



Form follows fascination

Forbes Magazine has hailed the duo behind *Humans since 1982* as two of the most exciting young designers to come out of Sweden in recent years. Spotlights—their installation showcased at Design Miami/—was created especially for the four rings and inspired by the Audi e-tron quattro concept.

Eva Bolhoefer (copy), Anders Lindén (photos)



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The idea for Design Miami/: Placed around the Audi e-tron quattro concept, three colossal spotlights feature videos that interpret some of the technology study's hallmarks.

“We want to amaze people with our ideas.”



Born in 1982, Per Emanuelsson worked for several years as a mechanical engineer before switching to his current creative career path.

Per Emanuelsson and Bastian Bischoff’s creative empire lies in a Stockholm basement in the borough of Östermalm. Houseplants and little cactus clusters decorate the big worktable where, every day, the pair sit across from each other working on their next innovative sensation. One of their most successful eureka moments to date hangs on the studio wall. The kinetic installation *A Million Times* graced a host of galleries and art shows everywhere from London through New York and Miami to Dubai. It’s constructed from multiple analog clocks whose hands spin in a complex technological ballet of precision engineering to produce shapes, letters and patterns before coming to rest in the form of a mock-digital timepiece. “Analog clocks are regarded as predictable—they repeatedly circle the face, going through the same motions. We wanted to change that,” explains Bastian.

This thinking is very much in line with their motto: form follows fascination. “We want to amaze people with our ideas. Seeing



After graduating with a degree in communications design from Germany’s Konstanz University of Applied Sciences, Bastian Bischoff, who was also born in 1982, enrolled in an MA program in Gothenburg, where he met Per.



The car’s aerodynamics, technologies and green credentials served as a source of inspiration for the designers in conceptualizing their artwork for the fair.

“Good design is bold design.”

the surprise on their faces and watching their reactions is what motivates us,” says Per. “Often groups of people gather in front of the installation. Many of them even start filming it on their smartphones, the way concertgoers do. Only here there’s no music, the visual experience takes center stage.”

What today takes the form of a visual concert started out as a virtual animation on YouTube. Within no time, it notched up hundreds of thousands of views. “The incredible response gave us the push we needed to build the real thing. That’s when we hired our current engineer David Cox, whose expertise got the hands moving,” says Per. Just two months later, the first prototype was ready for an exhibition in London. “Our nerves were totally shot but in the end it was a success—even though the installation was initially so noisy that the other exhibitors kept complaining,” recalls Per with a laugh. Today, after endless refinements, the technology is so quiet that the piece could easily hang in a library.

Marrying technology and aesthetics is not only key to their work but has deep roots in the inventive twosomes’ résumés. Before setting up *Humans since 1982*, Per worked as a mechanical engineer and Bastian graduated with a degree in communications design from Germany’s Konstanz University of Applied Sciences. The German and Swede met as students enrolled in an MA program at the University of Gothenburg’s School of Design and Crafts. While working on a joint project, they soon realized that they shared a creative philosophy—a distinct design idiom at all times fronted by a powerful idea. They personally prefer to remain in the wings and generally lean more toward nordic understatement. Their growing success has done nothing to change that. And growing it certainly is—their impressive client list includes high-profile art collectors and the international press is sitting up and paying attention. None other than Forbes Magazine hailed them as “two of the most exciting young designers to come out of Sweden” in its April 3, 2015 issue.

The duo is always on the lookout for something to spark them off. It’s impossible to tell when the next brainwave will strike. “We’re inspired by anything and everything. The most fascinating ideas are often found where two specialized fields intersect,” explains Bastian. To sow the seeds of genius, they often look beyond their professional horizons, combining physics and fashion, technology and philosophy, cosmetics and cosmology, food and architecture, religion and humor.

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“The video installation *Spotlights* illuminates the nature of the Audi e-tron quattro concept.”

For all their multidisciplinary methods, time is not the *Humans*’ only recurring theme. Light is another. At the Lightopia group exhibition showcased at the Vitra Design Museum in Weil am Rhein, Germany, their work proved highly illuminating. A number of their pieces revolve around light-emitting diodes in their most basic form. Collection of Light, for instance, is a constellation of carefully clustered LEDs that together form a wall lamp. “By categorizing and arranging the diodes according to size, color temperature and type, the work echoes an insect collection in the abstract,” points out Bastian. “Usually, LEDs are hidden under casings, but we wanted to spotlight the diode as an interesting exhibit in its own right. It’s a reflection of our passion for rigor and minimalism.”

For Bastian and Per, good design is bold design. Which is why they don’t shy away from social commentary in their creations. One of their more daring projects, Surveillance Light is a lamp that features eye-catching housings in the shape of security cameras. “In designing the spotlights, we took our cue from the debate about surveillance in public spaces that was raging at the time. It’s an ironic statement with Orwellian overtones,” comments Bastian.

The power of electric light is also the shining heart of the installation entitled *Spotlights* that *Humans since 1982* created for Audi. Premiered at Design Miami/ 2015, the work pays tribute to the Audi e-tron quattro concept, a sporty, fully electrically driven

Audi SUV that can be read as a clear statement of intent from the Ingolstadt carmaker on the future of mobility.

The car’s aerodynamics and technologies served as a source of inspiration for the designers in conceptualizing their artwork for the fair. They encircled the car with three monumental spotlights equipped with projectors to screen footage relating to electromobility, aerodynamics and solar energy. “We wanted to home in on three aspects—electrification, aerodynamics and renewable energy as the fuel source of the future,” says Bastian. “For solar energy, we have a sequence of images of the sun, while electrification is represented by shots of lightning and aerodynamics by a flock of birds. All in all, the installation pays homage to the power of Nature that is also reflected in the nature of the car.”

With their innovative vision, the duo behind *Humans since 1982* exemplify a designer elite that continually puts a fresh and progressive spin on familiar forms and patterns. Design Miami/ is where this elite gathers and enters into creative dialog. //

More on the topic:

Audi has been the exclusive automotive partner to Design Miami/ since 2006. The carmaker’s role is not, however, limited to that of a traditional sponsor. It also provides creative impetus by stepping out as an exhibitor and teaming up with acclaimed designers and architects such as Konstantin Grcic, Bjarke Ingels, Clemens Weisshaar and Reed Kram in showcasing the convergence of technology and design.

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