

Saturday shopping with... *Hester van Eeghen*

Style



Hester van Eeghen proves to Style editor **Karina Hof** that the best retail investments are carryalls to last a lifetime

If you're looking to cut costs in your wardrobe, Hester van Eeghen's boutiques (Hartenstraat 1 and 37) might not be on your radar. Her world-famous handbags – vibrantly coloured, architectural Italian leather designs – have been sold by New York's Museum of Modern Art, auctioned in a 20-year anniversary collection sale at Sotheby's last year and commemorated in 'Bag and Shoe Design: Hester van Eeghen', a pop-up book published this month by Bis. Yet as a recent Saturday with the native Amsterdammer revealed, products with the human touch, like hers, are worth loosening the purse strings for.

09.50 – Patisserie Holtkamp
Vijzelgracht 15 (624 8757/patisserie-holtkamp.nl)

'Normally you find about 12 people standing here, fighting to get their sweets,' says Van Eeghen upon entering Holtkamp, the 90-year-old patisserie famous for its fairytale confections and a weekly production of 33,000 homemade *kroketten*. Van Eeghen has been coming here since childhood. After five decades, how bad is her habit? 'I wouldn't say daily,

but if there's something to celebrate, there's no doubt I would come here.' The counterwoman is unfazed when Van Eeghen tucks into a box of Halvemaantjes (€3.30/100g) near the register and is quick to share them.

'I need to buy these anyway,' she notes, though her payment for the orange-almond cookies is refused. Van Eeghen's aqua eyes glisten before the vitrine, as she points to other all-time favourites: a raspberry tart (€12.75) – 'always good, no matter what season you are in' – and the lemon meringue (€12.75).

We escape the growing queue. Outside the store, a panhandler beseeches passers-by. Van Eeghen removes several coins from a self-designed pink 'Café' model wallet, wishing the man a good coffee.

10.15 – Kunsthandel Inez Stodel

Nieuwe Spiegelstraat 65 (623 2942/inezstodel.com)

Van Eeghen's orange bike guides us to a chic antique shop in the Spiegelkwartier. 'This is actually a little bit like Holtkamp,' she says about Inez Stodel's diorama-like jewellery



displays. 'There is such an eye for detail, and if you look at this, it's almost tempting – like food.' Inez, who has run the company since 1964, and Leonore, her business partner daughter, bring out coffee to compliment the Halvemaantjes produced from Van Eeghen's metallic-green bulging briefcase-like 'junk purse', as she refers to another self-designed model called 'Woody' (the larger version is called 'Mia'). The duo dote on their client, prompting her to try on 1930s emerald and diamond earrings (€19,000) and an Iberian 18th-century natural pearl necklace (€19,000). Dazzling, Van Eeghen agrees – but out of her budget. Instead she commits to a 144-piece box of miniature glass die (€100) from pre-revolutionary Czechoslovakia.

11.06 – Boekhandel Veenstra
Utrechtsestraat 18a (623 4329/boekhandelveenstra.nl)

Veenstra is one of the few privately owned bookstores still in business since a young Van Eeghen and her family lived in what is now the Kattenkabinet (cat museum) on Herengracht. Once a student of literature, Van Eeghen frequents the bright, single-room shop on the western border of Rembrandtplein. The venue marks 'the start of the beautiful street – from here on you only have nice and friendly shops,' she says, referring to Utrechtsestraat. 'Though we have to take care, because even now we're getting Sissy-Boys and things like that, which I don't like.' Van Eeghen buys the Dutch translation of Paolo Giordano's 'The Solitude of Prime Numbers' (€18.90).

11.33 – The Frozen Fountain
Prinsengracht 645 (622 9375/frozen-fountain.nl)

A loyal patron of the Frozen Fountain since it opened in 1985, Van Eeghen studies the acclaimed design store's products as though she's viewing a gallery exhibition. 'The boy who makes this is so clever,' she says, lingering over a collection of chocolate-coloured bags by Ferry Meewisse, a close contender for Van Eeghen's Stichting Leather Design prize in 2003. This showroom is also Van Eeghen's

go-to for gifts. She chooses tea towels (€10) from Textielmuseum Tilburg for her father-in-law and a friend, two Royal VKB salad bowls (€15) – recipients yet to be determined – and an electric-blue mohair throw (€115) for her drafty guestroom.

12.48 – Van Ravenstein
Keizersgracht 359 (639 0067/van-ravenstein.nl)

Our last stop is the venerable Van Ravenstein, the beloved boutique of women with a penchant for high-end Beneluxian clothes.

'There's no place where you can touch this quality,' Van Eeghen whispers. 'I come sometimes just to touch things.' Limited on time – she's meant to be at a wedding in minutes – Van Eeghen riffls through hangers of Balenciaga and Givenchy.

An indigo-coloured nylon-Spandex piece brings her hands to a halt. 'The pattern is amazing,' she says, taking the Walter Van Beirendonck shirt (€325) behind a changing curtain. 'Bijna tatoogge,' she exclaims to a sombre saleswoman. In the mirror, Van Eeghen admires the skin-tight 'almost tattooed' Mayan motifs dancing up her torso, although she decides to wait for her husband's opinion. The shirt is put on hold – just long enough for her friend to get married.

