



'Doing business internationally: make it happen!'

Marketing director Jille Kuipers (28) of startup Design Indulgence is a global citizen. Born in South Korea, he grew up in the Netherlands and started a business in Hong Kong. 'At 18 years old I did an internship in the Caribbean. It decisively influenced the course of my life; under the influence of an entrepreneur/investor I learned about the world of business. After studies and another internship in the United Kingdom, in 2010 I went to Singapore, a gateway to Asia. There I took my first steps in innovation. I then moved on to a big market and joined Philips in Shanghai.'

There, he was responsible for innovative projects mostly in the hospitality industry, such as human-centric lighting providing a sunset and sunrise experience in hotel rooms. However, Jille had an 'itch' to move on, driven by the desire to be involved with improving life through technology. To not just make products but have this added value as well.

'I had gotten to know one of my fellow entrepreneurs –Tomas Ortiz-Ferrer – through my work at Philips. Over dinner and drinks together with Banly Cheung we had endless conversations and discovered our shared passion for better living. And making it available to "the sensible consumer", close to people's values and beliefs', says Jille. 'Design Indulgence started in September 2015, with the stated mission of creating crafted moments of beauty. In our view, beauty needed a redefinition. Our intent was to bring art to products that have a special role at home. Reflecting values such as re-using materials and craftsmanship for better experiences with technology.'

Sensible and meaningful consumption

Enter their first product category Sound ART-Works and its Collection No. 1. Timeless art and modern hi-fi technology all in one. 'When travelling in Asia we were inspired by old wooden fishing boats, discarded and just lying on the beaches there. This precious material has a new life in our design object – the sound system is shaped as a boat and made from teak wood, porcelain and electronics – with its own story. To us it represents conscious and meaningful consumption.'

Collection No. 1 is a limited-run serial art piece combining (the wood) with craftsmanship (the porcelain).

'The teak wood is durable and sustainable, provided by our partner operating from South East Asia. We wanted to use old and obsolete wood instead of wood from recently cut trees. In terms of regulation and certification this is definitely something out-of-the-box. You really have to know your way around to prove old growth teak was reclaimed and not chopped from the forest. With regard to quality and quantity South East Asia proved the best region to source the teak wood from.'

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As fast as possible, Jille and his partners have been visiting the main audio shows around the world with their prototypes – among others in Las Vegas and Munich – and with encouraging results. 'It felt really good to see people expressing genuine interest and accepting 100% of our vision', Jille smiles. 'A lot of hard work on the preparation such as prototypes and research was rewarded.'

Some 50 sets are currently undergoing testing for CE and other certification. Collection No. 1 should be available this fall at a price tag of around 3,800 euro (depending on local VAT). It will be a limited run of a few thousand sets, after which Design Indulgence will move on to the next project.

Make it happen

What does Jille consider the most important factor in being a startup entrepreneur? 'Well, you see it is quite simple really. Make it happen! I mean you need to create a strong vision and start working to realize it. A strong vision creates focus and motivation. Then you have to do it yourselves. Trial and error. In a team of three you have to make it happen. A strong shared vision is a strong motivator.'

Photo caption:

Jille Kuipers asked his picture to be taken at Zoku Amsterdam because Zoku is a point of reference, having a similar vision offering an enriched experience for better living, just as Design Indulgence does. See www.livezoku.com/nl/ (Photos: Ewout Huibers for Zoku and concrete (Social Spaces); Hans van der Lee (Jille Kuipers)).

Hans van der Lee