

GREAT SHOPS

Present tense? Forget the chain gang this holiday season. These Amsterdam-only stores are thinking outside the (gift) box. Mark Smith and Anna Whitehouse spoke to the city's radical retailers for some expert inspiration. Photography by Marie-Charlotte Pezé



Jutka & Riska

Whimsical wardrobe accents

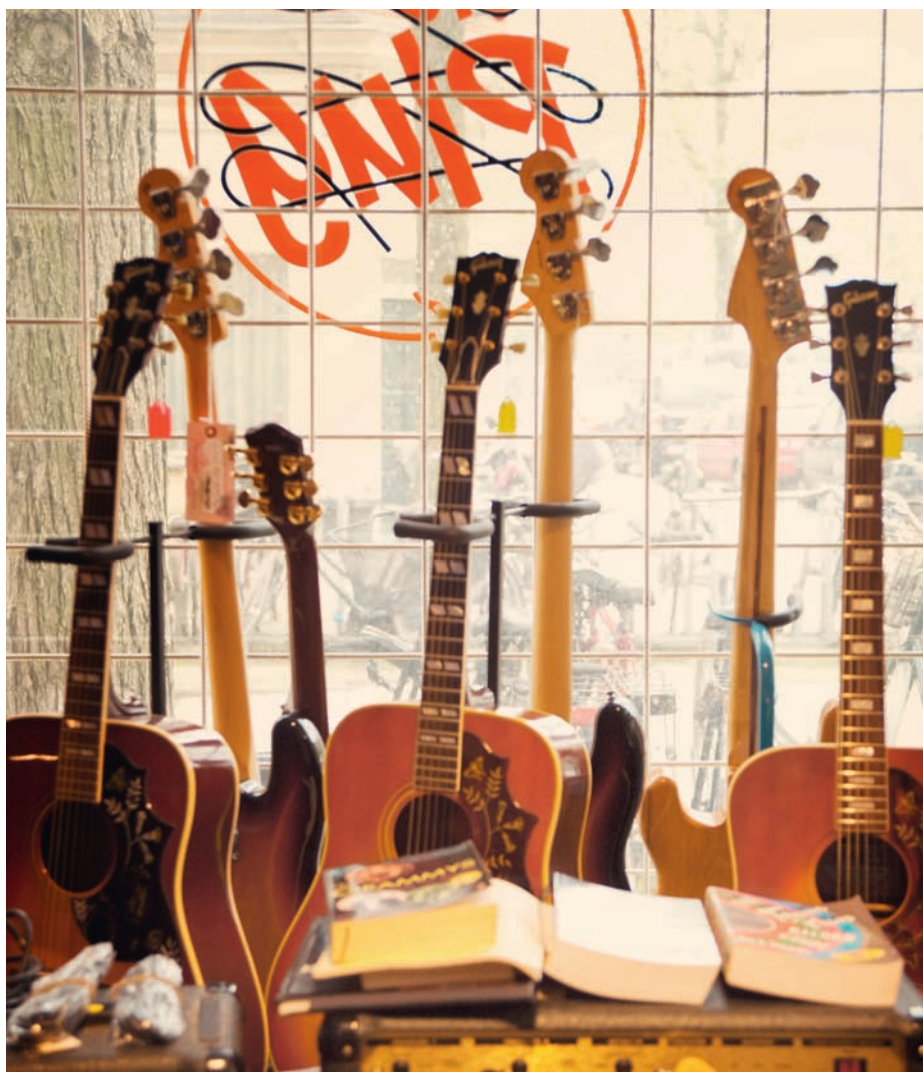
Mixing quirky vintage pieces, handpicked from the stock of wholesalers all over Europe, with the work of up-and-coming local designers (including the Roparosa brand from Roos van der Kamp, winner of 'Project Catwalk') and a healthy dose of cheap and cheerful accessories (we're loving the Prada-esque butterfly shades, at a pleasingly non Prada-esque €10), the Volkerts sisters, whose first names are above the door of this store, certainly know a thing or two about keeping the shopping experience fresh. Whimsical hats are displayed atop kitsch ceramic dogs rather than boring old mannequins and tunes from Whitney Houston's ebullient heyday set the sonic tone.

Bilderdijkstraat 194 (062 466 8593/jutkaen-riska.nl). Open Mon-Sun 10.30-19.00, Thur until 21.00. MS



'You can wear this skull print scarf with absolutely everything, it's so adaptable. It can give a rock 'n' roll edge to a more demure outfit or else take a leather jacket to the next level. It comes in several different colours. At this price, you can afford to keep one for yourself, too.'

Jiske Snoeks,
sales assistant.



De Plug

String fellows

The musos who populate this canal-side guitar shop, nicknamed 'Woodstock in de Pijp', were the subject of a successful documentary (2010's brilliant 'Mama Don't Like No Guitar Pickers Around Here') and to step inside De Plug is to see exactly why. Rock 'n' roll is a way of life for this ragtag collection of old-timers, who'll break into song at the drop of a hat, demonstrating the wonderfully diverse selection of vintage acous-

tic and electric instruments with practised ease. See the poster of John and Yoko at the back of the store? Staffer Roy Griffon, who was 14 at the time, was by the pair's bedside the afternoon it was taken. The store doubles as a rehearsal space for his band Backbeat Club.

Ruysdaelkade 105 (662 4889/deplug.nl). Open Mon 13.00-18.00, Tue-Fri 10.00-18.00, Thur until 21.00; Sat 11.00-17.00. MS



'It may look like a novelty item, but this Hello Kitty electric guitar is made by Squire, a decent brand, and it's actually a great instrument for beginners. When children come into the shop, it's amazing to see how they make an instant bee-line for it.'

Roy Griffon,
part-time shop assistant.



Colors

Wick thinking

Adjacent to the De Regenboog drop-in centre for the homeless and recently re-housed, this affiliated workshop offers its students a hot meal at lunchtime and the chance to acquire a new skill in the form of candle making. All day long, happy crafters can be seen pouring fluorescent molten wax into a variety of distinctive moulds. The brightly coloured results are worthy of any high-end design emporium, but much cheaper. Crafters are paid a small fee for their efforts and are happy to chat with inquisitive customers about the creative process, so nosiness is encouraged.

Bilderdijkstraat 184 (530 9814/deregenboog.org). Open Mon-Fri 09.00-16.00. MS



'We have so many participants and I can't remember exactly who made this one, but they'd certainly gotten the hang of the manufacturing process. The stripes are so perfectly aligned on this, it would almost be a shame to burn it.'

Franz de Jong,
project leader.



Juffrouw Splinter

Girlish knick-knacks

Stepping into this rambling curiosity shop that was formerly an old grocer's store on Prinsengracht is like walking into the Mad Hatter's tea party. There's an ethereal, dream-like vibe to the place that permeates every rickety shelf and dainty hand-painted tea cup – one feels like the Queen of Hearts could well be stashed away in one of the antiquated wardrobes in the basement. Owner Jolyn Bosma ditched her career

as a lawyer nine years ago to live out her retail fairytale and if the Cath Kidston-style crockery and highly covetable floral textile lamps are the benchmark, she's arrived. She gestures toward an old till from 1910 and then points to an old 'koffie' tin from 1912. 'I'm surrounded by my favourite things every day – *this* is the dream.'

Prinsengracht 230 (330 5515/juffrouwsplinter.nl). Open Mon 13.00-18.00, Tue-Fri 11.00-18.00, Sat 11.00-17.00. AW



'I'm not sure I'll even sell this. It's only €10 but they're really rare, especially the orange ones. It's a cocoa powder tin from this old grocery store in Amsterdam that's no longer around. It was one of the first things I had in store, so I suppose it means a lot to me. I might sell one of the green ones if you're lucky...'

Jolyn Bosma,
owner.

Fifties/Sixties

'Mad Men' vintage

On first impressions, Fifties/Sixties is a hoarder's cavern. With barely room to swing a cat, this tiny shop on Reestraat is jam-packed with vintage lamps, toasters and household objects from the '50s and '60s that even owner Jetty Bär sometimes can't fully describe: 'I think that one filters coffee', she guesses, pointing to an oversized mug with a metal lid. A self-confessed magpie, 68-year-old Bär has the kind of twinkle

in her eye that has no doubt secured her great deals on everything in store. 'I absolutely won't reveal my sources, jeez,' she laughs. 'Not in a million years.' Unique, affordable (€145 for an original 1930s chandelier) and with jolly Bär at the helm, this could well light the way through any Christmas shopping tunnel.

Reestraat 5 (623 2653/fifties-sixties.nl). Open Tue-Fri 13.00-18.00, Sat 13.00-17.30. AW



'Okay, so I have to admit I have no idea who the designer is, I just picked this up from a market in Edam, but I do know it's late '60s. I don't go with brands usually, for me it's just a feeling. I look at it and I just know. Then I haggle, walk away, haggle some more and then finally get the right price.'

Jetty Bär,
owner.

Nilsen Cadeau & Zo

Nouse for the Nordic house

You may recognise Norwegian Turid Nielsen, owner of this fragrant Oud-Zuid boutique that opened last year, from her other retail life. The glass panel in floor by the window is a clue, revealing a similar soap-making apparatus to the machinery of her other store, La Savonnerie. As well as the beautiful hand-made toiletries from far and wide (check out the exquisite and geologically correct geode soaps from America)

this new venture stocks pretty much whatever takes Nilsen's fancy: mostly beautiful textiles in muted New England-style colourways and some exquisite hand-made children's toys from Denmark. Appropriately, there's even an organic soap-making kit for kids. *Willemsparkweg 157 (470 4718/lasavonnerie.nl). Open Mon 13.00-18.00, Tue-Sat 10.00-18.00. MS*

'I'm completely head-over-heels in love with this hand-knitted Princess and the Pea doll by Danish brand Maileg. This manufacturer's other toys – like their mouse in a matchbox – have sold really quickly, so I'm thinking about hiding her until I'm ready to say goodbye.'

Turid Nielsen,
owner.





'I love leather. I love simplicity, so no bling bling stuff, just really simple and beautiful designs. That's what Kala Newman is great at – this necklace goes with everything, but I always like to think of contrasts, so try wearing it with something girly or sporty.'

Audrey Weeren,
co-owner.

Vezjun

Boho boutique

So, you have a label, people love it, what to do? Set up a quirky little boutique with your mates, of course. This is what four Dutch designers – Kala Newman, Gabrielle Holland, Roos van der Kamp and Audrey Weeren – decided to do seven years ago and Vezjun on Rozengracht is the result. It's a kind of boho version of Young Designers United, but with a little less floor space. This turquoise-walled fashion hub houses one-off designs from all four designers, including Newman, who hopes to see her urbanite leather necklaces decorate the décolletage of Carice van Houten. 'She's a friend of a friend so I have my fingers crossed.' One of the four 'fashion musketeers' as they're known by devoted fans, designer Audrey Weeren is a stickler for quality leather; her satchel bags are hand-crafted and softer than a powder puff. Rozengracht 110 (vezjun.nl). Open Tue-Fri 12.00-19.00, Sat 11.00-18.00. AW

Soon Salon

Fashion fresh from the atelier



'This 3D bird-in-a-cage Christmas decoration was made with a special printer that basically prints your design in plastic. These are so feminine and beautifully designed that we asked the designer, Michiel Cornelissen, to make them into earrings too.'

Rutgen Prommenschenkel, co-owner.

Jolyn Bosma, owner.

Owned by sister-brother duo Sheila and Rutgen Prommenschenkel, Soon Salon is at the bleeding edge of all things cool – apparently that includes 3D 'printed' Christmas baubles. The festive orbs in question are by Michiel Cornelissen and are displayed alongside Sacha Lannoye's leather pumps that have a gold placard emblazoned across the heel saying '20kg or less' – a friendly poke at the fashion industry's use of rake-thin models. Rutgen's own fashion

label Ha-ru-co-vert adds some additional flourish to the luxe lifestyle store with tutu ruffle dresses and military-print business suits. Our personal favourite? A photo book called 'Loser' – the 'superheroes in recession' chapter depicts a downtrodden superman with a cardboard sign that reads 'extreme piggy-back rides €1'. Haarlemmerdijk 146 (06 2422 3557/harucovet.nl). Open Tue 13.00-18.00, Wed-Sat 11.00-18.00. AW



Soon Salon



'This silk kimono is from the late '60s or early '70s and Ken found it at an antiques market in Tokyo as a complete set – something that's really hard to come by. It's called a 'tsugesage', which means it's not so formal that you can wear it to a ball, but smart enough for a visit to relatives. I love the autumnal floral pattern on it for this time of year.'

Berber Oostenbrug, shop manager.

't Japanse Winkeltje

Daylight robbery

't Japanese Winkeltje ignites the sort of lifestyle ambition among its regulars ('Oh, to afford a 1930s appliqué kimono,' one remarked while we were in store) that's usually reserved for glossy interiors rags. The minimalist decor is the work of Japanese-Danish architect Nezu Aymo – a nod to the level of pedigree that owner Ken Nishigori can command. Born in Tokyo, but based in Amsterdam, Nishigori set up shop in 1976 with a

steely determination to bring the 'beauty of Japan to Damrak' (a big task, if ever there was one). If the delicate sake set, hand-made by artist Kazuo Toyomasu, and the 'Kukura' table lamp, which resembles a Philippe Starck number, is anything to go by, we'd say he's turning us Japanese. *Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal 177 (627 9523/japansewinkeltje.nl). Open Tue-Sat 10.00-18.00. AW*

Typique

Escapist stationary

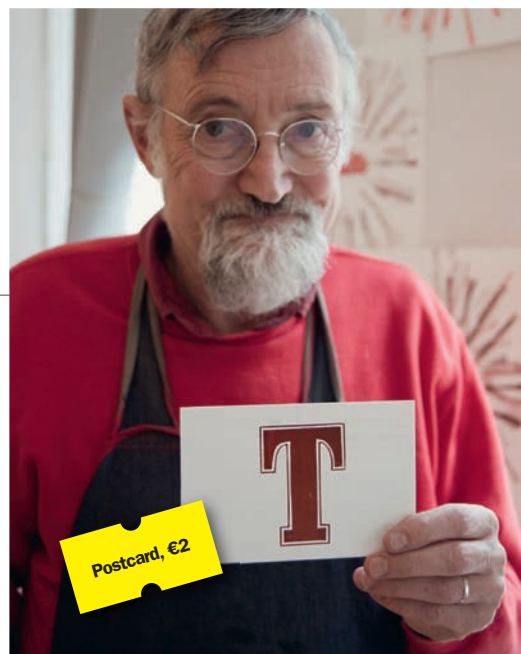
There's nothing typical whatsoever about this wonderfully anachronistic stationery trove, which is to desktop publishing what the nearby Movies cinema is to the soulless modern multiplex. Founder René Treumann set up shop in 1979 after graduating with a degree in typography and he's been hand-printing bespoke greeting cards, posters and wedding invitations on-site ever since, using beautiful, carved stamps of everything from Amsterdam canal houses to elephants to create captivating one-offs. Recently, Treumann has seen a resurgence of interest in his artisan wares, as the Facebook generation tires of its own amateur DIY efforts. He's particularly proud of his framed 'Castles in the Sky' series of one-off prints. And rightly so.

Haarlemmerdijk 123 (622 2146/typique.nl).
Open Mon-Sat 10.00-18.00. MS



'Like everything in the store, these Sinterklaas greetings cards are hand-printed by me. The inscription on the back reads 'je kunt er geen chocola van maken', a Dutch idiom which, roughly, translated means 'useless'. For someone who's on a diet, it's a good alternative to the traditional chocolate initial.'

René Treumann,
owner.



'This dog bed from Lord Lou is called the "Antoinette" and I think you can see why. Fine absolutely adores it, which is always a good sign when it comes to my stock. She's got pretty good taste. The fur is synthetic; I'm thinking about becoming a vegetarian and would never sell the real thing.'

Saskia Schipper, owner.

Vovnjau

Presents for posh pets

The brainchild of former private banker Saskia Schipper, Vovnjau sells luxury goods for cats and dogs, as well as high-end accessories (think limited edition Hunter wellies) for their well-heeled owners. The vibe is Paris catwalk rather than Paris Hilton, so it came as no surprise when Schipper told us that she's been invited to open a pop-up concession at the chic Maison de Bonneterie department store this month. Mini Vovnjau will open its doors 10 November. We have to admit being slightly envious of Fine, the adorable rescue shelter 'mutt' who's been Schipper's constant companion for the past four years. She gets her pick of the canine candy and hand-made leather collars. A dog's life? Not really...

Willemsparkweg 68 (772 0825/vovnjau.nl).
Open Mon 13.00-18.00; Tue-Sat 10.00-18.00,
Thur until 19.00. MS



Outras Coisas

Little bits of luxury

Originally a Portuguese pottery shop (hence the name), the camera-shy owner Ewo Karkdyk ('Oh please no photo of me,' he protested) now uses his Nine Streets shop to sell gifty items that include homewares and fashion accessories. But Karkdyk doesn't like to shoe-horn his store into any particular category. Currently, there are Missoni bath towels and bone spoons for sampling caviar on the raw wooden shelves, along with supple leather

products from Campomaggi, but what's on sale at any given moment is completely subject to Karkdyk's whims. 'I sold all kinds of fashion last year,' he says, 'but not now, I doubt I'll have anything you see here in a few months – Outras Coisas is always changing its colours.'

*Herenstraat 31 (625 7281/outrascoisas.nl).
Open Mon, Sun 12.00-17.00, Tue-Sat 10.00-18.00. AW*



'I don't like trendy things or anything too structured. I feel like a cool biker with this bag. It's simple, without being plain and it won't be cast aside by the fashion magazines because it's timeless.'

Ewo Karkdyk,
owner.



SASKYA & CO

A FINE
SELECTION
OF
MODERN
DUTCH
SOUVENIRS

**Stromarkt 5
Amsterdam
020-4200840**

**OFF THE SINGEL,
NEAR KOEPELKERK
AND CLOSE TO
CENTRAL STATION**








THE ORIGINAL SEX SHOP BY WOMEN!

Large selection of:

- Lingerie
- Sexy apparel
- Assorted toys
- Lubricants
- Bondage
- Literature
- Films
- Jewellery
- Accessories





Browse in-store and online at
www.mailfemale.com **for quality brands and products to satisfy even the most individual tastes...**

Mail & Female • Nieuwe Vijzelstraat 2 (corner Weteringcircuit) Amsterdam
 T: 020 6233916 • Open Mon-Sat: 11.00-19.00 • Sun: 13.00-18.00

