

MECCA X NGV WOMEN IN DESIGN COMMISSION

CHRISTIEN MEINDERTSMA

Artwork labels

Wall text:

MECCA x NGV Women in Design Commission: Christien Meinertsma

Dutch designer Christien Meindertsma's *First there was a mountain* is made from European wool that would have otherwise been discarded as waste. Utilising a groundbreaking robotic tool known as the 'Wobot', this project demonstrates the possibility of fabricating structural, three-dimensional objects using only wool. By employing mechanised needle-felting to compact the wool and bind its fibres, this technique revolutionises the repurposing of waste wool and highlights its vast potential for future applications.

As the first complex prototype created by the Wobot – pioneered by Meindertsma in collaboration with Netherlands-based

machine developer Tools for Technology – *First there was a mountain* takes the form of a newborn lamb, captured standing for the very first time. Modelled after a lamb from a flock of two thousand sheep grazing near Rotterdam, this work not only tells the story of the material from which it is created, it also emphasises its transformative potential. Wool processed using mechanised needle-felting is an environmentally sustainable alternative to petroleum-based materials such as foam, rubber, plastic, polyester and polystyrene. Unlike traditional industrial felting processes, robotic needle-felting requires no water and can be combed out, enabling a completely circular material life cycle.

The MECCA x NGV Women in Design Commission is a major series that invites

internationally renowned female designers and architects to create significant new work for the NGV Collection. The five-year series is supported by MECCA through its philanthropic program, M-Power, which champions and elevates women in art and design.

The NGV warmly thanks MECCA for supporting the acquisition of these works.

PRINCIPAL PARTNER

MECCA

Wall text:

Christien Meinertsma

Christien Meindertsma is internationally recognised for using design to conduct in-depth research into materials – uncovering their properties and the stories and industrial systems behind them. Focused on sustainability and the life cycle of products, Meindertsma's work challenges us to rethink our consumption of materials, encouraging a deeper understanding of the connections between the objects we use and their impact on the world.

Based in the Netherlands, Meindertsma has been widely celebrated over the past two decades for her design projects that explore animal by-products, agricultural processes and textile waste. *First there*

was a mountain is her most recent work in her sustained investigation of the production and manufacture of wool products. In earlier projects she has created a woollen rug that maps significant sites involved in the production of wool, produced a series of twenty machine-knitted jumpers from the coats of individual merino sheep, and digitally scanned and categorised discarded wool textiles to compare their labelling with their actual wool content.

Christien Meindersma is the MECCA x NGV Women in Design Commission recipient for 2024.

PRINCIPAL PARTNER

MECCA

Artwork labels:

Christien Meindertsma designer

Dutch born 1980

Tools for Technology manufacturer

Dutch est. 1998

First there was a mountain

2024

wool (Suffolk/Kempisch Heideschaap),
merino wool sweaters

Inspired by the form of a standing newborn lamb, *First there was a mountain* addresses critical issues related to wool and wool products. The work is made from 95 per cent virgin wool sourced from a Rotterdam flock of two thousand mixed-breed Suffolk and Kempisch Heideschaap sheep blended with 5 per cent recycled merino wool from coloured

knitwear, much of which originates from Australia. The European wool industry faces significant challenges due to the superior quality of fine soft merino wool used in modern textile production, which outperforms the typically coarser local European wool. This disparity has led to the undervaluation and frequent disposal of European wool. In the Netherlands alone, 1.5 million kilograms of wool are discarded annually. *First there was a mountain* brings attention to the growing issue of waste in the global wool market and proposes a potential solution for utilising this often-overlooked resource using innovative tools and technology.

Commissioned by the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, this work was made possible through the MECCA x NGV Women in Design Commission. The NGV warmly thanks MECCA for their generous support in acquiring this work.

Christien Meindertsma designer

Dutch born 1980

Tools for Technology manufacturer

Dutch est. 1998

Wobot chair

2024

wool (Suffolk/Kempisch Heideschaap),
merino wool sweaters

Christien Meindertsma's *Wobot chair* is an example of how innovative technology can unlock new opportunities in design. Fabricated using the designer's 'Wobot' tool, which utilises the mechanised needle-felting technique, this chair demonstrates the immense potential of wool in the creation of everyday objects. Unlike conventional chair designs that rely on internal structures, foam, filling or upholstery, the *Wobot chair* is made

entirely from a single material – wool. The wool is felted in layers, allowing for precise control over the distribution of softness and hardness, ensuring comfort and durability exactly where needed. This pioneering approach reveals the versatility of this material, and how the technology behind the *Wobot chair* could potentially pave the way for sustainable, circular design in furniture and beyond.

Commissioned by the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne. The commission of this work is made possible through the MECCA x NGV Women in Design Commission. The NGV warmly thanks MECCA for supporting the acquisition of this work.

Christien Meindertsma designer

Dutch born 1980

Roel van Tour videographer

Dutch born 1976

First there was a mountain, video

2024

digital film, sound

Human-made products consist of raw materials that have undergone various processes to be shaped for human use. Often, in their finished form, the materials embedded in a product become invisible to the user, as they have been so extensively transformed from their original state. First there was a mountain, a video produced by designer Christien Meindertsma in collaboration with filmmaker Roel van Tour, traces the production of Meindertsma's MECCA X

NGV Women in Design Commission. It introduces the Rotterdam flock whose wool was used to create the new work and captures the processes involved: carding the wool, shredding used merino fibres, transforming the waste into roving and the robotic felting performed by the Wobot. This video allows audiences to better understand the technology and methods behind Meindertsma's project, and to consider the often-complex material processes embodied in the objects that surround us.

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