free artist's impressions. Meticulously coloured and executed interior impressions from this period are rare.

Little is known about the life and work of Jan den Drijver. He followed in the footsteps of his father, who trained him as a furniture maker. Later Den Drijver also worked as a furniture draughtsman and interior designer. From the end of the nineteen-twenties he was active under the business name of 'Woninginrichting De Stijl'. Although Den Drijver often moved around within The Hague, from 1928 onwards his showroom and 'workshops for home furnishing' were situated at 99 Thomsonlaan and then at 9 Hogewal for prolonged periods. Den Drijver mainly designed and made affordable wooden furniture in the New Hague School style, which now and then still appears on the market. In 1962 he lost his showroom and workshop in a distress sale.

Den Drijver made the six drawings at the start of his career. Unlike the five interior drawings of the early nineteen-thirties, the 1923 design for a sideboard is a stylistic blend of Gerrit Rietveld's slatted furniture of around 1920 and the New Hague School. The tubular metal furniture and the lamps in the other five drawings are reminiscent of the designs by the Rotterdam-based furniture firms of Gispen and d3 and the austere furniture by Mart Stam produced by Thonet in Austria. The red electric conduit that runs across the wall and ceiling from the switch to the lamp in one of the drawings is an interesting feature. In 1928 the architect Jan Buijs had also opted for a solution like this for the sitting room and study of his

house in The Hague; an unusual arrangement that might have served as an example for Den Drijver.

RB

## PROVENANCE:

...; purchased, with the support of Pon Holdings B.V., from Gallery Frans Leidelmeijer, 2016 (inv. nos. RP-T-2015-43-1 to 6).



Inv. no. RP-T-2015-43-1



Inv. no. RP-T-2015-43-2



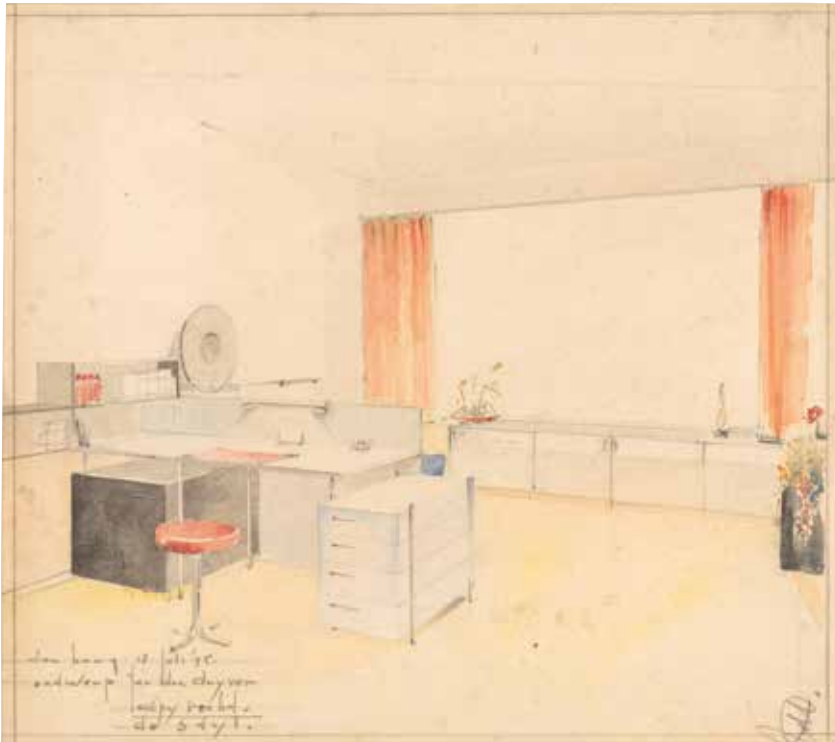
Inv. no. RP-T-2015-43-3



Inv. no. RP-T-2015-43-4



Inv. no. RP-T-2015-43-5



Inv. no. RP-T-2015-43-6



- 4 GERRIT THOMAS RIETVELD (Utrecht 1888-1964 Utrecht),  
executed by Gerard A. van de Groenekan (1904-1994 De Bilt)  
*Zig-Zag Chair with Holes and Short Armrests*, 1932 (design), executed after 1938  
Wood, metal and paint, 69.5 x 52.2 x 53 cm

The *Zig-Zag Chair* and the 'red and blue' slatted armchair are the most famous furniture designs in Gerrit Rietveld's oeuvre. Like the slatted furniture, where a specific construction principle of jointed slats intersecting at right angles led to a 'family' of similar designs, there is also a series of variations on one principle in the *Zig-Zag Chair*. Several of these design families can be identified in Rietveld's oeuvre. Sometimes one family gave rise to another.

What is characteristic of this design is that the baseplate, 'leg' and seat are joined together at an acute angle. The 'leg' runs from the back of the baseplate obliquely up to the front of the seat, creating the characteristic Z shape. The tensile forces of the acute corner joint are absorbed by a series of nuts and bolts, the compressive forces by an angled batten.

The first *Zig-Zag Chairs* were designed in 1932 as dining chairs, but after a few years different variations were produced – with armrests, as low or high armchairs, with high backs or low backs with holes, and even some children's chairs. Rietveld also once experimented with a version made of metal tubes and one made of plywood. But in those last two variations it was only the shape, not the construction principle, which governed the design.

Rietveld tried out many of his chairs for varying periods in his own home. At some point he gave the *Zig-Zag Chair with Holes and Short Armrests*, which the Rijksmuseum has acquired, to his eldest daughter Bep (Elisabeth) Eskes, undoubtedly after he had used it himself for some time at home. It is the most compact variant of the *Zig-Zag* armchairs, and its pattern of holes may have prompted the perforations in his experimental *Aluminium Chair* of 1942. In turn this particular feature gave rise to a small new 'family' of similar designs.

LVH

LITERATURE:

- Peter Drijver and Johan Niemeijer, *Rietveld meubels om zelf te maken*, Bussum 2011, pp. 94-97  
 Ida van Zijl, *Gerrit Rietveld*, London 2010, p. 134  
 Luca Dosi Delfini, *The Furniture Collection Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam 1850-2000: From Michael Thonet to Marcel Wanders*, Rotterdam/Amsterdam 2004, p. 316, cat. no. 499 (fig.)  
 Peter Vöge, *The Complete Rietveld Furniture*, Rotterdam 1993, pp. 84-85, no. 124 (as *Zig-Zag Chair with Cushion*)  
 Marijke Kuper and Ida van Zijl, *Gerrit Th. Rietveld, 1888-1964. Het volledige werk*, Utrecht 1992, pp. 145-47 (fig.)  
 Marijke Küper and Mart van Schijndel, 'Der Sitzgeist. Over het ontstaan van de Zigzagstoel', *Jong Holland. Tijdschrift voor Beeldende Kunst en Vormgeving in Nederland na 1850* 3 (1987), no. 2, pp. 4-11, fig. 12

PROVENANCE:

- G.Th. Rietveld, c. 1938-60s; donated to his daughter E. Eskes-Rietveld, c. 1960s-80s; donated to her daughter M. Eskes, c. 1980s; gift of M. Eskes, Krommenie, 2015 (inv. no. BK-2015-1-1).



- 5 WILLEM HENDRIK GISPEN (Amsterdam 1890-1981 The Hague),  
executed by Gispen's Fabriek voor Metaalbewerking N.V. Rotterdam  
*Armchair no. 304*, 1933  
Chromium-plated steel, Bakelite, bamboo and paper cord, h. 61 x 47 x 70 cm

W.H. Gispen was the first Dutch designer and manufacturer to see the potential of the modern tubular steel furniture shown at the Werkbund exhibition *Die Wohnung* in Stuttgart in 1927. Four years later, Gispen started mass production of his own dining chairs with no back legs, which were derived from the first design for a cantilever tubular chair by Mart Stam. The chair with no back legs was a new invention that radically changed the concept of a traditional chair with four legs. The bent steel was so sturdy that people were able to 'sit on air' and the slight springiness made it even more comfortable.

In 1933 Gispen presented a range of armchairs with no back legs, of which no. 304 was the first. It was the most unadorned and restrained model in the catalogue. The other models all had thick upholstered cushions. In the austere lines of this model Gispen echoed other well-known international designs of tubular chairs like the B35 by Marcel Breuer and Mies van der Rohe's *Weissenhofstuhl*.

The finish of the *Armchair no. 304* acquired by the Rijksmuseum is unique. The paper cord upholstery, which follows the shape of the frame between seat and back without interruption, was not offered in the catalogue, nor is it known to have been available on other items of furniture made by Gispen. The interweaving forms a clean geometric pattern, reflecting the rigorous modernism at the beginning of the twentieth century. Gispen may have been experimenting with new upholstery materials or he may have made this chair – originally one of a pair – at the special request of an unknown client. This chair also differs from other designs because the crossbars, invisibly incorporated in the upholstery, are made of bamboo rather than steel.

RB

LITERATURE:

- Otakar Máčel, *2100 Metal Tubular Chairs*, Rotterdam 2006, p. 134 (fig.)  
André Koch, *W.H. Gispen. Serieproducten 1923-1960*, Rotterdam 2005, p. 130 (fig.)  
André Koch, *W.H. Gispen: A Pioneer of Dutch Design*, Rotterdam 1998, p. 45  
André Koch, *Industrieel ontwerper W.H. Gispen (1890-1981). Een modern eclecticus*, Rotterdam 1988, p. 90  
Jan van Geest and Otakar Máčel, *Stühle aus Stahl: Metallmöbel 1925-1940*, Cologne 1980, p. 80 (fig.)  
Sale cat. *Gispen metalen meubels. Meubelcatalogus no. 52*, Rotterdam 1933, p. 5, cat. no. 304 (first mention)

PROVENANCE:

- ...; purchased by dealer Harry Mellema, Niet Nieuw Design, Tynaarlo (2008); dealer Ad van den Bruinhorst, Gallery De Andere Tijd, Kampen (2009-16); purchased from Gallery De Andere Tijd, 2016  
(inv. no. BK-2016-53).



## 6 JACOB BENDIEN (Amsterdam 1890-1933 Hilversum)

*Plastiek*, 1933

Brass, h. 37.4 x diam. 14.5 cm

Jacob Bendien's *Plastiek* is a singular work in the Dutch sculpture of the interwar years. While the sculptural landscape was dominated by the stylized, expressionist figuration of artists like John Rädecker, Hildo Krop and Johan Polet, Bendien made an organically shaped, almost abstract sculpture in 1933 when he was close to death. In the book Paul Citroen published in 1940 in memory of Bendien he writes that it was not cast in aluminium and silver-plated bronze until after the artist's death. The number of examples is not mentioned. The last mentioned example is in the collection of the Kröller-Müller Museum (inv. no. 1435-61), although Citroen was mistaken about the finish: the bronze is plated with nickel, not silver.

A third example in patinated brass can now be added to the other two finishes. We do not know whether it was Bendien himself who gave instructions for the different finishes but it is quite probable that he did. He devoted an extraordinary amount of attention to the texture, nuance and variegation of his drawings and paintings, and this would have been much the same in the few sculptures he made. *Plastiek* is an exceptional experimental work because of its remarkable organic shape and its execution in different metals.

In Bendien's oeuvre, this sculpture is closely related in form to the early abstract paintings his friend Jan van Deene dubbed 'absolute painting' in 1913. The fluently formed, but strictly separated planes of colour were 'depictions' of 'animated nature in the abstract'. Ten years later Bendien continued to elaborate on this organic idiom with his 'meditative' line drawings that symbolically expressed the 'ramblings of our thoughts and inner life'. Anyone looking at *Plastiek* with such a spiritual gaze can see expressed in it growth or rising up or even a thought that is forming, but the power of the work nonetheless lies in the unusual and remarkably strong plastic form.

LVH

## LITERATURE:

- Sale cat. *Kunstkoppels. Kijken met nieuwe ogen*, Ede (Simonis & Buunk) 2014, p. 14  
 Marianne Brouwer and Rieja Brouns (eds.), *Sculpture in the Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller*, Amsterdam 1992, pp. 52, 54, cat. no. 197 (nickel-plated bronze example)  
 Carel Blotkamp, 'Oude bekenden, lang niet gezien. Jacob Bendien', *Kunstschrift* (1991), no. 2, pp. 52-53 (nickel-plated bronze example)  
 Elina Taselaar (ed.), *Jacob Bendien 1890-1933*, exh. cat. Leeuwarden (Fries Museum)/Utrecht (Centraal Museum) 1985, p. 85, cat. no. 95 (nickel-plated bronze example)  
 Paul Citroen (ed.), *Jacob Bendien 1890-1933. Een herinneringsboek*, Rotterdam 1940, pp. 82, 99, fig. 24 (aluminium example)

## PROVENANCE:

- ...; anonymous sale, Zofingen (Auktionshaus Zofingen AG), 17 June 2006, no. 2022; Kunsthandel Simonis & Buunk, Ede, 2006-16; purchased with the support of the Knecht-Dreth Fonds/Rijksmuseum Fonds, 2016  
 (inv. no. BK-2016-36).

