



PRESS RELEASE

Design That Opens Doors: A Decade of Nuki Revolutionizing Smart Access Aesthetics

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From the “Magic Black Box” to the smallest Smart Lock in the company’s history: As Nuki celebrates its tenth anniversary, the Austrian company reflects on a decade in which its design has redefined the look of electronic door locks. More than 800,000 people now use a Smart Lock featuring Nuki’s iconic LED ring in their homes.

“Every beginning holds its own kind of magic”: this quote from Nobel Prize-winning author Hermann Hesse is often used to describe the spirit of startup culture – but it perfectly captures the early days of smart access pioneer Nuki. There truly was a touch of magic in the design phase. Exactly ten years ago, on May 12, 2015, the Austrian company unveiled its keyless entry solution to the public for the first time – via the crowdfunding platform Kickstarter. Back then, it took the shape of what designer Harald Gründl called the “Magic Black Box,” a radical concept aimed primarily at tech enthusiasts and early adopters. During the development process, however, a manual control element was added – paying homage to the material aesthetics of traditional door hardware – which would go on to shape the form of Nuki’s first-generation Smart Lock.

“Product design at this stage is always an investment in the future – it can go either way. In hindsight, it was a high-risk decision,” says Harald Gründl of design partner EOOS. “That’s why we’re incredibly proud of that first fully realized concept. With only minor tweaks, it has stood the test of time over ten years and has firmly anchored Nuki’s premium positioning through design.”

Design as a Key to Success

For Jürgen Pansy, Nuki Co-Founder and Chief Innovation Officer, design has been central from day one: *“The Smart Lock is a retrofit device – it mounts onto your existing door cylinder, so it has to work harmoniously with the existing door. That’s why it was clear from the start: Nuki could only succeed with a coherent design.”*

And the numbers speak for themselves: More than 800,000 people already use Smart Locks in the Nuki design, making the Graz-based company the European market leader in keyless access solutions. Nuki's design has also garnered numerous prestigious awards. Even the latest, fifth-generation product – Smart Lock Ultra – is already an award winner, boasting both a CES Innovation Award® and an iF Design Award.

“This shows that we’re setting benchmarks in both technology and design for smart access solutions,” adds Martin Pansy, Co-Founder and CEO of Nuki. *“We’re thrilled that, together with our long-standing partner EOOS, we’ve created a design that appeals to both users and expert juries alike.”*

An Iconic Element

Five product generations have followed the original Kickstarter-era “magic box.” Which evolution posed the greatest design challenge? According to Harald Gründl, it was integrating the gearbox and battery into the rotary knob for the fifth generation: *“There was a constant back-and-forth between engineering and design. We were dealing in millimeters – details that ultimately shaped the overall impression of the new Smart Lock.”*

But one design element never came into question. *“Even though the housing is two-thirds smaller, you instantly recognize it as a Nuki Smart Lock – thanks to the iconic LED ring,”* says Martin Pansy. Harald Gründl elaborates: *“The ring bridges hardware and software, indicating whether the lock is locked or unlocked. It’s a clear differentiator compared to open padlock symbols or red and green lights. Integrating it is complex – but there’s no compromise here. The illuminated ring is Nuki’s identity.”*

Reaching a New Audience

How has the role of design evolved in the smart home sector since Nuki’s beginnings? According to Harald Gründl, the design quality of smart home products has significantly improved over the past decade, making them far easier to integrate into home environments. Nuki is contributing to this shift: the new Smart Lock Pro and Ultra are two-thirds smaller than earlier models and blend seamlessly into modern interiors. Interchangeable rings in black and white allow further customization to match door and hardware finishes.

“The more harmoniously a smart lock fits into the interior design, the more relevant it becomes for design-conscious consumers. Good design opens the door to new audiences,” observes Martin Pansy. *“And with every new user group, smart door locks become more and more part of everyday life.”*

More Than Just Functionality

Ten years. Five generations. Nuki has proven that a smart access solution can offer far more than pure functionality – it’s about the interplay of technology, security, convenience, and design. *“For me, truly great product design means using it brings joy,”* concludes Jürgen Pansy. *“And the clearest sign of that is the fact that more than 800,000 people are already using Smart Locks in the Nuki design.”*

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About Nuki

In 2015, the successful crowdfunding campaign on the Kickstarter platform laid the foundation for Nuki's success story. Since then, the company – founded by brothers Martin Pansy (CEO) and Jürgen Pansy (Chief Innovation Officer) in Graz – has grown steadily: Today, Nuki is Europe's leading provider of smart, retrofit access solutions. The company currently employs 150 people from 18 different nationalities at its headquarters in Graz. Nuki holds dual ISO certifications – ISO 9001 and ISO 14001 – attesting to its high international standards in quality and environmental management systems. In addition to its Europe-produced Smart Lock and a wide range of accessories and services, the Austrian company is committed to continuously developing smart access solutions for a completely keyless future.

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