



words Onur Basturk
 portrait photo Katie McCurdy

the ST VINCENTS DUO



Housed in a beautifully restored 18th-century printing house in Antwerp, ST VINCENTS is more than just a store—it's an experience. Founded by Henri Delbarre and Geraldine Jackman, who left behind careers in finance and law for a creative pursuit, this boutique gallery invites visitors to explore design in a way that feels both inspiring and immersive. As you move through its carefully curated spaces, unfolding into rooms of varying sizes toward the back of the building, you're met with collectible pieces that blur the lines between art, design, and storytelling. In this interview, Henri and Geraldine share their journey from corporate life to creative entrepreneurship, the evolution of their concept, and the delicate balance of positioning themselves between a store and a gallery.

How did the idea for ST VINCENTS come to life? What were you doing before, and how did your paths cross?

We came from completely different worlds—Henri from finance, myself from law. We met in Amsterdam while working at the same consulting firm. It was a great place to work, a golden cage of sorts, but over time, the lack of fulfillment began to weigh on us. Henri took the first step, quitting his job to push himself toward his next move. Several months later, I faced a similar crossroads and decided to join him in navigating the unknown together.

We had no clear roadmap, only the certainty that we wanted to create something. Several ideas were percolating at the time, but finding the right location truly shaped the concept, sparking new ideas and possibilities—it still does to this day.

Initially, our vision was broad—a space where art, design, fashion, and hospitality could converge. At the time, we felt that most stores offered the same mass-produced products. We were drawn to the challenge of presenting design not just as a commercial entity but as something to be engaged with, admired, and understood—creating a unique design experience that would transcend typical retail spaces.

How has ST VINCENTS evolved since its inception?

ST VINCENTS has always been, and remains, a personal reflection of us, evolving in parallel with our own growth. Over time, we refined our selection and let go of what didn't align with our values. Fashion, for instance, felt at odds with our commitment to sustainability and timelessness. And the café, while a great experience, began to overshadow everything else. The pandemic, in an unexpected way, gave us the headspace to regroup and focus on what resonated most with us—design. We honed in on authentic, thoughtful, and enduring pieces, made to order, that capture the zeitgeist of our time.



What criteria do you use for exhibitions, and how do you shape your curatorial program?

Our approach to exhibitions is fluid—there’s no set formula. We don’t commit ourselves to a rigid schedule; the flexibility we have is probably one of the perks of the boutique gallery format. Each year, we plan to scale back on shows, yet growing interest from designers keeps pulling us in.

What we’ve found works best is a balance between invitation and opportunity. Many of our exhibitions come about when designers approach

us with ideas or simply need a deadline to inspire their next creation. Other times, we feel that a designer’s work deserves to be highlighted—an opportunity to share their story and offer a deeper understanding and appreciation of their creative journey.

We believe in letting designers set their own pace. Our focus is on showcasing work that feels intentional and reflects a designer’s unique voice, rather than being driven by market chatter. However, creators often feel pressure to produce new pieces just to stay relevant, sometimes at the expense of the work itself. This led

us to create “The Edits”, a more flexible and sustainable format. It’s a capsule series—less pressured, more adaptable, and ranging from large showcases to intimate displays. While it primarily focuses on current works, it may also feature a mix of older and newer pieces, creating a dialogue between a designer’s past and present. With The Edits, we don’t expect designers to constantly reinvent the wheel. Instead, they can show us their work as it evolves. Outside of The Edits, we still host more traditional exhibitions when a specific narrative needs to be explored or when a new collection or aspect of an artist’s practice deserves to be highlighted.

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Which product has garnered the most attention so far?

Lighting is probably one of our standout categories. Over time, it has evolved beyond its purely functional role into something more—a sculptural art object that elevates a space. Unlike furniture—which comes with more concerns for customers (comfort, fit, compatibility, durability)—lighting is more versatile and less restrictive. It’s easier for people to envision a lighting piece in their home, no matter their existing decor or style. There’s also a practical side to it: lighting is less likely to be damaged or worn out over time, which makes customers feel more confident in their purchase.

What are the pros and cons of positioning ST VINCENTS between a design store and a gallery?

Over time, we have settled on “boutique gallery.” It feels like the most accurate description of what we do—we’re more than a store, as we feel the works we represent are more than just commodities. Galleries carry a certain prestige, and we believed the designers we work with deserve the same level of recognition. By adopting elements of the gallery format, we created a showcase where the narrative of the creators takes center stage, setting us apart from traditional retail concepts.

At the same time, we maintain some elements of a store because we don’t want to be limited by a formal exhibition format. Our space hosts all of our designers under one roof, allowing us to stay flexible and responsive to new work and ideas. Unlike traditional galleries, which focus on specific exhibitions at certain times, we can curate and display work year-round, creating a more dynamic experience.

Of course, operating in this “middle ground” comes with challenges. Design, in particular, is a unique space—it’s less regulated compared to galleries, and the market is still developing. This presents both risks and opportunities, as being somewhere in between allows us the flexibility to navigate these uncertainties while offering some security in a less mature market. In the end, it’s this hybrid model that works for us. It allows us to curate something personal and intentional while supporting both established and emerging designers. It’s a delicate balance, but it’s what differentiates us.



Michael Hilal





Pierre Augustin Rose

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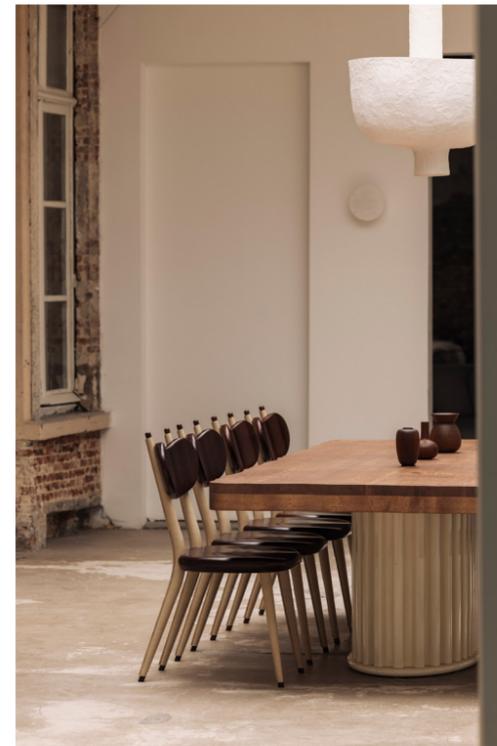
What are your criteria for the collectible products sold in the store?

Many factors come into play—it's not just about the work itself, but also the relationship, values, approach, and story behind it. Being a small team—just the two of us for a long time, and now three—means we have to be really intentional with every decision.

We're always keeping an eye on designers we admire, but we're very careful about how many we work with at once. Being small means we can't spread ourselves too thin—we want to give each designer the attention and support they deserve. So, the makers and designers we do end up working with have to be truly exceptional.

Since we don't come from a design background, we're constantly learning from the designers we collaborate with. Their sensitivity, their poetry, their unique visual language—it's all so inspiring. They give us new perspectives and insights into what drives them, and we learn so much in the process. It's a two-way street, and that collaboration is really special to us.

We also think a lot about integrity. In a world where companies often shift responsibility onto consumers, we believe businesses have to hold themselves to higher standards. Designers and artists are often at the forefront of what's needed in society, and their values, processes, and sourcing reflect that. That's why these things are so important to us. We want to work with creators who share our commitment to integrity, humanity, and sustainability.



THE BUILDING'S CHARACTER HAS BECOME SUCH AN INTEGRAL PART OF ST VINCENTS' IDENTITY

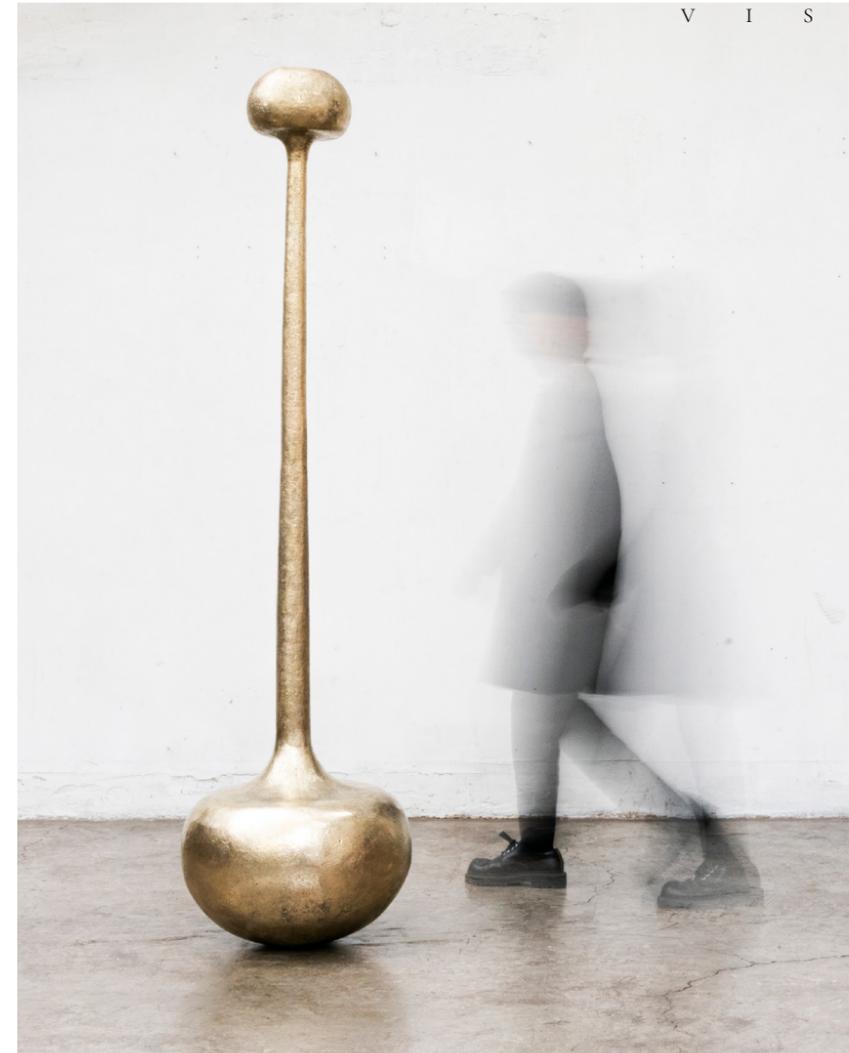
Your space is a restored 18th-century printing house—was choosing this location intentional?

It was sheer chance—or serendipity—that we ended up at Kleine Markt 13. Originally, our criteria for a location were quite modest: something around 100 to 200 square meters, a space we could easily move into, “plug-and-play” situation.

We had actually passed by the building before, but it didn't really register because of its derelict state, size, and the obvious costs involved. Still, it lingered in the back of our minds—you know, keeping options open—and when a realtor suggested we take a look, we decided to see it anyway. That's when we fell in love with it: an 18th-century former printing office, spanning approximately 800 square meters across three floors. It had been abandoned for years, completely derelict, and had been on the market for a long time. But we could see the potential it harbored.

The building had so much character, but it was a far more ambitious project than we had planned. There were so many factors working against us: we were on a tight deadline, had no renovation experience, and certainly no budget for a rehabilitation of this magnitude. The building itself became a source of inspiration and helped solidify the concept in a more concrete way.

Maybe it was naïve optimism, but we believed that with a few adjustments, we could make it work. Despite friends and family trying to convince us otherwise, we signed the lease. For the renovation, we focused on the ground floor first, planning to expand into the building gradually. After a very bumpy renovation process—where, honestly, everything that could go wrong did go wrong—we finally opened four months behind schedule. The building's character has become such an integral part of ST VINCENTS' identity.



BRIAN THOREEN HAS BEEN A FAVORITE SINCE BEFORE WE OPENED

Which designers or collectible pieces have recently caught your eye?

We're drawn to creators who challenge norms and make us see—or feel—the world in a different way. Brian Thoreen has been a favorite since before we opened, remaining a key reference. What draws us to Brian's work is his methodology and his ability to approach design with such intent. His work feels pure—understated yet extremely strong in concept, form, and material.

Then there's Marte-Mei van Haaster, who has completely shifted how we think about sustainability in design. She brings a poetic language to her work, and her entire process—how she integrates nature into design—is both effortless and profound. We've learned from her that sustainability isn't just about sourcing or made-to-order; it's about creating a harmonious relationship with nature. We're currently working on a few projects together, and it's been incredibly inspiring. We're even planning a show with her at the end of this year or early next.

Lastly, we're excited to be working with Nick Valentijn, a young designer who recently graduated from the Maastricht Academy. His work is still evolving, but it already has such a unique and confident voice. It's whimsical yet sophisticated, with this childlike magic to it—as if the objects could speak to you. Supporting emerging talent like Nick is incredibly rewarding, and we're excited to host his show this May.