

# marlies | dekkers

## PROFILE - MARLIES DEKKERS

### THE START

Marlies Dekkers (1965) graduated cum laude from the Sint-Joost Academy of Art and Design in Breda in 1991. The famous “mooning dress” from her graduate presentation is still a talking point. Determined to bring her own lingerie brand to the market, Marlies Dekkers secured a start-up grant from the government. She received a bursary of 16,000 euros from the Ministry of Economic Affairs. In 1993, she started her own company as a young entrepreneur from a two-room flat and launched her lingerie brand “Undressed by Marlies Dekkers”. It is remarkable that, in addition to the design of her lingerie, Marlies also handled the production management, the promotion, the sales and the distribution aspects. Some time later, her then husband Peter Wagenaar and her sister Anja joined the company.

### THE DESIGNER

Marlies Dekkers has proven her many talents. Her designs have been accepted, nationally and internationally, as refreshing, trendsetting and innovative. With her pioneering designs and her own philosophy, Marlies Dekkers has changed the lingerie market forever. She designs from her own vision of life and aims to give women self-confidence. Her motto is “Dare to be”.

She allows herself to be inspired by artists and philosophers. Her designs are known for their radiance of power and self-confidence, as well as for their groundbreaking style, perfect fit, detailed finish and the use of modern materials and innovative techniques. In addition to her creative talent, she has exceptional business instinct and a perfect feel for marketing. Her versatility has also been demonstrated by the fact that she has written two books and outstandingly combined her work with caring for her nine-year-old daughter, Zilver.

### THE GROWTH

During the first few years, production was placed in the hands of a Belgian textile company. On their collapse, in 1998, Marlies Dekkers made contact with a large Asian producer. The collaboration that followed made a strong increase in turnover possible.

Meanwhile, her network of suppliers expanded and was characterised by years of collaborative effort and great personal commitment. Marlies’ employees train the seamstresses in the making of her lingerie. The complexity of the work requires considerable care and places heavy demands on the skills of the mainly female production employees. Craftsmanship and a good social policy are therefore absolute conditions in the choice of suppliers. To further strengthen collaboration, at the end of 2006 a Hong Kong office was opened, so improving control of quality and fit.

In 2000, the brand name was changed from “Undressed” to “marlies|dekkers” and a distribution contract was signed with an external partner. Marlies was then able to concentrate on design and marketing while the partner took care of sales and distribution in Europe.

In 2005, this company was taken over and continued under the name of “MD Sales & Distribution”. In high tempo, further expansion and internationalisation continued under its own control.

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## THE COMPANY

Nowadays, “marlies|dekkers” has grown into an established brand at home and overseas, with almost 1,000 sales outlets worldwide and more than 100 employees. Around 80% of the employees are female and that is a conscious choice. Marlies Dekkers’ strong point is the recognition and development of talent. She is proud that many join the company without much ambition and then reach management positions. The corporate culture is built on five main themes: creativity, personal growth, identity, curiosity and self-confidence.

The brand also has six of its own shops that, in addition to lingerie, sell bath wear and sun-glasses, scented candles and chocolate. The “marlies|dekkers” stores are entirely designed by Marlies Dekkers herself and have an intimately atmospheric interior with a combination of classic and modern styles with ingredients such as warm colours, a fireplace and a lounge area. Currently, “marlies|dekkers” stores can be found in Antwerp (2002), Rotterdam (2004), Amsterdam (2005) and Bangkok (2006). In April 2007, shops will be opened in Maastricht and Paris. More shop openings are planned.

## THE COLLECTIONS

The marlies|dekkers collections have grown over recent years.

Undressed (1993) consists of gorgeous lingerie for women. Undressed Men (2002) is a modern men’s line under the signature of the designer. The Sundressed (2002) beachwear is a “cross-over” between over and underwear. Nightdressed (2003) is a line of deluxe lounge and evening wear for women. The Girl collection (2004) is a lingerie collection for young women.

The Sunglasses (2004) collection is a modern collection of sunglasses inspired by the “marlies|dekkers” range of bath and beachwear. The Special Sizes collection (2005) goes from cup size D up to size F. Finally, the Cotton line (2005) is a comfortable collection of tops and bottoms for women and men.

## THE RECOGNITION

Marlies Dekkers has won various fashion prizes. In 1991 she already received the “Zeebeltprijs” for her graduate collection. That was followed in 1994 by the “Dutch Bodyfashion Award”. The crown on her work was museological recognition with a solo exhibition in the Rotterdam Kunsthal in 1997. The aim of this was to bring the innovative aspect of her unique designs into the spotlight. In 2004, Marlies Dekkers was awarded the “Elle’s Innovator of the Year Award”. In 2005, the Dutch Textile Organisation, “Modint”, granted the title of “Grand Seigneur” to Marlies Dekkers. She was seen as a designer who made a difference in the fashion and design world.

## THE LITERATURE

In 2003, on the 10-year anniversary of her company, Marlies Dekkers decided to reveal her feelings in the book, “33 propositions”. Each proposition tells a story about Marlies Dekkers. In February 2007, her second book, “Stout”, that she wrote with Heleen van Royen, was published. With a print run of 100,000, this book is an absolute bestseller.

## THE FUTURE

The ambitions of Marlies Dekkers and her team are extensive. All women over the whole world should be able to choose her lingerie. With commitment and enthusiasm, the current growth path should achieve that ambition.