

Ethnicraft

PRESS KIT



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« Ethnicraft, committed design »

The name Ethnicraft is the very expression of the brand's origin and philosophy. 'Ethni' is a reference to the company's roots and 'craft' is a testament to its artisanal approach, deliberately distinct from that of more industrial companies. Ever since its beginning, Ethnicraft's history has been shaped by people: the company's two founders, as well as all the people who have lent it their talent and know-how and helped the brand grow.



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A Two-Man Story

In the mid-90s, chance brought together Benoit Loos and Philippe Delaisse, two men from Antwerp, and led them to embark on a shared adventure.

After travelling around the world, Philippe Delaisse settled down in Indonesia and started exporting traditional furniture and accessories to Belgium: baskets, teak tables, display cases, wardrobes, etc. That is when the two young entrepreneurs met, became friends and decided to start working together.

With time, the two partners came to the realisation that importing one-off traditional pieces was not a viable strategy in the long run. They needed to move on to the next step, if only to keep the adventure going, but also to become more than just importers. So they had an idea to tap into local craftsmanship to produce contemporary furniture, but manufactured from solid wood. The result was their very first solid teak collection. And so began Ethnicraft's story, when it was founded in 1995. Philippe Delaisse took charge of manufacturing operations and product developments, while Benoit Loos was responsible for marketing, finances and the company's growth.

In 1997, when they had their first chance to show their work at Maison & Objet, it was the confirmation they had been waiting for. Visitors and buyers raved about the products, it was instant success! Ethnicraft had found the right path: beautifully crafted contemporary solid wooden furniture. Over the years, the company broadened its creative palette to develop a complete range of furniture, without turning its back on its identity. In addition to teak, the company started manufacturing furniture from oak in 2004, then walnut in 2007. 2012 saw the creation of Studio Ethnicraft, a service entirely dedicated to professionals of the contract industry (hotel owners, restaurateurs, architects).

A year later, Ethnicraft joined acquired Notre Monde, a brand founded by American designer Dawn Sweitzer, who creates hand-painted tables, trays and mirrors designed like works of art. By joining Ethnicraft, Notre Monde brings a complementary offering and gains access to the Group's extensive manufacturing capacities.

In 2018, driven by its know-how and momentum, Ethnicraft is launching a new premium collection, which brings together ancestral tradition and contemporary design – *Ancestors* is born.

Key Dates

- 1995: Ethnicraft founded by Benoit Loos and Philippe Delaisse
- 1997: First time exhibiting at Maison & Objet in Paris
- 1997: Notre Monde founded by Dawn Sweitzer
- 2012: Creation of Studio Ethnicraft
- 2013: Notre Monde acquired by Ethnicraft Group
- 2017: Launch of new showroom in Antwerp
- 2018: Creation of *Ancestors*





The Ethnicraft Style? Emo-rational!

Both emotional and rational, Ethnicraft's approach mixes uncluttered design with the emotion associated with solid wood of different species. Products combine timeless style, a sense of authenticity and strong values, such as the importance of transmission, know-how and the respect for mankind and nature. From Ethnicraft to Notre Monde, collections complement each other to create a consistent range of products, which works just as well in a country home as in a city flat.

Ethnicraft covers the whole spectrum of interior design, with one notable exception – kitchens. The offering spans tables, chairs, storage units, from bedrooms and offices to bathrooms. The designs are simple, authentic and timeless. Contemporary shapes are expressed using a traditional material: solid wood. Teak, oak and walnut give the pieces their extraordinary quality and durability. While know-how and craftsmanship are at the very core of Ethnicraft's DNA, the company is continually integrating new innovative techniques into its manufacturing process. Each new design is the product of meticulous attention to detail.

As time went by and new collections were released, Ethnicraft's offering evolved to meet customer expectations and reflect new trends. Pieces show increasingly delicate and complex lines, thanks to technological and technical advancements made in the field of woodworking, which make more elaborate shapes possible. But in spite of it all, Ethnicraft furniture has retained its core features: durability, repairability, and timeless designs that are nevertheless the perfect reflection of their time.

Ethnicraft: The Authenticity of Solid Wood

Craftsmanship

Authentic

Functional

Timeless

Contemporary design



Notre Monde ideally complements Ethnicraft's offering, with a complete range of beautifully crafted trays, tables and mirrors.

Established in 1997 by artist Dawn Sweitzer, Notre Monde's specificity comes from Sweitzer's original and exclusive drawings, inspired by her many travels, nature and daily life. Each piece is unique and brings a sense of luxury into any interior. Products are made from wood, metal and glass. They are manufactured using a traditional printing technique and are hand-finished.

Since 2013, Notre Monde is part of the Ethnicraft Group, but has kept its singular identity and sense of aesthetic.

Notre Monde: Artful Sophistication

Unique

Luxurious

Traditional craftsmanship

Artistic

Decorative



In 2018, Ethnicraft remains on the path of innovation, both technically and aesthetically speaking, with a new collection with a high-end positioning: ***Ancestors***.

Ancestors is a line of exclusive furniture designed as a celebration of our origins. Inspired by ancient geometrical shapes and symbols found in cultures around the world, *Ancestors* puts traditional ethnic arts in the limelight. Hand-sculpted like true works of art, these pieces are a testament to a rich ancestral heritage that revolves around spirituality, and traditional techniques used in faraway lands like Africa. By merging together ethnic art and contemporary design, the *Ancestors* collection transcends borders and bridges past and present.

Ancestors: The Origin of Tradition
Heritage
Tradition
Timeless
Art
Culture

A Controlled Design Process

A great majority of Ethnicraft products are designed in house to ensure a strong consistent identity, and it is Philippe Delaisse who oversees the entire product development process. Nevertheless, Ethnicraft regularly extends invitations to designers to create a collection.

They make the company's style:



Alain Van Havre He is Ethnicraft's in-house designer, he is passionate about wood, a material he uses to create simple, streamlined pieces.



Dawn Sweitzer : Founder of Notre Monde, she is also the brand's Art Director. A self-taught artist, she finds her inspiration in her travels and several stints in Europe and Russia. She now lives in North Carolina.

A look at collaborations:

Nathan Young: He is a major design figure in Asia. From Singapore, where he lives, he supports Ethnicraft's growth and contributes his extensive design expertise.

Constance Guisset: The French designer brings her own identity to Ethnicraft's offering, with the *Simple* and *Window* collections.

Sascha Sartory: Based in Cologne, Germany, he is an industrial designer driven by one goal: to design high-quality sustainable products. For Ethnicraft, he created the *Monolit* collection, as well as the bathroom furniture collections *Layers* and *Cuadro*.

Jacques Deneef: An artist with a long-standing passion for repurposing things, he has been an independent designer since 2003. His work encompasses furniture, accessories, textiles, lighting, etc. He designs sofas for Ethnicraft.

Commitment to Sustainability

Ethnicraft may not be a vocal advocate of sustainable design, but the company is proud to have integrated the financial, environmental and social dimensions of sustainable development into its overall strategy. Ethnicraft provides support to factories that manufacture the brand's products through lasting partnerships. For instance, the first factory, based in Indonesia, has gained a lot from Ethnicraft's success: from a small workshop originally, it has now grown to become one of the largest teak furniture factories in the country. In order to safeguard the environment, the Group's factories recycle wood offcuts. Sawdust is also kept to fuel the ovens used to dry the timber. Lastly, manufacturing techniques and technological advancements offer ways to optimise the volume of wood needed for the production process.

Of course, the choice of wood – the defining feature of Ethnicraft products – was not a random one. Since the beginning, the two founders have made use of this natural, rich and renewable material. Every piece is designed to stand the test of time, to age naturally and to acquire a beautiful sheen with time. From material sourcing to production, the company upholds the industry's best practices – including those set out by the FSC. Each tree cut down for its timber is selected with care, then prepared under optimal conditions to ensure the product's durability. Every species used for production is traceable:

- FSC-certified teak from Asia;
- Oak from European eco-forests;
- Walnut from sustainably managed American forests.

Specialised Production Sites

At Ethnicraft, human commitment is just as important as the quality of the products. That is why the company chose to establish strong, long-term partnerships all over the world. Manufacturers collaborating with the brand all work exclusively for Ethnicraft and Notre Monde. The company picks production sites based on their location, and technical and technological specificities. Ethnicraft keeps employees on site to serve as intermediaries and to ensure that the quality of the production remains consistent. In total, some 2,000 people work in manufacturing operations.

- **In Vietnam:** This is where the brand's oak products were originally manufactured. Today, this factory works on oak and walnut pieces for the Asian market.
- **In Serbia:** This is the second factory manufacturing oak products. Its production is distributed across Europe.
- **In Indonesia:** This is where teak and walnut products are manufactured. From a small workshop originally, this factory has probably grown into the largest factory on the island of Java today.
- **In Malaysia:** This is where sofas are manufactured.



Seamless Logistics, Worldwide Distribution

Ethnicraft developed a network that allows the brand to rapidly deliver orders anywhere in the world. The company distributes its products through a network of some 500 retailers in more than 80 countries. The main markets are Europe, the USA and South Asia.

95% of products are available from stock. In terms of logistics, the company has a distribution hub on each continent in order to be as close to its customers as possible and to guarantee the highest standards of service.

Studio Ethnicraft, the Solution for Specific Projects

A company within the company offering services for companies. This is one way to describe Studio Ethnicraft. Ethnicraft established this department in 2012 to provide professionals with a service to address challenges faced specifically by the contract and hospitality industry (hotels, restaurants, projects led by architects).

Studio Ethnicraft has two offices in Europe, one in Asia and another one in the USA, to ensure maximum proximity to every project on all continents. Overall, a team of around 15 people are in charge of overseeing the various ongoing projects. Each project manager is in a capacity to manage every aspect of a project, from sales to production, including regular progress monitoring. *“Studio Ethnicraft is an important part of our business, one that is rapidly growing,”* Benoit Loos explained. *“Everywhere in the world, we meet companies and architects looking for tailored solutions and personalised services, which is exactly what we provide.”*

Studio Ethnicraft offers a solution to meet the need of business and hotel owners in search of more authentic and natural furniture.





Recent projects:

Hôtel Jardin Secret, in Bruxelles, Belgium

LYO Boutique Hotel, in Mykonos, Greece

Fortuna Laax Hotel, Switzerland

Starbucks coffee shops

Four Seasons Hotels

W Hotels

Aman Resorts

Both YOJ restaurants in Marseilles, France (architect Olivier Frémont)





A Brand New Showroom

Since the end of October 2017, Ethnicraft now has a new showroom, located in Boom, Belgium, also home to the company's HQ. A perfect illustration of the brand's interior style, this new 1,200-sqm space showcases all collections and products from both of the Group's brands. The approach is anything but systematic. The goal was to stage the products in a way that celebrates the combination of styles and influences, that highlights how brands and products interact in a common environment. Open to professionals only, the showroom welcomes retailers and distributors from all over the world, as well as architects in search of inspiration. Because this is what the showroom was designed for: *"We want to show visitors that products from our various collections mix very well together and that they can easily be paired with other pieces of furniture,"* said Benoit Loos. But this is also a place to convey the brand's image and, as such, it was designed to house events including previews for journalists and bloggers. To keep an element of novelty over time, the showroom's team have come up with the idea of installing four glazed boxes – designed to look like Polaroid pictures –, to show exclusive installations by product designers, fashion designers and partner brands.



Five questions to... Benoit Loos, CEO of Ethnicraft

1) When you first founded Ethnicraft, did you think it would grow into the company we all know now?

When we decided to design contemporary teak furniture, we felt that we were creating something that did not exist at the time: a sort of fusion between Italy's minimalistic design language and Indonesian know-how, using one of the most traditional materials imaginable. Our first collection *Teak Horizon* immediately earned us a lot of attention at Maison & Objet. And that's how it all started. But we could never have imagined it would turn out to be such a huge success.

2) Is that your recipe for success: never go where you are expected to go?

We did not grow up in the culture of design. We were entrepreneurs and our perspective on the industry is completely original, so we just wanted to create our own niche markets. For example, we chose not to launch the brand on furniture fairs and have always preferred interior design fairs. This slightly unusual approach is what makes us different.

3) But you still manage to remain consistent...

Our various brands all complement each other, both in terms of positioning and offering. The different collections are complementary, they can be mixed together and can easily be paired with other products. This is especially important to us.

4) How would you say your offering has evolved over the course of 20 years?

One of our products' strengths is timeless design. We never try to focus on trends. We believe in beautifully made products, manufactured from solid wood and designed to stand the test of time. Of course, this requires an effort to guarantee certain quality standards, both during production and delivery.

5) Which models are your favourite?

In the more recent collections, the Bok dining chair and table are my favourite pieces, because they are a good illustration of how our offering has evolved: sophisticated designs and artisanal production. All of which is made possible by our designers and technological innovations, such as computer numerical control machines, which we use in our factories. It is this combination of new technologies and hand finishes that provides the right circumstances for the brand to grow without losing its authenticity.

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