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## Case Studies in Design Policy & Programmes

This case study was developed as part of the SEE project. SEE is a network of eleven European partners sharing experience and stimulating debate on how to integrate design into innovation policies at regional, national and European levels.

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# The Henry van de Velde Awards and OVAM Ecodesign Awards PRO

Belgium



Visitors trying out the Oasis, a sofa designed by Bram Boo for Feld. Photo: Michael De Lausnay

Every year, Design Flanders organises the Henry van de Velde Awards and the OVAM Ecodesign Awards PRO in Belgium. In the last four years, seven hundred design products have entered the competition and an international profile has been created for Flemish design. Since 2008, the Henry van de Velde Awards have included the OVAM Ecodesign Award PRO an initiative of the Public Waste Agency in Flanders to promote responsible and sustainable consumption and production.

December 2009 marked the sixteenth session of the Henry van de Velde Awards & Labels since their inauguration in 1994. The award was created as at the time, no prizes existed in Belgium or Flanders for professionals in design or design-related fields. To underline their prestige, Design Flanders wanted to attach a number of symbols to the Henry van de Velde Awards, including a trophy, calligraphic certificate and prize money. Siegfried De Buck created the first trophy and Design Flanders used his design for five editions. Nedda El-Asmar created the second trophy and the third was by David Huycke. Helena Schepens, one of the youngest Flemish silversmiths, with a Masters from the Royal College of Art in London, is the designer and maker of the fourth trophy. The certificate had to be calligraphic in order to illustrate the power of craftsmanship, just like the trophy. The first calligrapher was Bert Binneweg, and the second was Brody Neuenschwander, who worked with Peter Greenaway on films like *The Pillow Book*, *Prospero's Books* and others. The cash prizes have been increased to 5000 Euro for the Career Award, the Company Award and the Award for Young Talent. The Public Award is worth 2500 Euro. Normally the award ceremony is held the beginning of January of the following year.



Calligraphic certificate by Brody Neuenschwander

The ceremony for the Henry van de Velde Awards & Labels 2009 took place on 19 January 2010 in the De Schelp chamber of the Flemish Parliament. The Awards and Labels were presented by Kris Peeters, Minister-President of the Flemish Government while Joke Schauvliege, Flemish Minister for Environment, Nature and Culture presented the OVAM Ecodesign Award PRO 09. Prizes for this session were awarded as follows:

#### Henry van de Velde Public Award 2008

The prize was awarded to Frederik Aerts for the Neo product, a set of pans that he designed for Berghoff International. This product was chosen by the public who visited the Henry van de Velde Awards & Labels 2008 exhibition as the best product.

#### Henry van de Velde Award Young Talent 2009

Jorge Manilla Navarrete's jewellery won this year's prize for Young Talent. His work reaches out to the possible answers to questions that inquisitive minds have sought throughout their lives. Religion, myth and spirituality determine the verbal character of his pieces of jewellery. A deeper symbolism runs through his works, which each viewer can individually interpret.

#### Henry van de Velde Award Company 2009

Drisag, an upholstered seating manufacturer, has plenty of good seats. Drisag develops and manufactures its own products in close collaboration with well-known designers like Stefan Schöning (2008 designer of the year), Alain Berteau and Roel Vandebek. During recent years, Drisag has also profiled itself as a production house for important design brands like Moooi, Vange & Lensvelt. This is how the company came into contact with designers of international allure like Marcel Wanders, Gerard van den Berg and Joep van Lieshout.

#### Henry van de Velde Award Carreer 2009

Since 1989, Martine Gyselbrecht has been continuously searching for new developments as a freelance textile designer. On the looms in her studio, she creates experimental samples that are then manufactured by interested companies at home and abroad. She is mainly inspired in her research by the characteristics and tactility of unusual materials. The experimental research is supported by a great deal of technical knowledge and a strong sense of simplicity and beauty. (From Label-design.be)

OVAM Ecodesign Award PRO 09 | Product on the market

Sas Adriaenssens receives the Ecodesign Award for three Buzzispace products: Buzziscreen, Buzzizone and Buzziboard.

OVAM Ecodesign Award PRO 09 | Product in development

The Beci Bike Project, designed by Fosfor, is a bicycle leasing concept for the city of Brussels, consisting of a durable bike rack (covered or not) for traditional and folding bikes.



The reception in De Loketten, the exposition room of the Flemish parliament, begins. Photo: Michael De Lausnay

The Henry van de Velde Awards & Labels have evolved with time, and in harmony with the changing spirit of design. When granting the prize for Best Product, the judging panelists were increasingly confronted with a dilemma of having to choose between a crafted, industrial or graphic product, and sometimes even a virtual product, which gave rise to some thorny discussions. In 2006 Design Flanders finally replaced the prize for Best Product with the Henry van de Velde Labels. These confer a quality label to a product on the market that clearly offers new vision and perspectives. The chosen products may use the Henry van de Velde Label in any way they

choose. In the past four years, Design Flanders has awarded exactly 50 Labels, from a total of around six hundred and eighty products. Both at home and abroad, partly thanks to the high quality of their creations, Flemish designers attract enormous interest and enjoy considerable success. Furthermore, many global companies call upon the services of Flemish designers and design studios to develop their products. In this difficult socio-economic period, the performance of these companies and designers is certainly encouraging. Design is expressed in many forms and functions. The Henry van de Velde Labels show why, and with good reason, design is not necessarily synonymous with exclusivity, but can be accessible to everyone. It has become a form of innovation, an expression of pride and very often simply a means of doing things faster and easier. It is rewarding to see that businesses and designers in our region are bringing a steady stream of quality design products onto the market.

In 2008, the award organisers, Design Flanders, were approached by OVAM, the Public Waste Agency in Flanders, to link their OVAM Ecodesign Award PRO with the Henry van de Velde Awards as part of their strategy to promote responsible and sustainable consumption and production in Flanders. In promoting eco-design initiatives, like the Ecodesign Award PRO, OVAM wishes to demonstrate that innovation, the environment and the economy can go hand in hand. Europe currently faces the major challenge of tackling both an economic and an environmental crisis. Over the last decade, the processing, sorting and recycling of waste in an environmentally friendly manner have been well managed in Flanders. But further action is necessary. Moreover, even when products and waste follow the 'cradle-to-grave' system, we are still hitting the limits of our waste and looking at insurmountable problems. We may well be reaching our recycling goals, but environmental pressures keep increasing. Therefore, we must seek new tools and methods - such as eco-design - to help us keep our impact on the environment to a minimum.

Ecodesign is a design method that takes into account the environmental impact of a product throughout its lifecycle, from the design and production phase to the waste and recycling phase. When designing a product, considering its environmental impact is one of the keys to environmentally sound business practice and a cleaner environment. Ecodesign closes the material cycle, making the 'cradle-to-cradle' philosophy reality and is thus the design method of the future.

To reward the environmental efforts of Flemish designers, OVAM delivers one annual Ecodesign Award to students and one to professionals. Products entered for the Ecodesign Award PRO must have a clear 'Flemish' link and have been on the market for no longer than three years. There are two categories: 'marketed product' (prize: 4000 Euro) and 'product in development' (prize: 2000 Euro). In assessing the entries, the jury considers the extent to which eco-design was applied: did the designer take into account environmental aspects at every stage or in as many phases of the lifecycle of the product as possible? The criteria used to assess this are on the one hand, how the environmental impact of the product throughout its lifecycle was evaluated (fulfilment of function, raw material substitution, materials saved, efficiency of processes, distribution, product use, product life span and product disposal) and on the other hand, its interpretation of the concept of sustainability through social, economic and ecological aspects. In addition, the jury obviously also considers the overall quality and design, distribution potential and innovative character of the product.

For the delivery of the award, Design Flanders invests, together with OVAM, 120,000 Euros in an award ceremony and reception. In January 2010, the event attracted 850 people. In total, 10 staff members are involved in the preparation of the award. According to Johan Valcke, Director of Design Flanders, 'the challenge of this type of promotion strategy is to keep finding new, well designed products and to find and convince companies to participate. However, the investment has been positive because the public interest in the ceremony and exhibition keeps growing. We succeed in attracting the general public, government representatives, designers, design companies and the media. The ceremony has become a major event and the awards & labels are highly appreciated tools for promotion.'



President of the Flemish Government, Kris Peeters presenting the award to Frederik Aerts

For more information on the Henry van de Velde Awards, Labels, winners and exhibition, visit:  
<http://www.designvlaanderen.be/en/hvdv-award-labels/laureates.html>