# Inge Onsea’s vibrantly restored Antwerp apartment reflects Essentiel Antwerp’s bold spirit



Bursting with energy and a vibrant spirit, Inge Onsea, co-founder and creative director of the Belgian fashion label Essentiel Antwerp, embodies the dynamic ethos of the brand she helped create over 25 years ago. Despite the global expansion of Essentiel Antwerp—now present in more than 40 countries with around 40 standalone stores—Inge remains refreshingly grounded, personally connecting with staff and radiating the warmth and enthusiasm that fueled the brand’s inception.

Her recently renovated three-storey apartment in Antwerp’s historic Graanmarkt Square offers a fascinating glimpse into her world beyond fashion. The building, dating back to 1870, showcases an eclectic mix of neo-classical and art nouveau architectural elements. Sitting directly opposite Essentiel Antwerp's headquarters, the location is ideal for Inge, who utilises an entire floor of the building to store an extensive archive of clothing, including treasured pieces by designers such as Thierry Mugler and Yohji Yamamoto. This proximity is a valuable asset for her, allowing regular access to past inspirations.

Inge’s journey with Essentiel Antwerp began without a defined plan. The brand's founding idea emerged from a love of vibrant colours, sparked during a formative period spent in Mumbai in the early 1990s. In a fashion landscape then dominated by muted tones, she and her former husband and business partner Esfan Eghtessadi launched a playful collection of T-shirts in 20 distinct shades. This early burst of creativity quickly blossomed into a comprehensive brand featuring clothing, accessories, and footwear within just six seasons. Despite their separation, the pair maintain a strong professional relationship and share parenting responsibilities for their two sons.

The decision to settle in the Graanmarkt apartment came after a period of alternating residences, including their former family home—a former French consulate on Antwerp’s outskirts that was also designed by Gert Voorjans. Voorjans, who is a highly respected Belgian interior architect known for creating richly layered, colour-infused environments, collaborated with Inge on both homes. His work reflects a blend of vibrant colours and period finishes, such as those seen in the consulate’s salon featuring 19th-century Italian sofas and bespoke damask panels. His credible design pedigree also includes creating interiors for prominent clients and stores, including Antwerp’s Dries Van Noten boutiques and the Grade II-listed Downe House in London, Sir Mick Jagger’s former residence.

The Graanmarkt apartment project took two years of meticulous renovation, during which the property was stripped back completely to merge historical grandeur with contemporary design. Inge relished the newfound creative freedom to make decisions unilaterally, describing the process as akin to designing a fashion collection—mixing, matching, and coordinating colours and fabrics to forge her perfect sanctuary. Though much of the apartment’s original features—such as wooden floors, ornate mouldings, and soaring ceilings—were preserved, the interiors were carefully curated to avoid clutter and excess, reflecting Inge's preference for minimalist yet vibrant living.

Among the standout furnishings is a 1980s modular round sofa sourced from Jean-Philippe Demeyer & Co., prized for its versatility in entertaining guests. Eclectic artistic touches, such as a large wooden head sculpture by a local artist and shelves lined with striking East African Malakita crystals, infuse the space with unexpected energy—so potent, in fact, that Inge reportedly invited a guru to help balance the crystals' intense vibe. The extensive shoe closet, overflowing with colourful designs from AtKris Studio, a Dutch vintage furniture and decor specialist, highlights Inge’s keen eye for unique and storied pieces, including a couch upholstered in fabric once used in Elton John’s private jet.

Inge's flair for entertaining is legendary, with evenings often spent hosting lively gatherings complete with carefully curated tablescapes, good wine, and DJ-spun music. Although she admits to being a poor cook, she takes pride in providing a harmonious mix of guests, ranging widely in age and background, reflecting her belief that the essence of a great party lies in its people.

Essentiel Antwerp continues to champion vibrancy and individuality in its collections, which feature bold graphic and floral prints with daring colour combinations designed to empower women to feel confident and flamboyant. Founded in 1999 with an initial focus on high-quality basics, the label has expanded to become a beloved international name, maintaining its Belgian roots in both design and ethos. According to the company, the mission remains to surprise customers daily, encouraging them to express their unique style and personality fully.

The Graanmarkt apartment not only epitomises Inge Onsea’s personality and creativity but also serves as a tangible testament to her journey—both personal and professional. Situated within a historically significant district of Antwerp, where architectural landmarks and the city’s first skyscraper punctuate the skyline, her home is a vibrant, living canvas that complements the exuberance of her renowned fashion label.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.hellomagazine.com/homes/834390/inside-inge-onseas-vibrant-city-apartment/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.hellomagazine.com/homes/834390/inside-inge-onseas-vibrant-city-apartment/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.hellomagazine.com/homes/834390/inside-inge-onseas-vibrant-city-apartment/), [[4]](https://www.bloovi.nl/artikels/stories/2021/inge-onsea-essentiel-antwerp-ik-ben-altijd-een-vrouw-zonder-plan-geweest-de-rode-draad-in-mijn-leven-is-dat-alles-per-ongeluk-gebeurt)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.hellomagazine.com/homes/834390/inside-inge-onseas-vibrant-city-apartment/), [[2]](https://www.galeriemagazine.com/gert-voorjans-antwerp-summer-2020/), [[3]](https://www.gertvoorjans.com/about/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.hellomagazine.com/homes/834390/inside-inge-onseas-vibrant-city-apartment/), [[3]](https://www.gertvoorjans.com/about/)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.hellomagazine.com/homes/834390/inside-inge-onseas-vibrant-city-apartment/)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.hellomagazine.com/homes/834390/inside-inge-onseas-vibrant-city-apartment/)
* Paragraph 8 – [[1]](https://www.hellomagazine.com/homes/834390/inside-inge-onseas-vibrant-city-apartment/), [[5]](https://www.company.essentiel-antwerp.com/about/), [[6]](https://www.company.essentiel-antwerp.com/team)
* Paragraph 9 – [[1]](https://www.hellomagazine.com/homes/834390/inside-inge-onseas-vibrant-city-apartment/), [[7]](https://www.ignant.com/2015/12/17/graanmarkt-13-antwerp/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.hellomagazine.com/homes/834390/inside-inge-onseas-vibrant-city-apartment/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.galeriemagazine.com/gert-voorjans-antwerp-summer-2020/> - Gert Voorjans, a renowned Belgian interior designer, was commissioned by Inge Onsea and Esfan Eghtessadi, founders of Essentiel Antwerp, to transform a former French consulate into their family home in Antwerp. The design features a blend of period finishes and vibrant colours, including a Sterling Ruby painting contrasting with chartreuse damask panels in the salon. The space also includes 19th-century Italian sofas and a green settee from the original Concorde waiting lounge. The master bath is adorned with Arabescato marble and Lefroy Brooks fittings. ([galeriemagazine.com](https://galeriemagazine.com/gert-voorjans-antwerp-summer-2020/?utm_source=openai))
3. <https://www.gertvoorjans.com/about/> - Gert Voorjans is an iconic Belgian interior architect known for his unique style that celebrates the daring and exceptional. He has designed homes for leading residential and corporate clients, creating richly layered environments suffused with colour. Voorjans studied Interior Architecture in Hasselt, Belgium, and has postgraduate degrees in Art History and Styles & Arts. In 1997, he opened his own architectural and design practice in Antwerp. In 2018, he collaborated on a collection of fabrics and home furnishings for Jim Thompson. Architectural Digest France named him one of 'Les 100 Décorateurs du Moment' in 2020 and 2021. ([gertvoorjans.com](https://gertvoorjans.com/about/?utm_source=openai))
4. <https://www.bloovi.nl/artikels/stories/2021/inge-onsea-essentiel-antwerp-ik-ben-altijd-een-vrouw-zonder-plan-geweest-de-rode-draad-in-mijn-leven-is-dat-alles-per-ongeluk-gebeurt> - Inge Onsea, co-founder of Essentiel Antwerp, reflects on the brand's organic growth since its inception in 1999. She describes herself as a woman without a plan, with the thread in her life being that everything happens by accident. Essentiel Antwerp began with four quality basic T-shirts and has since become a beloved brand in Belgium, with hundreds of points of sale worldwide, including in South Korea. Onsea believes that women should work because it allows them to blossom and realise their full potential. ([bloovi.nl](https://www.bloovi.nl/artikels/stories/2021/inge-onsea-essentiel-antwerp-ik-ben-altijd-een-vrouw-zonder-plan-geweest-de-rode-draad-in-mijn-leven-is-dat-alles-per-ongeluk-gebeurt?utm_source=openai))
5. <https://www.company.essentiel-antwerp.com/about/> - Essentiel Antwerp is a Belgian fashion brand known for its energetic, fresh, and surprising collections. The brand features signature graphic and floral prints and daring mixes of colour, aiming to make women feel confident and powerful. Founded in 1999, Essentiel Antwerp is designed in Belgium and has a global presence. The brand's mission is to bring out the most flamboyant version of its customers, encouraging them to surprise themselves and others every day. ([company.essentiel-antwerp.com](https://www.company.essentiel-antwerp.com/about/?utm_source=openai))
6. <https://www.company.essentiel-antwerp.com/team> - Inge Onsea serves as the Creative Director and Co-Founder of Essentiel Antwerp. Under her leadership, the brand has grown from a small collection of T-shirts to a globally recognised fashion label. ([company.essentiel-antwerp.com](https://www.company.essentiel-antwerp.com/team?utm_source=openai))
7. <https://www.ignant.com/2015/12/17/graanmarkt-13-antwerp/> - Graanmarkt 13 is a concept store in Antwerp, Belgium, that combines a boutique, restaurant, gallery, and apartment under one roof. Renovated by architect Vincent Van Duysen, the space offers a homey atmosphere with a curated selection of high fashion pieces and design objects. The top-floor apartment, once the founders' residence, is now available for guests. ([ignant.com](https://www.ignant.com/2015/12/17/graanmarkt-13-antwerp/?utm_source=openai))