

Founder Focus

Before founding AEON, what drew each of you to design as a discipline, and how has that background shaped the way you build a company?

Mert

I've always been fascinated by great brands and products. What makes something iconic? Why are we innately drawn to some objects over others? How come some textures bring us calm and peace, and others tire us by their mere existence? The study of design provided me a path to explore this curiosity.

Daniel

My family has a background in engineering, so I've enjoyed tinkering and thinking of how to improve things from an early age, but engineering as a discipline can lack an element of beauty, so I felt design was a more well-rounded discipline, one that brings both beauty and functionality together.

Mert

After a decade of designing products for others, we've realized that to make a truly standout product, and aspire to make a dent in the fabric of culture, you have to start your own company and own a hundred percent of the process from ideation to delivery. There can't be a single atom in the chain that you don't feel good about. This level of purity in both the intention and the execution is not nice-to-have but a requirement, and somehow transmits through your product to the customers.

AEON describes itself as being founded by "two designers in pursuit of excellence." What does excellence mean to you in practice?

Mert

If you've ever held a Matryoshka doll you'll know the delightful surprise of discovering the inner layers one at a time. Just when you think surely this one is the last one, there you find another, even cuter one. Each new doll is a delightful surprise, and they're all perfectly executed right to the core. Looking carefully unravels even more beauty and care than originally expected. This is how it feels to interact with an excellent product. You're delighted and surprised by the level of care at every level. It's completely different from the ever-so-elusive "perfection".

Daniel

To excel is to go beyond what is required or expected. So in the context of lube, plenty of other lubes on the market are capable of supplying lubrication, but we try to go beyond just the minimum requirements, which in

the case of lube there are three: 1. Reduce friction 2. Be body safe 3. Come in a container. Excellence is delivered when you start asking questions that pertain to how humans uniquely experience the product: How easy is it to use during sex? Can the container be more hygienic? Can the product enhance the experience in any way?

What inspired you to enter the intimacy category specifically?

Mert

A brand is a symbol of trust, and we couldn't think of a better category to start with than intimacy where trust matters the most. It's a test of our ability to try and be worthy of that. The warm concepts of seduction, sensuality and beauty merge with the cold hard reality of safety, ingredient quality and logistics. We wanted to prove to ourselves that we can execute at the level this category demands on all fronts.

Daniel

The complexity of serving intimacy was a great challenge for us as designers, but through our personal interactions with the category, we also felt most products probably fell short in the eyes of demanding customers who were used to excellence elsewhere in their lives.

So we looked for the intersection of "what we want to make" "what we can execute" and "what we can afford" which led us to pursuing the lubricant as our first product within this category.

Was there a moment when you realized existing products weren't meeting the standard you believed was possible?

Daniel

A few companies before us started introducing better marketed products, with more discreet packaging, curated visuals, and so on. The reception to their approach proved there was appetite for something more elevated, but we thought there was space to push the envelope even further, past simple styling and think about the product more deeply.

Mert

I used to dread browsing for and using lube. Many products lack FDA clearance, even more are unsightly, and none of them really fit my lifestyle or design sensibility. A pump bottle for example, is non-negotiable for me. It allows you to apply just the desired amount, while keeping the rest of the formulation hygienic. The tubes on the other hand are leaky, unhygienic, and the most annoying of all, their harsh edges can cut into your skin if you happen to lie over one. An intimate product should feel smooth all around. It should feel comfortable on your skin in its entirety.

Over the years I found myself hunting for better formulations in different countries, then filling those small MUJI pump bottles. It seemed like none of these companies cared one bit about my experience. If this is how careless they are with their brand and packaging, how could I trust them to offer a safe formulation?

As co-founders, how do your perspectives differ and where do they overlap?

Daniel

I'd say our perspectives overlap in the drive and care we dedicate to delivering delightful products to our customers, but we started with different ideas for the visual world this brand should inhabit and the result we see today is a careful marriage of the two perspectives. I'd say this back and forth has helped bring greater depth to the character of the brand.

Mert

I agree with Daniel that we have distinct taste in visuals, which then we distill into a unified vision. Where we are fully aligned, however, is our commitment to quality. Neither of us ever questioned a suggestion when it was about product quality and safety. That alignment frees us up to spend more time doing what we enjoy the most, creating the visual and emotional world of the brand.

What conversations about intimacy, relationships, or the body do you feel are often missing from mainstream culture?

Daniel

We should celebrate sex positivity's great strides forward, but alongside it I've noticed an increase of crude content in media, the next step could be to go deeper than surface-level provocative imagery and talk more about the fleeting subjective things that make people feel attracted to each other. The art of seduction is something we should give more space to.

Mert

I personally think we've come a long way in creating a sex-positive environment. My personal circle is just a lot more informed compared to, say, a decade ago. However, a lot of brands still enter the conversation as teachers, defaulting to a didactic, Sex Ed tone that assumes the customer needs to be informed or reassured. There's real value in that work, it's just not what we're here to do.

Aeon is likely not the first lubricant you'll ever buy. It's an upgrade. It's for the people who appreciate the finer things in life. So our base assumption is that you are an informed adult with high expectations and clarity in your taste. We're not trying to educate you about your own intimacy, we're trying to add something to it.

Aeon is about discovery and delight. We think sex is a big part of the joy of living, and that's the conversation we want to push forward. How can we get more out of life?

Brand Focus

How do you describe AEON to someone encountering the brand for the first time?

Mert

A breath of fresh air. We want you to let go at Aeon and enjoy the weightless feeling of not having to think about the details. Knowing that it's all taken care of for you, with the level of care and thoughtfulness that exceeds your expectations.

Daniel

When we say "all taken care of for you", we mean that using Aeon products should feel effortless. Our products are used in intimate settings, some of the most precious moments in life, and we will do everything in our power to ensure what we make doesn't distract from these moments.

Much of the language surrounding intimate products tends to fall into either clinical wellness or overt sexuality. AEON seems to occupy a different space entirely. Was that intentional?

Mert

I am so glad you've noticed. We're aspiring to evoke feelings, moments and memories. We talk about the concept of "true lovers". We want to speak to the yearner in you. We understand that attraction is not rational nor should it be, so we're exploring ways of playing into that irrational nature of sexual tension.

Daniel

This kind of expands on the earlier point about seduction: It's an inherently social act, which means you need a subjective observer to appreciate the effort you've put into your interaction with them. Imagine you go out on a date with someone, they've done everything to put their best foot forward, they wore beautiful clothes, did their hair, they put on perfume, made engaging conversation the whole evening, Aeon is just the continuation of that effort. Once you agreed to spend the night together and you see they use elevated intimate products, that's a signal they truly cared for their experience and your experience. At the restaurant, the clothing and so on could have been a wider social signal, but Aeon is a signal for your eyes only.

The brand frequently references beauty, connection, seduction, and appetite for life. How do those ideas influence your work?

Mert

These concepts are at the core of what makes us human. The act of making something beautiful even when it costs more, crossing oceans in hopes of connecting with someone, and the dance of courtship to cross the line. We're trying to breathe the softness of humanity into our products.

Daniel

We want to make our products disappear into the moment, to leave space for what really matters in our customer's life, namely connection, beauty, etc. Now, we understand that it would be hubris on our part to think that you can gain human connection or appetite for life by buying lube, but what we're trying to do is create products that speak to people who care about those things.

AEON feels unusually design-forward for the category. Why was design such an important place to begin?

Daniel

Design is simply the process by which one can achieve a good product. All the aesthetic and functional considerations we make are tools that come together to deliver a great experience.

Mert

Beauty is both a signal and a function. The cup your coffee is served in has a profound effect on its taste. When you first come into contact with an object, the way it looks is the only information you have about it, so you make a preliminary judgment on whether it's good or not before you even touch it. Once you hold the object, and use it, you build on your initial opinion of it. But that first impression never goes away. Everything about the coffee cup forms almost this magnetic field around it that bends your experience with the coffee within. We need to make sure our products feel good the entire way from that first glance all the way until their eventual disposal. This is why we obsess over the design of everything about Aeon, it's just part of your continuous relationship with us.

Your media materials state that "good design disappears into the moment." Can you expand on that philosophy?

Mert

We want you to forget that our lubricant exists. If we've done everything right, the process of using the lube is so smooth that you don't even have to think about it. It just melts into the moment so you can concentrate on your lover.

A great pair of speakers should make you feel like you're being sung to personally by Erykah Badu as if she is 10 feet away from you. You don't want to be thinking about the speakers. If they're tuned correctly, you don't notice the speakers at all.

What emotions or experiences do you hope customers associate with AEON?

Mert

One of those rare days that you keep reliving in your head. When you were free, spontaneous and a little mischievous.

Daniel

We'd be very lucky if a customer was able to have such a memorable experience somehow aided by our products. An unexpected liaison during a trip abroad, a renewed spark with their partner. We would want to be associated with these experiences.

Were there any brands, movements, objects, or cultural references that helped shape your vision?

Mert

We're endlessly inspired by the icons before us where mythology grew out of real craftsmanship. 2000s Maserati, early days of Aesop, pre-LVMH Rimowa come to mind.

Daniel

The 2007 Maserati Quattroporte is one of our all-time favorite products. It just has so much in one package. A luxury four-door sedan with a Ferrari V8 engine. Tremendously beautiful and refined as one would expect, but it was also fast. However, everyone remembers this car for its signature sound. It somehow managed to sound better than the Ferraris with that same V8. So much so that there's this anecdote about an insurance company which conducted "research" on the car's exhaust note, finding that the Maserati's sound was literally arousing.

The team had made a technically exceptional car, but also understood everything that made Maserati a desirable brand by instilling beauty and drama perceptible by everyone who saw the car, regardless of whether you care about cars or not.

We don't want to emulate these companies but we want to try our hand at creating a moment of cultural relevance simply by creating excellent products that speak to people with our sensibilities.

Product Focus

Tell us about the journey of developing your first product. Where did the process begin? What aspects of the formula were non-negotiable from the start?

Daniel

We actually started with the water. It makes up most of the formula in a water-based lube and yet no one on the market seemingly paid attention to it. We then started searching for a lab to partner with who could pull off this formulation, we spoke with dozens of labs, in the US but also Switzerland and Germany, we were turned down every time, some couldn't deliver, others didn't match our quality bar, it took nearly a year to just find someone who could deliver before even starting development work. We finally found our lab in California which rose to the challenge. At that point we could start tackling other aspects of the product the rest of the industry paid little attention to, namely the user experience of the bottle, using it with a partner, carrying it around, and so on. This part was a little more familiar to us because of our background in product design, which is ultimately the core value we bring to the market as founders.

Mert

FDA clearance was absolutely non-negotiable. It still surprises me how many lubes skip it, marketing themselves as an "intimate moisturizer" or a "sex serum," then tucking "for external use only" into some corner of the label. I understand the temptation, clearance is slow and expensive, but that's exactly the point. If your product is going on the most sensitive part of someone's body, meeting the standard the category is actually held to isn't a nice-to-have. We were never willing to market our way around it.

AEON's lubricant features natural artesian water, hyaluronic acid, and organic botanicals. Why were those particular elements important to include?

Daniel

Lube as a commodity has largely been figured out, plenty of companies make acceptable lube but we wanted to take it further by bringing an ingredient that would spark that irrational desire.

We chose single-origin artesian water as our signature ingredient. Why? Why do people go to a thermal spa in the mountains? You could take a hot bath at home and it would be cheaper and achieve 80% of the desired effect, but people like going to the spa because they want to treat themselves, they want to go to a beautiful place, they want the real thing.

Mert

So we started looking for a pristine water source that also feels great on the skin. Our hunt led us to a granite aquifer in the Sierra Nevada Mountains in California.

We wanted a naturally wet and lively feel. We combine the soothing properties of organic botanicals such as aloe and passionflower, the hydrating properties of hyaluronic acid enriched with vitamin E, and our artesian water to deliver the signature Aeon feel.

The Jet™ bottle feels as considered as the formula itself. How much attention was given to packaging and product experience during development?

Mert

The entire experience is the product. From the moment you lay your eyes on the bottle everything needs to feel right and work as you'd expect. We went with a transparent look to highlight the primary ingredient, our natural artesian water.

We then scoured the world to find a bottle that would be perfect to both travel with and use in bed. The Jet™ bottle is leak-resistant, it's small enough to be ergonomic in use, and quite resistant to the eventual drops. (We briefly considered glass, but decided the safety risks were not worth it.)

Daniel

We wanted The Personal Lubricant to fit into the Aeon customer's lifestyle, so we tested existing products to identify the pain points, paying attention to even small grievances that many wouldn't even think of. Like for example if you're traveling with a bottle of lube, you're going to put it perhaps in a toiletry case, with combs, makeup brushes, etc. That creates a risk of contamination. That's why we chose to include a strong cap on the bottle and no paper label, you can easily clean the bottle after use and confidently toss it into your luggage. If you're an Aeon customer, you probably care about your clothes; we had to ensure peace of mind during travel. That's why we made the bottle leak-resistant, even at altitude.

Another point which is very niche so we rarely get to talk about is the fact that our bottle can only be made by, like, two factories on the planet. Most airless bottles are dual wall, making them bulky, and are usually made

using a plastic called Polypropylene (PP), which is not commonly recycled. So we found one of the only factories which had the capability to manufacture a single wall airless bottle using PET. That requires much tighter manufacturing tolerances because of the material's properties. PET is one of the most widely collected plastics for recycling.

What product details are customers often surprised to learn about?

Daniel

The most surprising tends to be the fact that our Jet™ bottle allows for usage at any angle. No sputtering pump, just smooth and reliable down to the last drop. That's one of those details customers immediately love.

How do you evaluate whether a product is truly finished and ready to launch?

Mert

Are we proud to sign our names under this product? Would we purchase this ourselves if someone else made it? Would we recommend it to our friends? Does this product deserve to exist? The answer has to be an honest yes. If we're in doubt, we will not ship it.

Were there any decisions that were more difficult or expensive to make, but ultimately worth it because they aligned with the brand's standards?

Mert

Every single one. To be honest the entire process demanded a lot from us. Navigating the FDA clearance with our unique artesian water formulation, the production in a cGMP-certified facility in California, the flight-ready Jet™ bottle, the climate-controlled logistics center where we store and ship our orders, the list goes on. We really walked the walk here to the best of our ability.

Industry + Culture

Why do you think intimate products have historically received less thoughtful design attention than categories like beauty, fragrance, or skincare?

Daniel

Sometimes it boils down to the right person needing to come along and innovate. Plenty of industries have had these moments, computers, skincare, cars; they were puttering along and then it just took one player to lead the way to greater heights. The intimate industry has experienced many hurdles like low cultural fit, advertising limitations and so on, but there was no real excuse for delivering poorly thought-out products lacking taste.

Mert

I agree. There is never an excuse for shipping junk.

What do you hope changes about the way consumers think about intimacy products over the next decade?

Daniel

We just hope people find more products they resonate with.

Mert

If we do our jobs right, we hope they'll feel seen and cared about when they browse and use our products.

Where do you see AEON fitting into the broader conversation around modern body care and personal care?

Daniel

We want to keep pushing the benchmark of quality and care higher. We want to set the bar so unreasonably high that it forces everyone to try harder.

Mert

As the interest in self-care rises, we would invite everyone to take a deeper look at the products they consume beyond the marketing. Look at the certifications, the ingredients, the owners. We speak very openly about the details in an effort to demonstrate the corners we didn't cut.

Conclusion

What are you most excited to build next?

Daniel

We're just excited to bring our design philosophy to more product categories within intimate care and beyond.

Mert

Our biggest challenge in looking at future products is clearing the bar we've set for ourselves with The Personal Lubricant. It's a tough act to follow.

If readers take away one thing about AEON after discovering the brand through The Beauty Brief, what do you hope it is?

Mert

We're a small, self-funded brand trying to create the world we'd like to live in one product at a time. No nameless suits, no VC money. We exist naked in the market. Our ability to maintain our independence and edge depends solely on our customers, and we're deeply appreciative of them.

Is there anything we haven't asked that feels important to understanding the brand?

Daniel

As I said, we're trying to push the bar higher, and to that end we are always looking to improve our customers' experience. Mert and I read every single customer email, and are invested in listening to what we can do better or bring to the world.

Thank you very much for the care you put into our conversation.

Mert

Your questions have been extremely thoughtful and comprehensive. I can't think of anything more I could add. The depth of your questions made us feel seen and I'd like to thank you for that.