

## Press information

### Hella Jongerius Whispering Things

14 March 2026 – 6 September 2026, Vitra Design Museum

**Hella Jongerius ranks among the most influential designers of recent decades. For more than thirty years, she has shaped a new understanding of design as a critical and poetic practice that continuously questions how we make, use, and care for the things that shape our daily lives. »Hella Jongerius: Whispering Things«, opening on 14 March 2026 at the Vitra Design Museum, will be the first major comprehensive retrospective of Jongerius' career. Tracing the full scope of her oeuvre, the exhibition brings together early experimental works, iconic products, and recent sculptural ceramics, offering profound insight into the fascinating creative universe of Hella Jongerius. Exhibits will include furniture, textiles, ceramics, sketches, prototypes, and films, including numerous projects developed with partners like Maharam, KLM, Camper, IKEA and Vitra, as well as for institutions such as the Museum of Modern Art in New York.**

What does it mean to design in a world that already has enough? How can objects embody appreciation and care rather than consumption and waste? These questions lie at the heart of »Hella Jongerius: Whispering Things«. The exhibition follows Jongerius' evolution from her beginnings in the Dutch avant garde group *Droog Design* in the 1990s, through her rise in the 2000s as a successful product and textile designer, to the deeply personal works of recent years that challenge the boundaries between design and art. Throughout her career, Jongerius has developed a distinct design language marked by complexity and an aesthetic of collage and layering, in which the diversity of materials is as essential as the expressive power of the handmade and the imperfect.

Building on this perspective, the exhibition unfolds across four chapters, each situated in one of the museum's galleries, collectively presenting over 400 works by Jongeriuslab alongside associated images and archival documents. Together, they explore how Jongerius has developed a sensitivity for the »whispering voices« of things— the subtle cues through which design conveys its origins, possibilities, and narratives. The presentation is based on Jongerius' extensive archive which is kept at the Vitra Design Museum since 2024. This collection comprises not only objects and prototypes, but also experiments, material tests, sketches, and documents. It offers fascinating views into a working process shaped by curiosity, research, and continuous experimentation.

The opening room, *Dirty Hands*, looks back to the 1990s, when Jongerius' exploratory approach first took shape. Early works from her time with *Droog* are shown alongside subsequent ceramics, textiles, and furniture. These formative projects demonstrate how Jongerius' interest in material behaviour and artisanal techniques informed a position between craft and industry. A video montage of the designer's hands at work highlights the deep physical engagement that has animated her ideas from the beginning.

The second room, *Business Class*, turns to Jongerius's long-standing collaborations with international companies. Projects for Maharam, IKEA, Nike, Camper, Vitra, and KLM show how she has treated industrial contexts as opportunities for negotiation and reflection. Rather than presenting only finished products, this gallery focuses on the traces of the process — sketches, samples, prototypes, and correspondence — which reveal how she has addressed questions of responsibility, authorship, and material integrity within commercial frameworks.

In the third room, *Feeling Eye*, the exhibition examines the chromatic and tactile research that forms a central thread in the designer's practice. A wide range of works — including a monumental installation of around 300 *Coloured Vases*, as well as constructed paper *Colour Catchers*, ceramic studies, and woven textiles — demonstrates Jongerius's ongoing investigation into colour as a situational and relational phenomenon. The development of woven pieces, shown from initial paper studies to experimental prototypes and final fabrics, offers insight into a method characterised by layering and close material observation. In an adjoining space is presented a newly produced video featuring the designer in conversation with critic Louise Schouwenberg.

The final room, *Cosmic Mind*, expands toward questions of coexistence and the agency of nonhuman beings. Sculptural works such as the *Frog Table* and the *Angry Animals* encourage viewers to consider relationships between species, while the *Space Amulets*, created in the aftermath of the pandemic, introduce a talismanic dimension. Kinetic three-dimensional weavings, the *Unfoldable Cubes*, animate the surrounding walls. The gallery is an integrated environment in which the »whispering voices« of things resonate on a broader, cosmological level.

At a moment of conflict, excessiveness and constant distraction, »Hella Jongerius: Whispering Things« is timely. Jongerius has often resisted prevailing trends, and her work can be at times deliberately challenging, breaking with conventions; at the same time, it derives its meaning from a virtuosity in the handling of materials and techniques that is unmatched in contemporary design. This exhibition, the most complete retrospective in Jongerius' prolific career, impressively underlines her outstanding position in the design world of the past decades and the reasons for her profound influence on a new critical generation of designers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

A comprehensive catalogue designed by Dutch graphic designer Joost Grootens, documenting both the exhibition and the Jongerius Archive at the Vitra Design Museum, will accompany the show. It includes a detailed exploration of the Archive as well as essays by renowned authors, including Alice Rawsthorne, Paola Antonelli, Louise Schouwenberg, and Christel Vesters. Following its premiere at the Vitra Design Museum, the exhibition will be presented at the Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg (16 October 2026 to 30 May 2027); further venues are currently being planned.

**Exhibition catalogue**



**Hella Jongerius:  
Whispering Things**

**Publisher:** Mateo Kries, Glenn Adamson  
Vitra Design Museum

**Authors:** Alice Rawsthorn, Louise Schouwenberg, Paola Antonelli, Christel Vesters, Marcella Hanika, Glenn Adamson

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**General information**

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Duration:	14 March 2026 – 6 September 2026
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Assistant Curator:	Marcella Hanika
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