

Foekje Fleur

1988, Rotterdam, The Netherlands

Foekje Fleur is a Dutch designer who graduated in Design and Fine Arts. Her playful and lighthearted products seem beautiful at first sight but promote a plastic-free lifestyle. She touches on serious issues such as environmental pollution and animal rights. In almost all designs of Foekje, the observer is tempted by the playful colours and shapes, but the main goal is to make people aware.

Bottle Vases

Back in the year 2009, Foekje Fleur read an article about the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, a place in the North Pacific where all floating trash collects, it is also known as the plastic soup. It was a turning point for Foekje, this issue became an everlasting inspiration for her projects and lifestyle.

She started to have a better look at the banks of the river Maas in Rotterdam when she realized that her hometown has its own unfortunate plastic patch. She collected plastic bottles that were floating or lying around there since the 60's or 70's, oddly they were still intact. She learnt that plastic is moving from here to there, passing rivers that transport it to the sea, where it will stay forever – plastic never disappears, it just breaks into smaller pieces, called microplastics.

After cleaning the found bottles she discovered that during their long journey they had lost their identities and function, and even though the colours were faded, they still had a flare. Just like that, it began, with the collection of rubbish standing in her atelier. She started to reproduce the bottles in durable coloured porcelain. Foekje chose this material due to its lack of degradability, same as plastic. She wanted to make these bottles last for millions of years so that they become a souvenir of this era, which she calls "the plastic era".

The vases attract a lot of people, the rainbow of colours is an eyecatcher. When they touch and lift the porcelain bottle, it's heavier than expected so they start questioning. Once they hear the story behind the product, they start to think about it in a more serious way. The material change from plastic to porcelain, makes people suddenly think of the bottle as a valuable object. This is the actual kind of interpretation that Foekje is looking for.

The bottles are hand-made by the craftsmen company Middle Kingdom in China, and by Polar Premium in Portugal.

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The handcrafted process makes each piece unique, just like the actual plastic bottle from the trash. The original trash bottles are used to make a three piece plaster mould, the mould is opened and the plastic bottle is taken out. Next, the plaster mould is put together and filled with a liquid porcelain slip. The plaster attracts water from the porcelain and a thick layer of clay starts to emerge, the leftover slip is poured off. The thick layer of clay is left to dry for some time and finally taken out of the mould to fire. Afterwards, the inside is glazed so that the bottle can be safely used as a vase.

Bubble Buddy

Foekje Fleur was asked by the Dutch gift company Goodtogive to design a soap dish for their corporate gift boxes. While keeping plastic soup in mind she developed the idea of melting down and recycling plastic this time. The concept was to not only create a soap dish but also to replace the plastic bottles of liquid soaps in the house with soap bars. This avoids the production of new plastic bottles. And so, Bubble Buddy was born.

You can use it as a usual soap dish to dry your soap fast, this makes bars last longer. Bubble Buddy has another asset: the top part can be used as a grate to produce soap flakes that you can turn into soap sud if you add some water. Each Buddy is made of 98% recycled plastic and 2% colour pigment and it is available in 8 colours. With Bubble Buddy, you are able to clean with a clean conscience.

When the production of Bubble Buddies started in the Netherlands, Foekje started to work on her soap bar line. The result is a series of 4 soaps that can replace almost every plastic bottle in your home. They are easy and even more economical to use. The soaps are handmade in Italy and are 100% plastic-free. To keep our world free from more pesticides they are made with certified organic and vegan ingredients. They are free from palm oil and not tested on animals. A hand-crafted organic soap bar without plastic packaging is always the best option.

Bubble Buddy comes as a set with an organic soap bar inside. Not only Bubble Buddy but also the soap bars set a good start to lower plastic consumption.

The problem of plastic pollution is not something new but it's not going to stop in the near future either. Foekje is always working on new projects which are good for us, animals, plants and the environment. Sometimes with just a little bit of awareness and sometimes with a new product which makes a huge difference. There has been one clear line in the designs, always with great aesthetics and colours. It's just a matter of time before a new colourful and thoughtful product will enter the world.

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