

INTERNATIONAL TREND GURU, LI EDELKOORT,
TALKS TO **DANIEL SCHEFFLER** ABOUT LIFE,
LUXURY AND HER LOVE OF SOUTH AFRICA

BEYOND BOUNDARIES



Trend forecaster Lidewij Edelkoort, dubbed Li by friends and enthusiasts, has a simple life motto - "never take no for an answer". Throughout her illustrious career,

the enigmatic trend forecaster has inspired the world with her ideas and her accurate predictions of where trends are headed. It is Li who embraced the digital era's trend tablet. She's the person who lets us know which books, exhibitions, artists and ideas are inspiring and worth pursuing.

In 2003, *TIME* magazine named Dutch peeress Li one of the world's 25 most influential people in fashion. In 2004, she was awarded the Netherlands' *Grand Seigneur* prize for her work in fashion and textiles. More recently, in February 2008, Lidewij was awarded the *Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres* by the French Ministry of Culture and Communication. Her company, Trend Union, which is based in New York, advises fashion brands on colour, pattern, luxury and zeitgeist. *Prestige* pinned her down recently...





PLEASE EXPLAIN THE METHOD YOU USE IN TREND FORECASTING

The best description I can give is that I'm doing archaeology of the future. I pick up fragments I see here or there - one brief image of a little girl, a photograph of an avant-garde artist, a video, a discussion, an observation. There are several leads, and then on top of all that there's my intuition, which tells me my eye is glued to this picture for a reason, and that it's going to materialise into something important.

I try to **LET PEOPLE DESIGN THEIR OWN DESTINY IN THE COMPANY**, to make their own career. This is why most of them stay with me for a very long time

HOW DO YOU RELATE THIS TO FASHION AND LUXURY?

Once you are able to read the language of fashion, you can understand society. For me, the language of fashion is the best possible tool to use when forecasting trends. Right now, the future lies in the hands of consumers; they are becoming the curators of their own lives – that's luxurious.



HOW CAN SOUTH AFRICAN DESIGNERS AND LUXURY ENTREPRENEURS RAISE THEIR PROFILE INTERNATIONALLY?

They can do this simply by being expansive and reaching out to the world. South Africa needs more workshops and industrial production, to be able to create jobs, independence, a local culture and a way to reach out to the first world.

WHAT IS YOUR OPINION ON SOUTH AFRICA FROM A BUSINESS PERSPECTIVE?

There is still so much to be done;

yet that is what makes it so exciting! Schools, museums, galleries, new brands, hotels and B&Bs all need to be created.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU ABOUT SOUTH AFRICA?

The landscape, the clouds, the animals, the food, the people... I guess I feel at home there.

HOW CAN SOUTH AFRICAN BUSINESSES IMPROVE ON A 'HOLISTIC BRAND EXPERIENCE'?

By understanding that a good product can be born only from good and fair conditions, otherwise the soul of the product will be negative and will not be able to satisfy the consumer in the long run. As many South African businesses are still young, it will be easier for them to make changes. 🏆

To read more about Li and Trend Union, check out www.edelkoort.com

HOW DID YOUR CAREER GET STARTED?

I had this super job in 'De Bijenkorf', a Dutch department store, where the circle of friends I'd collected during my student years expanded to include people of all ages and different backgrounds. This utterly upended my life and gave it depth and character. The person who inspired me the most was an eccentric friend and mentor by the name of Annie Apol, a 58-year-old stylist and forecaster at the department store.

TELL US ABOUT YOUR BUSINESS

My business is a new model that works with individual independence and organic growth. I try to let people design their own destiny in the company, to make their own career. This is why most of them stay with me for a very long time, compared to other fashion and design related companies. It is a kind of heaven.

