

TELLING TALES

FANTASY AND FEAR IN
CONTEMPORARY DESIGN



V&A

Gareth Williams

own country roots. They created 23 utilitarian and archetypal objects, such as forks and pails, boots and bowls, but exaggerated and elevated them by casting each one in gilt bronze, a favoured material of the designers. The bronzes were complemented by simple furniture objects that served as plinths for these sculptures. The collection, commissioned for the Zuiderzee Museum, Enkhuizen, in the Netherlands, both idealized and caricatured the Pastoral by fetishizing traditional farm implements.²² The poverty of rural life is entirely overlooked and even the Calvinistic simplicity of the implements, and by association the way of life they represent, is obliterated by the sheen of the gilt bronze.

The designer Ineke Hans similarly seems to pastiche Low Country rural pastoralism in her work, and sometimes even in her personal style, with references to Dutch national dress. Folk-art motifs, such as hearts and flowers, pervade her objects,



29. *The Farm*, 2008
Studio Job

which, perhaps contrarily, are made of contemporary materials including recycled plastic. The *Laser chair* (plate 30), made in batches since 2002, evokes the naïvety of paper-cuts. She describes it as a 'folklore chisel job', when in fact the pierced pattern is the result of sophisticated computer-controlled laser cutting. She continues, 'I think quite a lot of my designs have a strange kind of relation to reality. It is not always what you expect in the first instance.' The *Laser chair* is typical of many of her furniture designs, which seem to have escaped from an Arthur Rackham fairy-tale illustration and are obstinately anti-Modernist. However, Hans makes another connection. 'The pattern on the seat somehow reminds me of the first Thonet chairs,



30. *Laser chair*, 2002
Ineke Hans