

EMOTIONAL DESIGNS



Her critical attitude turned Hella Jongerius into a versatile designer: if something displeases her, she simply designs it again. Her colleague Adrian van Hooydonk works at BMW with several hundred people in order to design what will please as many people as possible. A conversation about the supreme discipline of industrial design: car design.



"THE INTERIOR OF OUR HOUSES
IS ALLOWED TO BE STRIKING AND VISIBLE,
SO WHY NOT THAT OF A CAR?"

HELLA JONGERIUS



"WE HAVE REDEFINED THE ENTIRE
INTERIOR EXPERIENCES – WELL-BEING –
INSIDE A CAR."

ADRIAN VAN HOOYDONK



Hella Jongerius takes an inquisitive look at the interior of the limousine that is conveying her from Munich Airport to BMW Welt, where she is about to meet for discussions with her fellow countryman Adrian van Hooydonk. The two successful Dutch designers have been wanting to meet each other for quite a while: Hella Jongerius, who manages her own company, Jongeriuslab, based in Rotterdam, and also designs for renowned manufacturers such as Vitra, Ikea, Droog Design and Nymphenburg Porcelain; and Adrian van Hooydonk, who has been in charge of the BMW design for years, and was recently appointed head of BMW Group Design.

Hella Jongerius has arrived a little early. The photographer makes use of the time until Hooydonk arrives to take portraits of Hella Jongerius – afterwards, she surveys the seating in the lounge and enquires who the manufacturer is.

When Adrian van Hooydonk arrives, he greets everyone in the room warmly, and is openly delighted about this long-awaited meeting with his colleague and the conversation that lies ahead.

The buyer of a car lets his emotions do the talking. The bodywork must be pleasing; after that, the customer enjoys sitting behind the steering wheel, testing the seats for comfort, gaining an impression of the interior and activating buttons and control knobs on the dashboard. Taken together, it all has a subliminal effect. To what extent do you as designers influence the buyer's emotions?

ADRIAN VAN HOOYDONK: It is important for a design to have an impressive effect. If an idea is good and has radiance, this can be seen right from the very first draft. The development of a car is an emotional process for me and my team, and I want these emotions to be real and vivid for the customer right through to the finished product. Design is meant to move people. It's great to see when people feel attracted by the design of a vehicle and get long-lasting enjoyment out of it.

HELLA JONGERIUS: One can be moved and gripped by a design. When emotions come into play, one opens up. When somebody buys my design for these reasons, the design will accompany him or her for a long time and will have an emotional effect. And this effect generates familiarity, an enduring effect, perhaps even love, and thus overpowers the throwaway culture. I try to totally redesign things, to do something that has a regenerative effect and that will endure. No matter whether we're talking about a sofa, a fabric or a chair.

ADRIAN VAN HOOYDONK: That's exactly my view. We designers constantly aspire towards regenerations that enrich and beautify our lives. Products are part of our lives. From the first glance, well-designed products convey the experience that can be undergone with them. The conscious decision to buy such a product reflects the owner's personality.

HELLA JONGERIUS: These "added values" we're talking about at the moment, I often see them based in the design or in the designer. In the past, one bought a chair because one thought it comfortable and functional. Today, one buys a chair because one wants to be associated with the name of a particular designer. With this added value, the chair is enhanced by even the designer's identity. I call this form of acquisition "new functionality". The concern is not the product, but rather the buyer's desire to take the designer's identity home by acquiring the chair. I think this need that consumers have is a remarkable fact.

Do you work with trend watchers?

ADRIAN VAN HOOYDONK: A car design takes about three years to develop. Generally, a model then remains on the market for seven years. If we're thinking about developing a new car today, we're looking at the year 2020.

A trend watcher looks ahead one and a half years at the most, so that doesn't help us. But there are trends that we can recognise because we are dealing with the future on a constant basis. We always try to keep the whole spectrum of design, fashion and architecture in our sights. We always have to know what the world has to offer so that we can design the future.

At the moment the world is undergoing radical changes, and everything is being redefined. Do you think that there will also be a new definition of luxury?

ADRIAN VAN HOOYDONK: In the automobile industry, luxury is often associated with leather, wood, chrome and the size of the vehicle. I expect that in the future, the customer will no longer only have eyes for luxury, but will also decide on a car that's more environmentally friendly. New technology, but also changes in exterior design, can help keep emissions to a minimum. Cars are going to look different – responsible handling of resources is going to have a visible effect on them. For example, we are currently developing a new exterior paint, grey metallic in

matt, which I test on a daily basis. Reactions to this paint are fantastic. People want to have a BMW with this paint straight away – and soon it will be possible, too. The whole world takes the view that whatever's valuable needs to shine. That doesn't always have to be the case. We don't even have to make parts shine to enhance the value of a luxury car. Of course, these are only tiny aspects of a big change in values and societal awareness that we are currently seeing. Each new challenge conceals new perspectives for us designers, and that spurs our creativity onwards.

HELLA JONGERIUS: That's right. In my experience, customers are becoming more precise, they take more conscious decisions and are looking for quality, not quantity. They can see through lavishness and the superficial, and are thus arriving at the essential. The crisis is effecting a pause. A shift in thinking is taking place: what is luxury, what is essential?

The interior of our houses is allowed to be striking and visible, so why not that of a car? I find the universal character of a vehicle interior really quite boring. Everybody has the same fittings inside their car. In my opinion, there are an enormous number of opportunities in the automobile industry, and there's a lot of energy in regenerating a car. In this context, it would need to be possible to continue customisation, adapting a product to the customer's desires.

ADRIAN VAN HOOYDONK: You're right. In the automobile industry a lot can be aligned with the customer's wishes, so the same interior can be designed in a number of variations – from sporty or classic through to modern. However, customers' wishes go beyond this; the entire interior can be devised differently as well. Different concepts and desires from the customers lead to a new interior-space experience. As a result, one sits higher up than in a limousine and every single person has personal space within the car, without having to sit squashed on the back seat. Within such a concept, the rear seats and the backrests are individually adjustable in order to extend legroom and allow comfortable travel. A first-class sitting experience. The interior takes on a leading role. The entire ambience should demonstrate a new type of luxury: wood, for example, will come in its purest form, and will therefore not disappear under many layers of lacquer. I believe that we are approaching a time when the interior fittings will become somewhat warmer. We also develop high-quality fabrics for the covers, but at the end of the day, what people want is leather.









HELLA JONGERIUS: Leather is just more practical. Families with children buy a leather sofa or a leather chair; they decide against a cover made of fabric. However, I do believe that textiles have something to offer. I design two types of fabric per year for Maharam, the New York textile label with which I work. We try to be more innovative every year. When standing in front of the closet in the morning, one knows exactly whether to go for cotton or linen. But customers who are in the process of acquiring new seating furniture are scared off by fabric covers. The covers get dirty; that is the first concern. Fabric can have just as luxurious a radiance as leather, but people are wary and ultimately decide on leather because they don't know their fabrics.

To finish, let's touch on a different topic. What has been the most magical moment in your life?

HELLA JONGERIUS: I hope that the magical moments will continue. I couldn't live if I thought I could only ever experience them once in my life. At the moment I live in Berlin, and I experience many a magical moment there. I enjoy the luxury of being able to choose which city I live in, being allowed to be in a new city, being able to discover new places I've never been to.

ADRIAN VAN HOOYDONK: One of my magical moments happened when I was an industrial design student. I was at the technical university in Delft, and then, with my three lines of Italian, I moved to Italy, which to me was the country of design. I very soon found a placement within a design agency. This brought me to the crucial conviction that I should and wanted to become a designer.

My new post enables me to meet different people and be confronted with situations that I wasn't familiar with before. For example, holding a presentation at seven in the morning. This means getting up at 5 a.m. As a designer I never wanted a job where I had to work from nine to five, but now I have a job from five to nine! (Laughs.)

*A new type of luxury: the focus is on the interior with
the BMW Concept 5 Series Gran Turismo.*





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