

Liljequist's Favorite

An interview with Gunhild Liljequist, Volkswagen designer until 1992

Black and white and the little witch's house is located between the evergreen pines. White outer walls, black wooden window frames, and tiles on the roof. Gunhild Liljequist stands in the open front door wearing the same combination: white blouse, black dress. Her colorful scarf is the only indication of what will happen inside: The house explodes in color with a thousand hues. Gunhild Liljequist acknowledged this with a laugh.

Colors abound in all kinds of variations on canvas cover the original white walls. Light gray and white floor tiles and a wood ceiling frame abstract image compositions in the space that is otherwise dominated by light: Bauhaus-style leather chairs and other classics. Everything here is easy and Scandinavian-clear down to the opulence of color painted art. "This is still my outlet," says Gunhild Liljequist, by removing their finger tips on one of the many screens. "My compensation. At work I had quite a few liberties, but it is always within certain limits."

The boundaries of her job have gone, but are still very much alive around us – in the form of Volkswagen models, on which Liljequist, designer for 27 years, has imprinted her "signature", if you will. From exterior paint to fabrics, color schemes to interior decorative elements, all share influence extended in the Volkswagen design. Most of all it was the special models, among which is the notable Golf Cabriolet "Etienne Aigner": The appearance of this distinguished convertible completes Liljequist's idea of elegance.

For Volkswagen Classic, Liljequist dips into her memories of one of the most beautiful special models of the Golf I Cabriolet: the "Etienne Aigner".



Ms. Liljequist, how did the special model Golf Cabriolet "Etienne Aigner" come about?

Gunhild Liljequist: I remember that very clearly! It was the sales, approached us from the design with the idea of a particularly high-quality Golf convertible with a sporty and elegant cut. For people with taste. And with money (wink). We had already created a lot of very successful special models for different audiences. Sometimes sporty, sometimes classic, sometimes contemporary chic. Thus, the models were called then: Sports Line, Classic Line, Fashion Line.

Not to mention the exotic-sounding names like Acapulco, Toscana ...

Gunhild Liljequist: Yes, exactly the taste that hit their target group; they were well equipped and always carefully color-coordinated. But now we wanted to be posh!

Etienne Aigner is a highly respected name.

Gunhild Liljequist: Very elegant! A name with tradition, with products of best quality and distinctive style. A great challenge. Has made a lot of fun. Was also exhausting, keyword "tight deadlines".

Why was Aigner chosen as a Cabriolet name and Golf style?

Gunhild Liljequist: The Volkswagen sales contacts already talked about the company Aigner and eventually lit the creative spark: Let us make Etienne Aigner on four wheels! That had never happened before. So in Wolfsburg our studio door opened and a colleague from the marketing department breezed in, Aigner documents under his arm. The papers landed on the table, and then went off the big idea of what fundamentals could be conceivable in that material of the interior and color combinations of tops and decorations. "Take a bite," he said. So I made three different proposals. All were unchanged in production.

A moment, please; not so fast! Otherwise, the interview is over before it began. What inspiration did you have?

Gunhild Liljequist: Well, there was this Aigner jacket I got as a provided sample. The lining was very pretty, so I started there (thinks). The jacket is probably still in my old closet where I hang them inside since 1987.

Were you shut up in the studio until the special model was designed to finish?

Gunhild Liljequist: (laughs) Basically, I hatched the design alone, yes! A colleague from the marketing department and I, however, flew to Munich to visit Aigner to get inspired. At the end of our visit, I got a pretty classy gift-wrapped present. I just wonder what would be in there! Only at home I dared myself to open it.

And? What was it?

Gunhild Liljequist: Gel. And I hate shower gel.

Oh.

Gunhild Liljequist: Ultimately, I always shampooed the dog with it before he was allowed back in the house on wet and cold days.

Aigner goes to the dog ...

Gunhild Liljequist: (laughs)

You spoke earlier about the limits of your artistic freedom. Did Aigner have input on your "own" Golf convertible?

Gunhild Liljequist: Not at all, I had a free hand. The presentation will have held up to complete and then approved the final outcome.

What about the other special models: first the name is there, or the design?

Gunhild Liljequist: Completely different! You first compose a specific vehicle configuration, which is rubber-stamped by the head, and then they search for the perfect model name. Unlike like the Golf Cabriolet "Etienne Aigner"; the name was firmly stated at the top of the project documents.

How did you proceed with the design of the Aigner convertibles? Was anything particularly new here? Alloy wheels, Radio "gamma", the best sport seats, four-spoke steering wheel – these comforts were also offered on other special models.

Gunhild Liljequist: Yes, yes, even the Etienne Aigner Cabriolet, of course, was way above standard – a standard feature. But this model was something else entirely.

They are mainly due to the muted and dulcet colors: Midnight Blue pearl paint, Mangrove Green metallic, Bordeaux pearl paint.

Gunhild Liljequist: These are all classic colors that are so typical Aigner. Then they had differently-colored textile roofs and specially designed jacquard fabrics, even those on the door panels. Even the top covers were made of stretchable jacquard fabric flat woven with the Aigner logo ...

The classic horseshoe ...

Gunhild Liljequist: Right, the horseshoe – because I remember this incredible story of the internal presentation, in Valhalla ... (Clapping her hands together in front of her face and laughing)

Valhalla?

Gunhild Liljequist: The so-called Valhalla is a large, empty hall on the site of Volkswagen in Wolfsburg, where all vehicles, studies and designs will be presented to the Board in advance. We had taken the trouble to create all three color variations to be covered by a complete, production-based Golf Cabriolet in hand. I have had the Aigner chrome horseshoe finished even in the Volkswagen prototype construction, which I attached using a thin wire on a leather strap of the seat backs. And then comes the morning of the presentation, all the important gentlemen meet one by one - and the shoes are gone!



The special model Etienne Aigner: classic colors, fine fabrics with woven jacquard Aigner horseshoe logo and small emblems on the seatbacks. According to the brochure, it is an "exceptional combination of elegance, style and attractive design".

How?

Gunhild Liljequist: Stolen! Handmade emblems, pinched with pliers overnight. For the most anyone had used. But ran lightly off. The biggest problem was this: Herbert Shepherd, my boss, and his colleague from the marketing department have just ticked off. What was much more important: they liked the creations!

What is it like to actually see, feel and to drive your own designs?

Gunhild Liljequist: It is very uplifting! Over time, however, this sensation flattens somewhat, and you get used to the exalted state (laughs)!

You see, over time, errors, or have their own designs for a long time before your critical eye on inventory?

Gunhild Liljequist: Different! I would, for example, never again have white carpet (touches her forehead and shakes her head) planned for a vehicle, as happened with Golf "match". The special edition Golf 'flair': the chintz fabrics were very sensitive. But behind the design of the Golf Cabriolet Aigner I am, today complete with pride.

The car is entirely by you?

Gunhild Liljequist: On the color-tinted wheels, I am innocent. But I can live with that.

It does you credit. The Golf VI convertible is currently debuting. Got a hot tip for a proper special edition?

Gunhild Liljequist: Golf VI ... how time flies. But, wait a minute: Golf VI Cabrio was announced and that brown is indeed difficult in all variations. That reminds me, of course, a Louis Vuitton! (Hits her hand on my knee) That would be something. A worthy successor to the Aigner.

Perhaps reading this here and send you a bag. As if to inspire patterns.

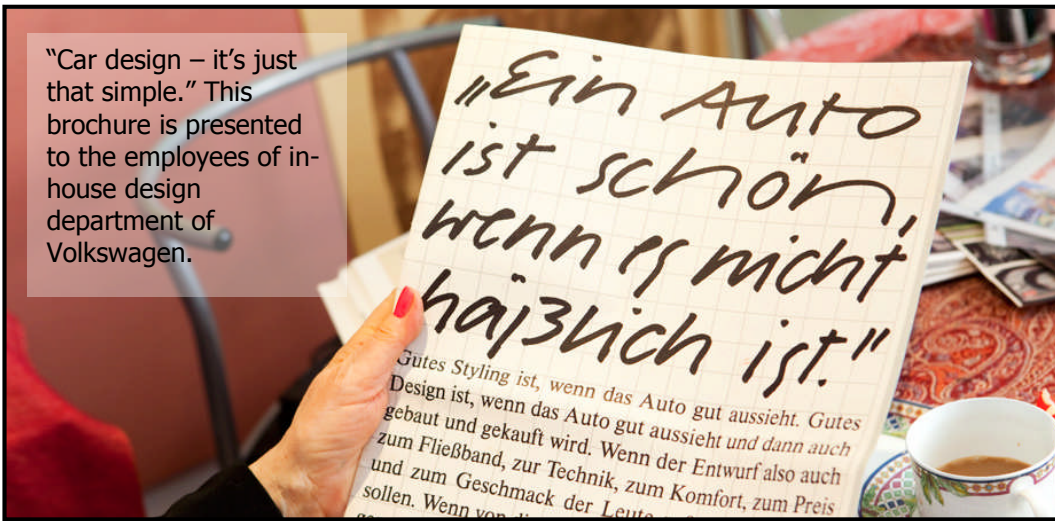
Gunhild Liljequist: (raises an eyebrow) Louis Vuitton, my address is ...



Gunhild Liljequist

Born in 1936; studied porcelain painting and design, first at the former chocolatier Sarotti before moving in 1965 to the "Department of fabrics and colors" at Volkswagen in Wolfsburg. Then she spent 27 years creating paint colors, interiors and accessories for Volkswagen regular series and special editions. In 1992, she retired and has since devoted herself to painting and object design.

"Car design – it's just that simple." This brochure is presented to the employees of in-house design department of Volkswagen.



Gunhild Liljequist, contemporary prospectus: When she began in 1965 in the Department of Fabrics and Colors, along with her colleague, she was the first woman in the Volkswagen design.



Paints, fabrics and interior, the color scheme was designed completely. The strong color of her own contemporary convertibles fit well into the picture. "Today, I would keep the color, however, subtle," notes Gunhild Liljequist with a grin.



Gunhild Liljequist with special paint film, a method developed by her creation of metallic paints. Color fantasies were constant companions: "I've always looked for colors that did not yet exist." Among other things, the marathon is on its creative account blue.



Whether Etienne Aigner, Quartett, Toscano or Match - many Golf models wear Gunhild Liljequist's design signature.



The thread count is an important tool for working with fabrics. The look for materials developed by the designer as a child, a milliner at a very early stage.



As with the Etienne Aigner, Liljequist was the sole designer responsible for the special model Quartett: "Special models did not have much time; always came very quickly and creatively under pressure - and I liked that!"



The joy of color Gunhild Liljequist's trademark. Even today.



For 27 years Gunhild Liljequist dominated the design at Volkswagen. Creativity in all facets.

Images and text (translated) are from the original magazine article located at <http://www.volkswagen-classic.de> .