

FRANK HEYL – THE MAN BEHIND THE DESIGN OF THE SUPER SPORT 300+



Deputy Design Director Frank Heyl lives and breathes design and speed

Bugatti produces the most exclusive, powerful and fastest cars in the world. “It is challenging, exciting and fulfilling to be a part of it,” says Frank Heyl, Deputy Design Director. A man who not only loves good design, but also yearns for high speed: the perfect match for the French hypersports car manufacturer from Molsheim.

The 41-year-old graduated in vehicle design from the Royal College of Art in London and worked at various manufacturers before kickstarting his career at Bugatti in 2008. At Bugatti he was involved in the design of vehicles including the Veyron Supersport, Vision Gran Turismo, Chiron and Divo. He was appointed Head of Exterior Design in 2014 and has been Design Director Achim Anscheidt’s deputy since 2019. It’s a role that drives him to the limit. He takes a creative and dynamic time out several times a year, taking it to the limit on track days in his spare time.

HEYL DEVELOPS THE WORLD'S FASTEST CARS

He forcefully pulls the six-point seat belt tight and starts the engine. When Frank Heyl takes to the wheel of his own Porsche 911 GT 3, he's in his element. "I might not be a racing driver, but I like to drive fast and take the vehicle to the limit. We all know that the race track is the best place for that." Heyl's day job is developing the world's fastest cars. The Hamburg-born designer seems down-to-earth and modest. Results and performance are important to him, not making a brash impression — in line with Bugatti's tradition.

Just like at work: Heyl will spend months refining every last detail until he has perfectly implemented his ideas — making them just right. He has registered a host of patents over the past years, for instance a special boot lid featuring a vacuum function for the Chiron. Instead of using ventilation holes for the engine, Heyl designed a dual-shell boot lid featuring a sandwich-design air guide element that only opens once the vehicle is in motion to extract hot engine air from the engine compartment towards the rear without having to create additional ventilation holes. "These would have otherwise spoiled the look of the rear, I didn't like that," he says. Form follows performance. As a designer he knows how hard it is to create a holistic product that brings together all the properties it needs while also looking great. "Every day I am thrilled to work on achieving these objectives and making the cars even better," Heyl explains.

BUGATTI DOES NOT COMPROMISE

Heyl is not a conventional designer who just focuses on looks. He considers function and technical details to be just as important. As part of his role at Bugatti he feels inspired by the close collaboration between engineers and designers, even after so many years. As Bugatti produces small batches of hypersports cars, the company requires different production methods compared with large-scale production. "At Bugatti we develop special solutions geared specifically towards our demands to build every vehicle as perfectly as we need it. This produces results in vehicles with road homologation that you would otherwise only find in motorsports vehicles," he adds. Our design team develops new approaches together with the engineers, from the first sketch to a series production launch or special customisation requests from customers. We are in the loop throughout the entire development process," Frank Heyl explains. Within the context of hypersports car coachbuilding, he and his team are granted all the design liberties they could wish for. "As a result we were able to implement three completely different styles with the Divo, the Centodieci and La Voiture Noire without moving away from Bugatti's core values," Heyl underlines.

DESIGN AND PERFORMANCE INSPIRE HEYL

He is fascinated by two aspects of vehicles: firstly the design, the proportions, for instance the height of the cab in relation to the wheels. A vehicle's stance also forms part of this element: is the outline leaning back or jumping forwards? Does it seem athletic or more elegant? What about the vehicle's design language: does it tend more towards organic or technical elements? For Heyl, the second category is anything to do with performance. "In addition to the drive train architecture and engine concept, this element hinges most of all on the aerodynamic concept," he explains. He is also fascinated by the history of and success in motorsports. "I am passionate about technology, even though I am a designer," he says. "This is partly due to my passion for

tinkering with cars, even if I only rarely get a chance to do so," Heyl adds with a smile. He is most of all interested in new technologies and materials. "These result in new design opportunities and potential solutions like the Divo's fragmented tail lights," Heyl says. Thermodynamics and aerodynamics also play a part in this context. Company founder Ettore Bugatti, who turned engineering into a form of art by permanently striving towards perfection, would agree.

What Heyl likes about the current Chiron is that it features reduced design with timeless features. "In my opinion the Chiron embodies a well built, buff athlete who focuses on good proportions and wears timeless clothing," Heyl explains. The body's two-tone paintwork uniquely divides the Chiron's volume. This gives customers individual configuration options to express themselves thanks to almost limitless colour combinations. Frank Heyl is sure that "this is another reason the Chiron will stand the test of time."

EDITION CHIRON SUPER SPORT 300+ DEVISED BY HEYL

Just like the Chiron¹ Super Sport 300+, where Heyl was responsible for the visual appearance and aerodynamic concept. This hypersports car was the first pre-series car to reach 300 miles per hour and guarantee its place in the history books of the world's fastest vehicles. "We have realised the maximum technical potential with this vehicle and you can feel a genuine pioneering spirit — it's my very own moon landing," Heyl says proudly.

His dream cars include the Porsche 911, McLaren F1, Red Bull X2010, Peugeot 905 EV01, Mazda 787B, Aston Martin Valkyrie, but also the Divo with its 16 cylinders. "I am fascinated by extraordinary vehicle architecture and engine concepts because the drive train layout holds the key to the proportions, the paramount element of automotive design," Heyl adds.

Frank Heyl is eagerly awaiting to present his newest project to the world soon.