

'The IF Gold: one evening of fame'

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Pamela Musch (42)

After graduating at IDE in 1991, Pamela Musch applied for a job at Heineken before running into designer Maarten den Hartog. They started their own office

in Arnhem and got married. DenHartogMusch has won several prestigious design awards. 'We signed a business contract before signing our marriage settlement'.

I saw a DenHartogMusch design of a facade based on light shining through algae.

„It will not be build however, we got a second prize: too strange, too innovative. It would have been wonderful, a facade based on light and growing algae, surrounding the elevator to a subzero bicycle storage in Amsterdam. The process of growing algae was very suitable on that location, next to the NEMO scientific museum. We have even talked about turning it into a public toilet, with algae cleaning the sewage water. Imagine a kind of brownish facade that gradually becomes transparent. That would be fun.“

Could you give examples of your designs that we might encounter in daily life?

„One of our designs is a traffic light that will replace most of the current fifty-year-olds. The ViaLina is a compact, modular design using LED-lights. It was nominated for the Dutch Design awards and was granted the IF Gold in 2005. A more recent design, which received a whole bunch of

awards, is an office chair for BMA Ergonomics. We are getting increasingly involved in designs based on the characteristics of the human body: chairs, orthopedic orthesis and so on.“



Have the awards brought in new clients?

„No, I don't think so. Clients appreciate awards as a proof of quality, but they are not bringing us a fortune. Receiving the IF Gold means that a design is considered to be the best of the fifty best designs. It's the most prestigious award, and it made

me feel incredibly proud to stand on a stage next to Sony and Apple. But that was all: one evening of fame.“

What was your graduation project?

„A modular armature, based on a design concept made by a German. It was more of a technology project than a design, but that suited me: I consider technology to be just as much interesting as creativity. I chose IDE because of the combination of these elements, not because I wanted to become a designer or run a design office.“

But you have your own office now, how come?

„After graduating, I had lost interest in industrial design engineering and applied for a job at Heineken. Out of 120 candidates I made it to the top five, but ended on the second place. Exit Heineken. I was doing all kinds of jobs when I met Maarten. He pulled me back into design. After a couple of years, we were able to start our own office.“

You based the office in Arnhem. Why there?

„We looked at a map and decided this was where we wanted to live: a central location surrounded by lots of trees. We also thought it would be an advantage to be this close to Germany. In the beginning it turned out to be difficult to find clients in

this region and we have never profited of the proximity of the German market. We do however still like our location: it's quite central if your clients are based all around the Netherlands.“

How big will DenHartogMusch become?

„Years and years we thought we were doing something wrong, being an office with two designers and a couple of interns. We have learned however, that our small size has advantages: a little ship is more easily maneuvered into another direction and less vulnerable in case of a storm. We do however have the ambition to make more of the ideas that are now archived due to lack of time.“

What did you like about IDE and how could IDE be improved?

„I would like to give the current students a more realistic perspective of job opportunities and the average salary. Not everybody will become an Adrian van Hooydonk and work at BMW. Even the R&D department of a big manufacturer like Brabantia, consists of only five to seven people. Where will the other students end up? What I have really liked during my studies was the kind of pioneering atmosphere in the field of sustainability, with people like Han Brezet. Very inspiring times.“

Do you consider designers to be the front people in sustainability?

„When I had recently graduated, clients were not at all interested in sustainability. Until they found out it could be profitable. Manufacturers started introducing sustainability merely out of commercial, pragmatic motives. They didn't need designers for that and I believe they still don't. Our role is limited, showing visionary and inspiring ideas: a beautiful thing to do!“

www.denhartogmusch.nl

