



profile



Bram Jam

'I was a trouble-maker. I couldn't follow the normal way of going to school, to go inside a room and do these things all day; for me it was too much after living in that very rich, very full world of my parents. I escaped and started having very dark years.'

We're particularly looking forward to meeting leading designer Bram Boo. First, we've got to meet someone with a name as fantastic as his. Second, we've seen his quite brilliant Overdose desk for Bulo, and are more than keen to discover more about the man behind the design. Third, we're hoping for frank and intriguing quotes like the one above.

We meet Bram in Bulo's Clerkenwell showroom, where, as we sit, several 'punters' pass by the window – but only after they have all stopped to look at the amazing Overdose. So we begin by asking about Bram's inspirations and methodology. 'I think people always want to discover something new, they want an atmosphere – you have to give them a bit more than just the furniture,' Bram enthuses. 'People should enjoy not just the furniture but they should also understand where it comes from. They should meet the designer, understand the meaning. It's very important for me – otherwise people simply see an image in a magazine. They don't see it in a truly physical way. Also, I like to meet people and I think this is so important.'

'I didn't follow classes or anything like that, so I had to find a way of starting somewhere. I've been going to Milan for years now, and I

thought I should take a chance and go over there and show my work. Then I quickly started to have a lot of communication about my stuff – people started talking, which was great. It's also important to have that contact with the producers – and it helps if they start to see you in the magazines, and then see you again and again.'

Bram was born in 1971 into an artistic family. His father, Bram Bogart, is a well-known abstract painter and his mother Leni is also an artist. The 13th century house he grew up in holds a kind of folklore, with its fantastic artwork and modern furniture made by greats including Joe Colombo, Charles and Ray Eames and Ettore Sottsass.

'It's a long story. I'm a mix of two strong cultures,' he explains. 'My parents are Dutch, they always talked about Dom Hans Van Der Laan and those people, but I'm born in Belgium. It's a country of surrealism, so I think I'm a mix. I've got the constriction of the Dutch, but there is also a Belgian part that is not too serious. I start furniture with that function and then move on to the other things – it's a blend of a Dutch and Belgian way to see things, perhaps.'

'My family was always very creative. My mother used to like to buy furniture from flea markets and paint it in flashy colours. I grew▶▶▶▶▶

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Bram's website states that 'by disturbing the usual rules, Bram Boo aspires to create new ideas and emotions with a focus on function and aesthetic values'. Looking at the reactions to his Overdose desk here at the Bulo showroom, we'd say he's succeeding. In spades. There's clearly a lot of Bram and his philosophies in this exciting development. 'It combines a lot of the things I was looking for,' he grins. 'The piece was, at first, quite straight, and I was looking for something much more chaotic. It is chaotic – then again the world is chaotic. The function of nature is chaotic. The human is always trying

to organise. Straight lines and squares are very human. I tried to bring things together here that aren't normally together. I wanted it to be unexpected. I think it's working very well in this collection.

'People are used to seeing a table that looks like a table, and therefore may be a little disturbed by what I do. When people first see my furniture in a space, perhaps they should laugh a little bit!'

Finally, we ask Bram how the collaboration with Bulo first came about. 'I had designed Overdose, and they saw it and decided they would like to produce it. I'm very happy because Bulo is a Belgian company. I always saw Bulo as a kind of reference – a kind of a dream for me to work with.'

'It is also quite an emotional company for me. Jules Wabbes, who worked with Bulo many times, and designed the seating we are sitting on right now, was a neighbour of mine when I was a child. My first dog was really a Wabbes dog!'

'Also, Claire Bataille was also working with and designing for Bulo, and she would come to see my father with clients for my father almost every week. She designed interiors and liked to use my father's artwork for her clients.'

It really is a very small, very chaotic world ●

