

CLASSIC DRIVER

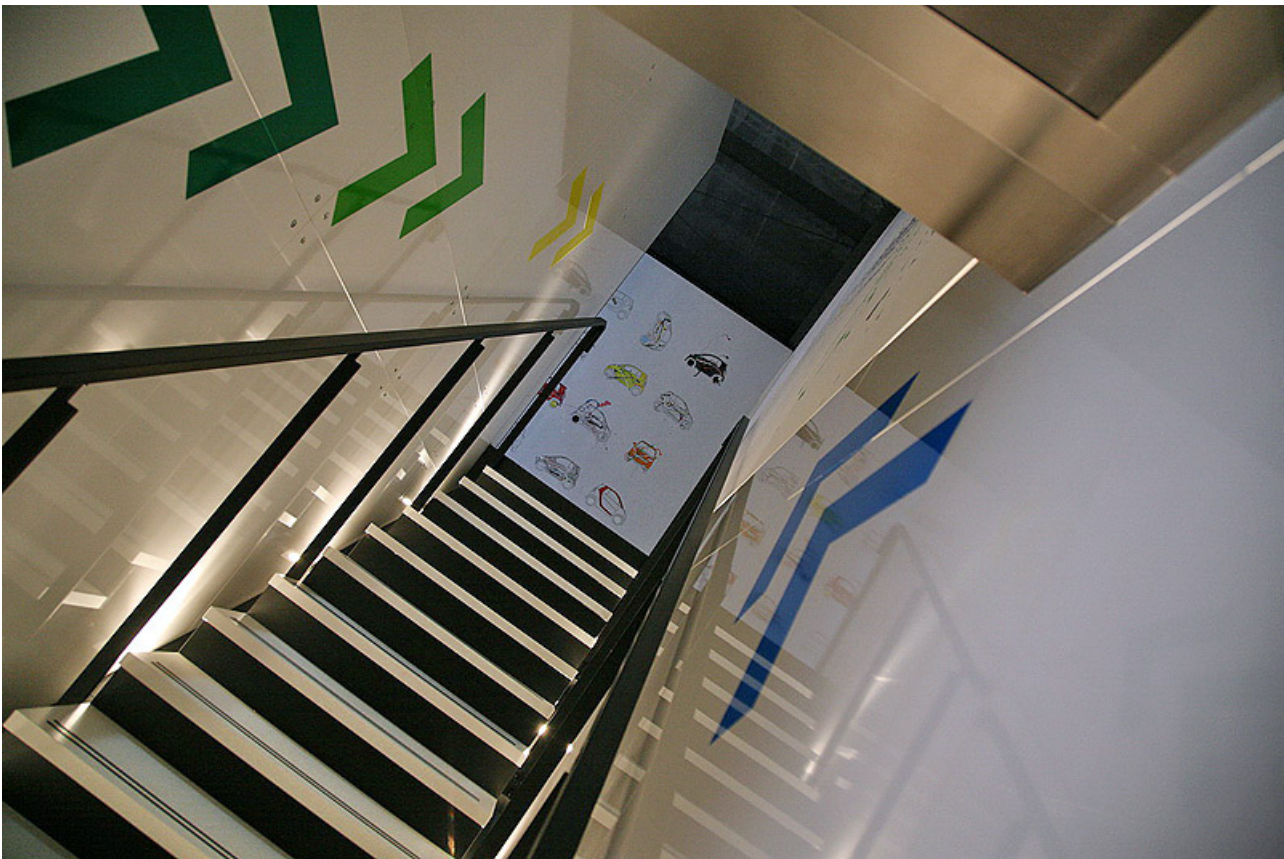
Geneva 2010: Smart Fortwo 'Sprinkle' by Rolf Sachs



World-famous Swiss designer Rolf Sachs thinks the smart car doesn't have quite the image it should. "Right from the beginning, the smart was such an original concept - and it's still unique. But the car needs to show its 'fun' side. At the moment, it's too constrained: it should liberate itself."

Hence the wild, free, colourful splashes of colour and hand-prints on the exterior paintwork of the smart fortwo 'sprinkle', which Sachs designed as a one-off for Geneva. Inside the car are patches of felt and painted details, with fun, coloured buttons on the seats. "And the whole dashboard is metallic," enthuses Sachs, "so you can stick whatever you want on it."





Rolf Sachs himself is ebullient, energetic, full of life, and it's clear he genuinely likes the simplicity of the functional smart. "The smart suggests a lifestyle, just as Ferrari and Maserati have their own lifestyles. But to me, all those two-seater sportscars... they're so passé. I want to see exciting new vehicles that are more practical: maybe a car with huge doors, that can seat seven people. I want to see *function* in the designs."

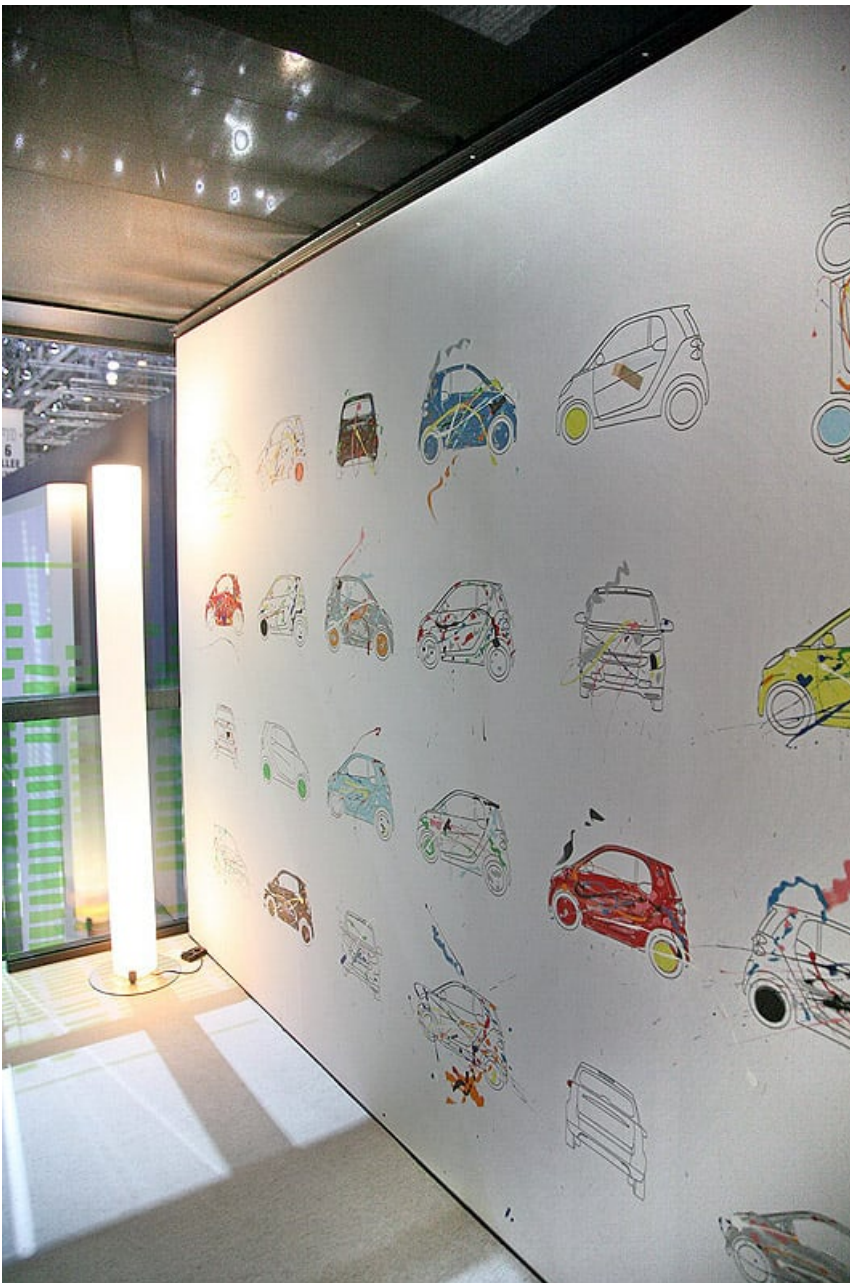




So does he think of himself as a designer or an artist? "Oh, I am a designer – but not an industrial designer. I try to put emotion into an object, rather than decoration. The French have a great word for it: *créateur*. A creator. In my studio in London, we work on the edge between design and art, often using surrealised ideas. We take familiar objects and change them. I want to give an object a soul. Furniture, for example, can be very soulless – I would like to create a chair, perhaps, that still looks like a chair... but when you touch it, it's stone."

I'm reminded of descriptions of Sachs' own house in St Moritz, where three-legged chairs are placed up a staircase. The chair legs are of unequal length, so they can straddle more than one step. "Ah yes," says Sachs delightedly. "Those chairs are from my boarding school: I bought the whole dining room – all the furniture, and then I changed it."





Sachs was also responsible for the design of the smart 'lounge' at the Geneva show, where we spoke to him, sitting between walls covered in the same bright splashes of colour. Everything speaks of vibrancy, of energy and life. Just like Sachs himself.

For the moment, the smart 'sprinkle' is a one-off, but there is scope to do a limited-edition production run of the fun, unconstrained little car. Yet Sachs seems never to stop thinking of new ideas. "If ever there was a car that *should* be electric, this is it." His face lights up. "Just think: the whole car could light up when you start it! And then slowly fade as you shut it down..." The technical department will have to work hard to keep up with his ideas.



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