



Petra Verwaal & Sanne Overmaat

FOUNDERS & OWNERS OF THINGS I LIKE THINGS I LOVE

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Vintage-inspired fashion is booming, and in Amsterdam there is one particular concept that has stolen the hearts of style lovers across town: Things I Like Things I Love, the brainchild of Petra Verwaal and Sanne Overmaat, is undoubtedly the coolest kid on the fashion-block.

Tupperware party

Seven years ago Verwaal and Overmaat, who happen to be sisters-in-law, were sharing an apartment on Gerard Doustraat and started to notice that they had similar taste in clothes and decor. Verwaal: “We used to scour the city looking for cool pieces for our apartment. We especially loved going to flea markets and looking for inexpensive, one-of-a-kind objects.” After a while, they realised that they had a true knack for finding special pieces and decided to throw a one-night-only event at a bar, where they would sell vintage clothing and decor objects. “We thought it would be like a Tupperware party, a small event with just some of our friends, family and acquaintances attending. But boy, were we wrong about that! We made a public Facebook event and didn’t think much of it. On the evening of our ‘little party’, two hundred people were waiting outside and we completely sold out everything we had within hours.”

“We decided to give it a year and see what would happen.”

Treasures

After that first overwhelmingly successful night, Verwaal and Overmaat decided to host a few more shopping evenings. “We went all over the country, going to thrift stores and flea markets to find inventory. After a while we had been everywhere and seen it all, so we packed our bags and travelled all across Asia, looking for treasures to bring back. We returned with two huge bags full

of inventory. We made sure that all the items were super-affordable, so you could buy something unique for a few euros. People really liked our style and taste. I think that that combination made it a success. After a while, it became clear to us that we had created something that could actually work long term. We decided to give it a year and see what would happen.”

“We have our own special blueprint.”

Pop-up

The duo’s shopping nights were a clear success, but the idea of a permanent location kept coming up. “That’s when we decided to look for a retail space, but we just couldn’t find anything that we could afford. Luckily, the municipality was starting a rehabilitation project on the West side of town on Jan Evertsenstraat. We got the chance to rent one of the available spaces and decorated the whole store for just five hundred euros! For the design, we were inspired by the industrial pop-up stores you would see in London and Berlin, and at the time there was nothing like it in Amsterdam. It was really well received by the public and met with a lot of enthusiasm.” From there it snowballed. Within a few years, Verwaal and Overmaat had created their own small chain of vintage stores, with four locations in Amsterdam and one in Utrecht.

Duo

The pairing of Verwaal and Overmaat turned out to be a winning combination, also on the business end of things. “Sanne has a great eye for fashion and trends. I, on the other hand, am a true numbers person and I have a huge passion for interior design. Every time we open a new store, it’s the same plan: find a location, remodel it, and look for inventory. We have our own special blueprint. But not one store is alike in decor and at every location you’ll find different pieces.”

Collection

Verwaal and Overmaat kept going on trips to look for inventory, but after a while they just couldn’t keep up with the demand anymore. “We decided to step away from selling vintage pieces and started to look for brands to sell in the stores and also to develop our own line. Everything we design is something we would wear ourselves. Our first collection was inspired by the vintage pieces we found during our travels. We were the only brand that was doing that. We started out really small, producing in little ateliers in Asia. After the line proved to be a success, we took production to Italy and China, to scale up. We definitely aren’t designers, but we know how we want things to look and are extremely detail oriented. Fabrics and their quality is something that we never compromise on. We also don’t work in collections; when something is ready to be shipped, we make it available to our customers. So there is a constant flow of new product available.”

Team

What once started out as a shopping night at a local bar has turned into a sizable operation. Verwaal and Overmaat currently employ 38 people, most of whom are friends and friends of friends. “Most of the people who work with us have been here since day one. We are a really close-knit team. We really make sure that we have the right people in place. That’s why we’ve been able to expand at this pace. Expansion is something that we are always working on and really motivates us. But the most important thing is that we truly love what we do. There hasn’t been a day where I wasn’t excited to go to work.” ■

THINGS I LIKE THINGS I LOVE
Ceintuurbaan 69, Jan Evertsenstraat 106,
Javastraat 75, JE Constanlijn Huygenstraat 25
thingsilikethingsilove.com