radical lace & subversive knitting

Museum of Arts & Design

niels van eijk

b. 1970, Someren, the Netherlands; lives in Geldrop, the Netherlands

Education: Studied mechanical engineering, 1991, Polytechnic School, Helmond, the Netherlands; studied handicrafts, 1992, at TeHaTex, Nijmegan, the Netherlands; studied man and living, 1997, Design Academy Eindhoven, Eindhoven, the Netherlands

While studying at the Design Academy Eindhoven, van Eijk completed an apprenticeship at Gijs Bakker Design. He credits Bakker, co-founder of Droog Design, as being a primary influence on his own design philosophy. "Droog is what was taught at the academy; it was standard at the time." Droog focuses on the design of functional objects using conceptual ideas. Van Eijk made his *Cow Chair*, 1997, out of a single cowhide. "I wanted to make a chair out of leather, no more and no less. Finally I got there." It was accepted into the collection of Droog Design before he completed his studies at the academy that same year.

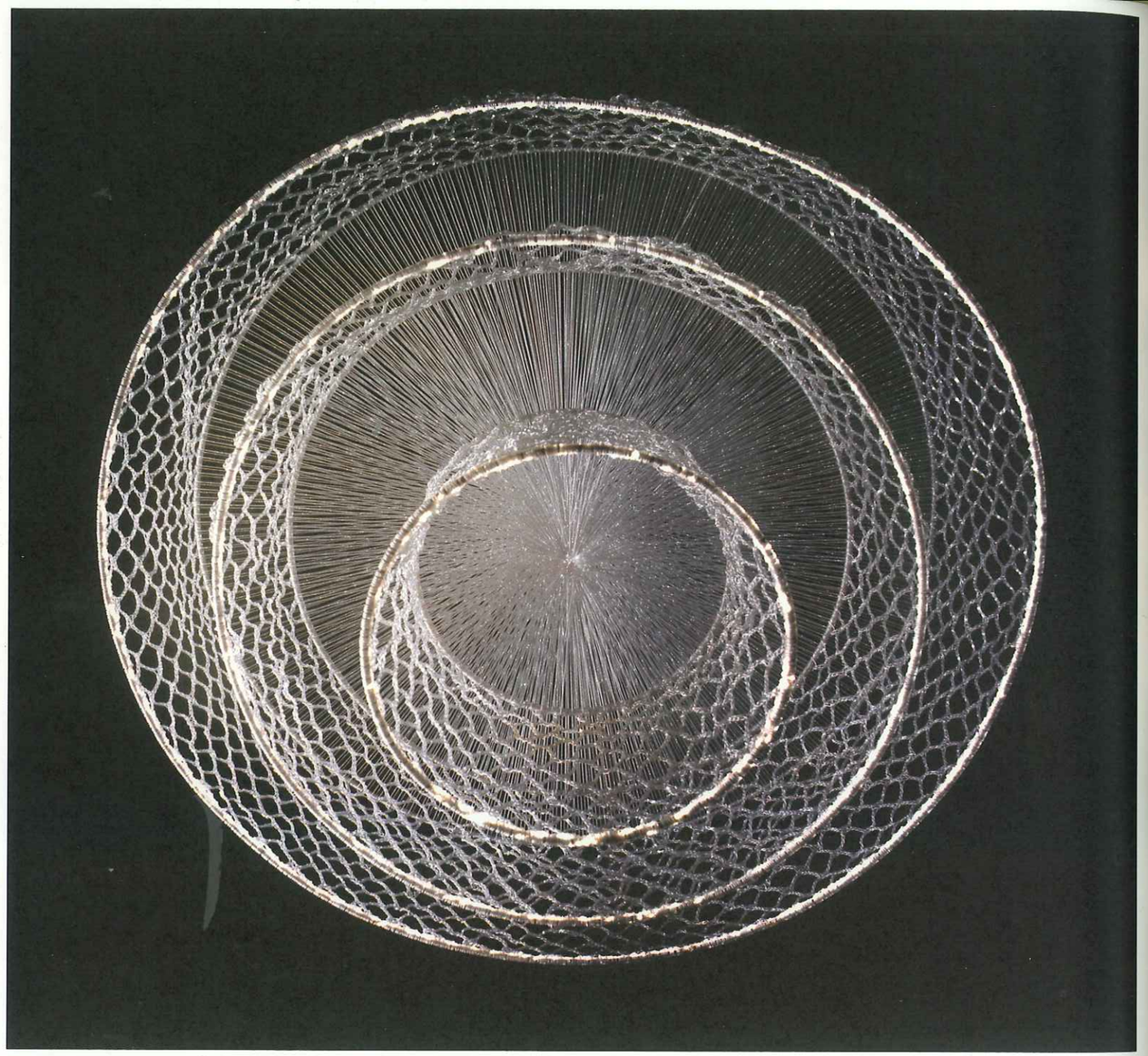
Van Eijk used a similar approach to create *Bobbin Lace Lamp*, 2002, his work presented in this exhibition. "I wanted to make a lamp without a bulb in it, and I wanted it to say something about light. Most lamps you see are some strange shape that doesn't have anything to do with the light itself." It took him three years to devise a solution to this problem, having discovered fiber optics early on in the design process, but only later finding the flexible type of fiber-optic cable that he would ultimately use in the finished piece. Its inherent properties led him to knot it into lace. "In this specific fiber-optic material, every fiber has 400 filaments in it. The fibers break at every knot, and that is how they lose light. I use the lace technique to break the fiber optics."

Van Eijk enlisted the help of an eighty-five-year-old neighbor who taught him traditional lace-making techniques. "It is very important to work with the people who actually do it. It doesn't have to be craftsman; it could be welders, or laser cutters. They can teach me about the techniques and ways to get a step further." This exposure to actual lace making and old pattern books from the library gave him the foundation required to develop his ideas into a finished product. The interwoven wires form the structure of the lamp's upper half (the "lampshade") and end as fringe in the lamp's lower half. Rather than being simply a decorative addition, the wires are both the natural extension of the structure and (at their ends) the functional transmitters of light.

—J.S.E.

ABOVE LEFT: Van Eijk working on his *Bobbin Lace Lamp* in Someren, 2006

OPPOSITE: *Bobbin Lace Lamp*, 2002
Fiber optics, metal wire
H. 9 ft. 10 in., Diam. 31½ in. (300 cm x 80 cm)
Museum Boymans van Beuningen, Rotterdam, the Netherlands; Dutch Textile Museum, Tilburg, the Netherlands; Manchester City Art Gallery, Manchester, England



Bobbin Lace Lamp, *Vegas*, 2005
Fiber optics
H. 6 ft. 6 3/4 in., Diam. 8 ft. 2 1/2 in. (2 x 2.5 m)
Le Rêve (beauty salon), Las Vegas, Nevada

OPPOSITE: *Bobbin Lace Lamp*, 2002 (detail)

Gallery view with works by: (left to right) Niels van Eijk, Hilal Sami Hilal