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# ONCE UPON A TIME WITH LIDEWIJ EDELKOORT

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**WORDS:** Daniel Scheffler **PHOTO:** Philip Munda

Beyond all the trends, the beholder of some of the future and the glamour of being the doyenne of the world's shift and swing, is the felinity of gentlewoman Lidewij Edelkoort. Whether she's thinking of what Annie Hall was

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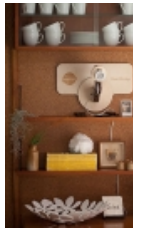
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wearing in 1975, sneaking tax-free perfume, loving summer, or talking about how AIDS caused creativity to vanish, she lives in her fairytale and never stops dreaming and analysing.

Spending time with Li at this year's Design Inbaba unlaces her beauteousness and ordinariness. Uninterested in another composition on trends, colours and fabrics, a quest for humanity strongly appealed to writer Daniel Scheffler.

#### **VISI: What movies do you like?**

Most of the films I watch are on the plane. I've done over 90 trips in the last year so I manage to see absolutely everything. The viewing experience is very different though thanks to the intense direct and difficult circumstances. I do like to buy some films to watch many times like Annie Hall, The Sound of Music (everyone loves that and cries in the end!) and Out of Africa.

#### **What did you think of Meryl Streep at this year's Oscars?**

I loved that she was dressed like the statue! Divine Lanvin.

#### **Do you agree that Annie Hall is relevant still today?**

Definitely. Look at the boyfriend-borrowed fashion for instance and the homage to women. Also the humour in the dialogue.

#### **Do you watch TV?**

I love watching series; it's the movie of today. We build such intimate relationships with characters in a series week after week. I do buy box sets and watch the whole lot, for instance: Lost, Dexter or the Tudors. I do think however that we need more documentaries, There just is not enough to experience. I especially love anything on nature or the BBC series with Sir Richard Attenborough... the voice! Talk shows stink, I don't think we need to be pressured to say what we need to say in a second, a nano-second even. The only exception being Bill Maher in the US; the one critical voice in politics and society.

#### **Do you like to read?**

I only read books in summer as I have continuation to do so. During the year I read magnitudes of reports and newspapers for work. Sometimes a short novel like Jayne Mansfield by the French writer Simon Liberati. But reading of books is for me. If I had one book that I just love it would be Agaat by South African writer Marlene van Niekerk. It embraces the geo-physical environment, tremendous suspense, fine layers of character, a romantic side and a pioneering take on style and design. So in summer I am almost bulimic with all this reading. For my school programs I also love reading about education and humanities. Recently I am rediscovering the brothers Grimm and fairytales. I think we recall the stories but forget the exact lines.

#### **What do you like to drink?**

Coffee in the morning. I use an old espresso pot the way the Italians like to use it. I was given a Nespresso machine but it broke after one week! Very disappointing, George. During the day I love sparkling water and tea. But I am a drinker so I definitely enjoy vodka, wine and champagne.

#### **What are your eating habits?**

I'm not a big eater. I think as a society we've eaten enough. Petite snacking is the food shift for me. I like to be healthy so some bread for breakfast and a salad for lunch. Dinner time I enjoy a cooked meal but I don't have starters or desserts.

#### **How do you sleep?**

In the middle of the bed with my cats around me. Adam and Eve. Adam passed away last week so now it will just be with Eve. I am permanently jet-lagged as I travel so much so that influences my sleeping patterns drastically, always waking up very early to think, to read, to watch the news.

#### **What's your day like?**

I'm an early riser, up at 5am and then I like to read. My favourite is to remain in my pyjamas and work from home to only go to office by midday. I was a night person before, out on the town devouring men and dancing with friends, but now I am plainly an early bird. In summer walking out in the garden in the early mornings is my dearest moment. I am sort of like a cat.

#### **How do you want to die?**



Conscious. Maybe old age or a progressive disease. I would like to experience the detachment of the corporeal tube. The liberation of spirit would be like an elating kite taking flight – provided I get to say goodbye.

**What do you love most?**

Work. It's my passion and my hobby.

**What do you hate most?**

Not much. After a life lived I had of course difficulties with a few people. The spirit of my mother sits on my shoulder and wanted to be forgiven for being a bad mother so I imagined a general pardon, so that she could be sure I pardoned her too. It's similar to Mitterrand's rival of some fines. Very liberating. Hating is a total waste of time.

**What is your favourite city?**

There are many cities I do like tremendously. Tokyo, Stockholm, New York, Cape Town.

**Where do you have homes?**

Normandy, Paris and New York.

**Are you religious?**

No. I am a non-spiritual spiritualist. I am naturally drawn to water, waving grass, and pebbles.

**Do you meditate?**

On the plane. I am able to just naturally be still.

**Do you have love in you life?**

I have a long-term partner, Anton, who has had a stroke that obviously has changed the dynamic. Our relationship is a caring-loving or loving-caring one.

**Do you prefer men or women?**

Men are no longer my hobby. I experience it is difficult to find interesting men of my age. Therefore I like younger men a lot. In general I think that women are developing more. Men are emancipating themselves so there is growth and hope. But I am from the feminist era, which I guess had tomboys, so it was all fair game. Men have become 100% man and women 100% woman that has closed all of them up. When during the eighties all the creative gay men died with AIDS, suddenly the heterosexual creative men took over and brought the bimbo back. Which has taken feminism back to square one in some sense.

**What are your human characteristics?**

I think I'm nice. Rather generous and not a gossipy kind of person. I am very optimistic and not cynical.

**What is your family like?**

I don't have kids but I am motherly with my students and my staff. I am a middle child with two sisters. I rarely see them but on my mother's birthday we have 'sister day' where we do something special. As a middle child and a black sheep I was let free so I loved it.

**What were you like as a child?**

I was an easy child — always in my own universe. Living in my imagination. The most amazing thing my parents ever did was not to send me to pre-school so until the age of six I was completely free to spend time fantasising and building tents and huts in the summertime. It was the 50s so we didn't have anything to act as references like today. I just had to build castles in the air.

**What were your student years like?**

Self-realisation came for me at art school. It elevated my ability to find almost immediate creative solutions to anything in life. It also defined and designed me and instilled a strong faith in myself that was there since I was young.

**Do you exercise?**

Not really. I like to swim in the sea and go for walks though.

### Do you wear perfume?

Sometimes. But with border controls at the airports I don't carry bottles of perfume anymore. I like to pop in at the duty free airport stores and test everything.

### Do you drive?

No, I never learnt to drive. I am also a danger on a bicycle as I'm always in thought.

Read more about Li Edelkoort and her work on [www.trendtablet.com](http://www.trendtablet.com)

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