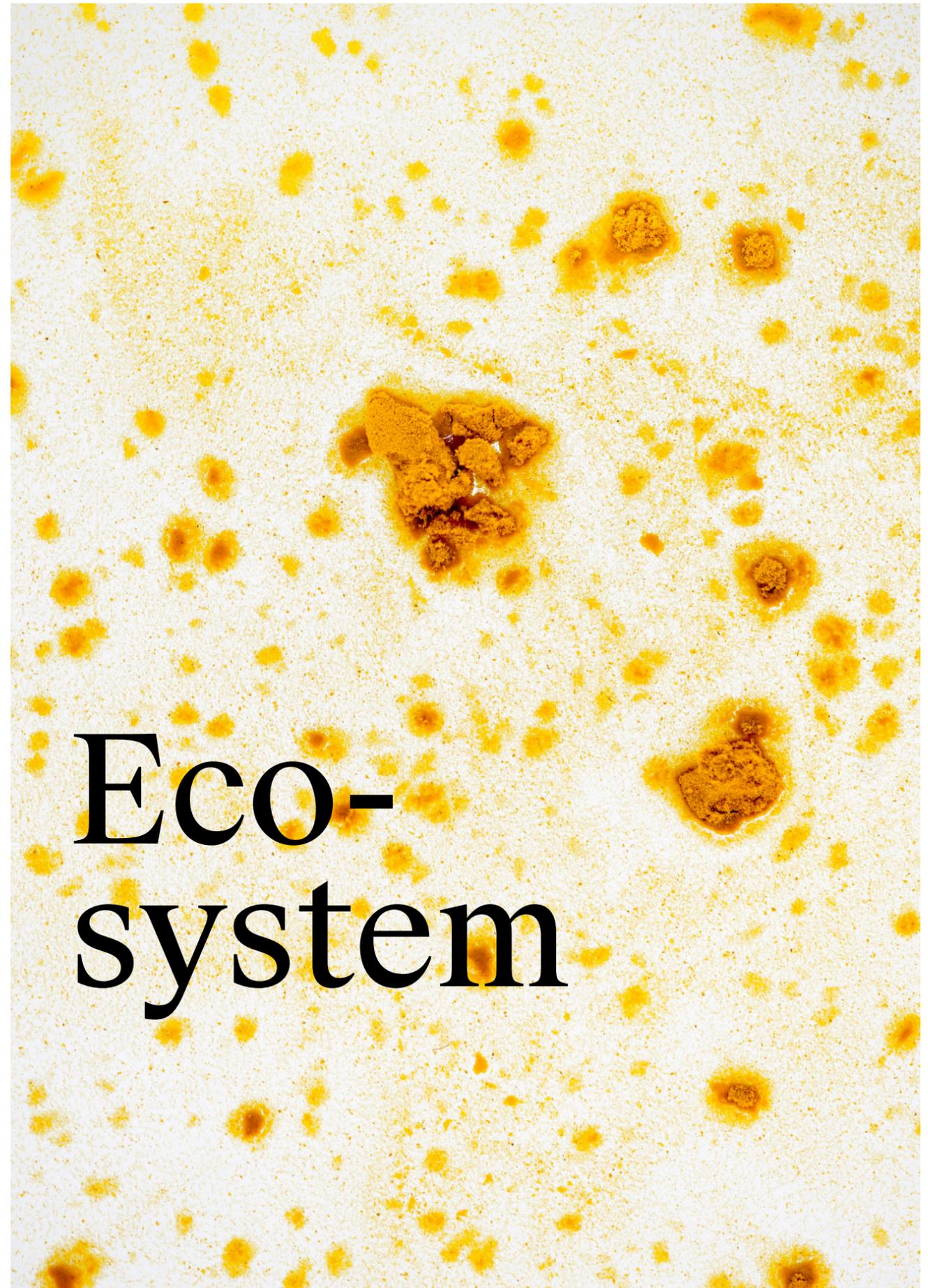


RAJESH PUNJ



Ideas as

Photo: HamahBraeken



Eco- system

Photo: HamahBraeken

YELLOW

Studio Nienke Hoogvliet's disruption of the textile trade modestly explores how we might change the industrial system to exist more naturally with colour. The aim is to avoid the harsh chemicals of synthetic dyes that pollute rivers, and ultimately end up as fast fashion in landfills. The thinking is about finding a more transparent supply chain for fashion.

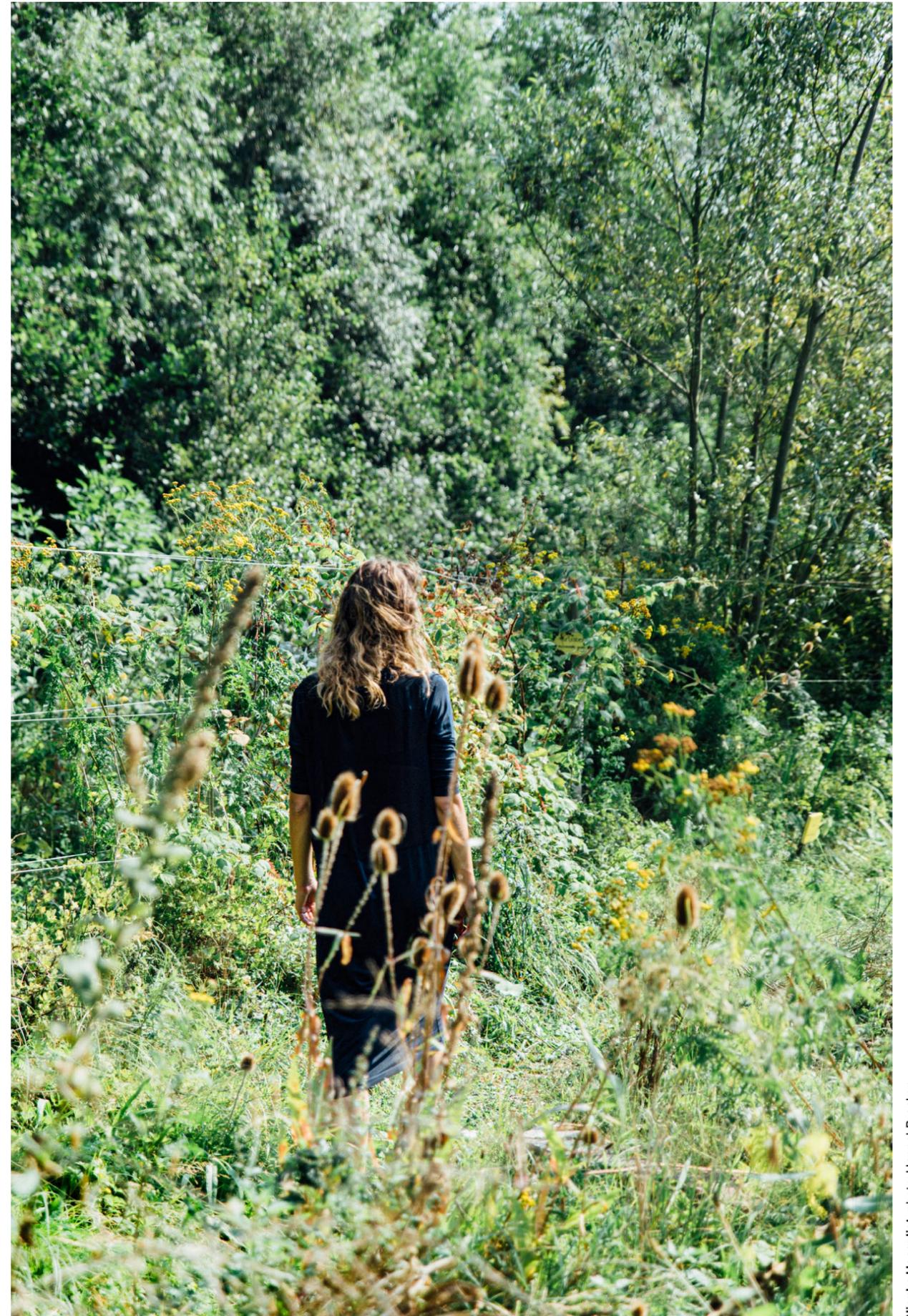
Under the stewardship of Dutch designer and founder Nienke Hoogvliet, and associate architect Tim Jongerius, the concept and culture of Studio Nienke Hoogvliet is less profit-driven than the norm and more environmentally involved. The duo sees every element as integral to how to create more consciously.

Growing up close to the coast, Hoogvliet's work is intended as a reminder of the sensation and sensitivity that holds everything together. Of water, earth, the atmosphere, and her enterprising ideas, being integral to one another. Graduates of the Willem de Kooning Academy, Rotterdam, and the faculty of Architecture, Delft, respectively, Hoogvliet and Jongerius want to create 'neutral spaces' that allow for objects and an audience to come into contact with one another. Forensic like, Hoogvliet's work makes for a morally more measured approach. Instead of man-made elements that deplete or damage planetary resources, she consciously considers and operates in a way to add to the earth. With interests that are born of the natural and elemental, Hoogvliet's has consideration for the environmental impact

of everything. Intending in her way, of halting the senseless and very ceaseless culture for the new. "I see my role as opening the eyes of the consumer, and at the same time I hope to give the industry a jolt," she says.

The work of the Studio has been exhibited extensively in a short space of time – at the Centre Pompidou, Paris, the Textielmuseum, Tilburg, the Centraal Museum, Utrecht, and Cooper Hewitt Design Museum, New York, among others. For the current *KleurEyck* exhibition at the Design Museum Gent, Hoogvliet wanted to think afresh about pigment and an earthly palette. Showing her project *H.E. R. B. S* (Healthier Environment, Remedy for Body and Skin), it is a pointed criticism against the chemicals used by multinational clothing companies and a connection to how Jan van Eyck himself might have been discovering the vibrancy of coloured pigments centuries ago.

The *H.E. R. B. S* installation creates a laboratory-like setting to investigate what actually is in clothes. "I want people to be aware that they can wear textiles dyed with natural herbs as well as synthetic colours," Hoogvliet says.



Nienke Hoogvliet, photo: Hannah Braeken



Testing the dyeing with natural colours / photo: Hannah Braeken

Shown are a string of upturned herbs and potted plants surrounding a recycled bath full of garments being mixed with a wooden stick. By replacing the artificial with the earthly, Hoogvliet physically shows how her newly coloured clothing is more sensitive to our skin, and sustainable for the environment. And as with Van Eyck in his day, Hoogvliet illustrates in her modus operandi, that a more rudimentary way of working makes us more aware of our actions.

Hoogvliet talks of “unburdening our bodies of synthetic dyed textiles”, in favour of more natural cured fabrics, “that relieve”, possibly even revive our skin of the menagerie of chemical pesticides, preservatives and pollutants, which invade our bodies, inside and out.

At *KleurEyck* there is a film of the process, with the bath installation planned for sometime in the exhibition’s run, but the overall project has other elements. *H.E.R.B.S Quilt* has the appearance of an unravelled cocoon, which Hoogvliet hand-stitched together to reveal different fragments of fabric. It is a tapestry of tender slips of material that combine to create a second skin, a shelter, and source for salvation. And as a choice of furnishing, it becomes incredibly symbolic of the kind of care and consideration Hoogvliet bestows upon her work, in a way that touches our human sensitivities, rather than challenging us to buy an alternative brand.

Rooting for the elemental, another of Hoogvliet’s research projects entitled *Bare Bones*, looks at the brittleness of animal bones kept in quarantine-like conditions and those able to roam more freely, and how these environments impact the quality of individual bones within the production of bone china. Photographing and filing them as



H.E.R.B.S Quilt (detail) / photo: Hannah Braeken

fossils, Hoogvliet again practically demonstrated that the composite ash of the bones of industrial animals is more fragile and so returns to their compound form very easily. Whereas the organically cultured creatures have more reliant skeletal skins that can confidently be reinvented to create bone china. Industrial versus organic, Hoogvliet investigates the residual effect of humankind’s treatment of the animal kingdom, and its collateral consequences. Citing how the quality of a fragment of bone can explain the living conditions of an animal, and how its ‘bone body’ holds all of the information of how much light and living space it has had in its lifetime.

Another work, *Waterschatten* or water treasures, recalls the mineral wealth of water, in a way that the *Bare Bones* project takes us into the anatomy of an animal. *Water treasures* has Hoogvliet focus on the waste products that litter our reservoirs and require a vast amount of energy and industry to turn back into clean water.

One leading element is used toilet paper that amassed makes up to 180,000 tonnes, equivalent as is explained, to the same number of trees. And in collaboration with the Dutch water authorities *Aa & Maas* and *Hoogheemraadschap Hollands Noorderkwartier*, Hoogvliet reconstitutes some of that excess into creating everyday objects that can easily be integrated back into the home – a table, lighting and decorated bowls.

At a moment when the environment is ‘front and centre’, we need to be able to apply Studio Nienke Hoogvliet’s investigative virtues to our understanding of our carbon footprint, and of what we bequeath to future generations. /

KleurEyck. Van Eyck’s Colours in Design, Design Museum Ghent, Belgium, until 21 February 2021, designmuseumgent.be

nienkehoogvliet.nl