

Volvo a Volver

*Van Eijk & Van der Lubbe
conjure the future*

DAMN° has gone and tapped on the shoulders of the Dutch designer duo, even though they are still in the middle of developing the first edition of the new Volvo Design Collection. We learn that Niels Van Eijk and Miriam Van der Lubbe are big fans of Volvo and that this is quite a dream project for them. As a result, they are going to great lengths to create a solid concept for the Volvo of the near future, a time when society is certain to be very different from now, as evidenced in the young generation's desire not to own their own vehicle...

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If you ask around about what Volvo represents to people, most will answer 'safety'. After all, it was Volvo that in 1959 developed the so-called three-point seat belt that has since become a basic component in every car. But if you ask Dutch designers Niels Van Eijk and Miriam Van der Lubbe, who have been summoned by Volvo to collaborate on the first edition of the new Volvo Design Collection, the Swedish car brand represents much more. Inspired by Volvo and the Volvo XC60 model, Van der Lubbe tells DAMN°, "We were really happy with Volvo's invitation, not only because of the topic, but also because of the brand, Volvo actually has so much more to offer than people realise. At least those who are not Volvo drivers." Van Eijk and Van der Lubbe discovered this while doing research for the conception of their project, which will be presented at the end of this year. "We visited the headquarters in Sweden and the factory in Belgium, and were really impressed", Miriam Van der Lubbe says. "I think it comes from the Swedish culture, they really care for people and for the environment. Volvo has even developed airbags for the top of the car, to protect the pedestrians involved in car accidents!"

It is still a secret as to what Niels Van Eijk and Miriam Van der Lubbe will develop for Volvo, but it will be something that makes not only car drivers but also everyone else, aware of the rôle of the automobile and of Volvo, in particular, in our society in future. "We want to surprise people and tell new stories that they are not used to hearing in an outspoken way", explains Van der Lubbe. "People will ask themselves questions about the automotive world, not as consumers but as human beings." In fact, for Van Eijk and Van der Lubbe, the future of the car is related to the environment as well as to the quality of life and of time. "Think of autonomous driving," Van der Lubbe suggests, "with cars that will, at a certain point, drive independently, without anyone steering: it is obviously something that all the brands are working-on at the moment, and there are many things that Volvo already does to support drivers. But maybe in 10 years you will not even be at the steering wheel anymore when driving long distances. And that will give people a chance to relax. This offers lots of opportunities regarding design, too, something that really inspires us."



SHARING AND CARING

Another important topic is sharing. "We wonder to what extent one needs his or her own car", Van der Lubbe proffers. "Young people are not so interested in owning their own car anymore. They don't see it as a status symbol, rather as a tool to get from A to B. It has a different value to them. So why should anybody own their own vehicle, why should it not be a mechanism that you can share? It is ridiculous to drive to work alone, park the car there for eight hours, and then drive back home for 30 minutes. And if you think of all the cars in the world that are doing this... So many cars are doing nothing!"

Volvo has left the two designers free to conceive whatever they want. "Of course, we will develop something that is related to the car, but it will be something that also exists independently. We are not going to design a car, because that is something very complicated that involves 200 designers at Volvo and a lot of money, but we will present our vision of the brand and of the future of the automotive sector, in our own way." The pair already have a deep re-

spect for the design of Volvo cars: "You can like it or not, it is a question of taste, but this is not the point. What is important is its truthfulness. It is their mentality, and that has so much to do with the 'caring' aspect. It is made for their loved ones. It is a very true way of giving shape to their philosophy."

Even if we have to wait until the end of the year to see what the Dutch designer couple is thinking-up for Volvo, there's a hint in the photographs shot by Lisa Klappe, which serve as a kind of teaser. "We will shed a light on the Volvo brand and on the XC60, but we're designers as well as researchers, and we have an investigative attitude towards the car. That means that we aren't just doing something for ourselves, something that we like, but something that has everything to do with Volvo. We are very happy with the photos, as we've admired the work of Lisa Klappe for a very long time. It's our choice to take an active, research-oriented attitude, as we want to go for content and not for show." <

volvocarsdesign.nl
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VEVDL INVESTIGATING THE
VOLVO XC60
Photo: Lisa Klappe