

D A R K R I D E R

HE IS A REVOLUTIONARY, YET HE WEARS A SUIT.
HE IS STEEPED IN THE BRAND'S DNA AND, AT THE SAME TIME, IS POINTING
THE WAY FORWARD. WITH THE AUDI PROLOGUE SHOW CAR,
CHIEF DESIGNER MARC LICHTER AND HIS TEAM ARE LAUNCHING A NEW
DESIGN ERA.



THE MUSCLES ABOVE THE SUBSTANTIAL WHEELS HARK BACK TO THE
UR QUATTRO OF THE 80S, YET ARE HARMONIOUSLY INTEGRATED
INTO THE DESIGN. THE SHALLOW SWEEP OF THE ROOFLINE IS ANOTHER
DESIGN ELEMENT WITH ICONIC STATUS.



THE UNUSUALLY WIDE, LOW SINGLEFRAME GIVES THE ENTIRE FRONT
END AN EXTREMELY SPORTY FEEL. THE HEADLAMPS OF
THE AUDI PROLOGUE PRESENT THE NEXT EVOLUTIONARY STEP
OF LASER TECHNOLOGY.



An on-site meeting in a studio in Ingolstadt. The light flows over a big, elegant coupe. Three men and one woman are assessing the car in all its details – chief designer Marc Lichte and some of his top people. Lichte’s long-time colleague Andreas Mindt is responsible for exterior design, Ulrich Beierlein manages interior architecture and Simona Falcinella is responsible for Color & Trim.

Marc Lichte switched from Volkswagen to Audi in early February 2014 and, since then, has been working with his team to develop a comprehensive new design strategy. Presented as a “signature car”, the Audi prologue is the show car for the Los Angeles Auto Show and conveys Lichte’s grand plan: “I want to give the Audi brand a face that expresses its strengths more clearly – the progressiveness, the quality, the sporting character.”

If you want to open up new perspective, you have to break through old boundaries. Marc Lichte (45) is a free thinker, overflowing with energy and a sense of purpose; his infectious optimism fills others with enormous enthusiasm. The design chief kneels down in front of the show car and immediately starts explaining it: “We have made the Singleframe grille far shallower and wider. It sits lower in the front of the car, with the inner tips of the headlamps sweeping over its corners. This gives the front end an extreme sense of width and sporting character.”

The Audi prologue show car is a revolutionary with a great deal of style. Its look is not loud, but decisive. It points to the future, without devaluing the past. And it is immediately recognizable as an Audi, even from a long distance – with its athletic build, taut, muscular surfaces and sharply defined edges.



I WANT TO GIVE THE AUDI BRAND A FACE THAT EXPRESSES ITS STRENGTHS EVEN MORE CLEARLY – THE SPORTING CHARACTER, THE PROGRESSIVENESS, THE QUALITY.

MARC LICHTÉ, HEAD OF AUDI DESIGN

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Power from the center –
the wheels of the Audi prologue are accentuated to the same degree – classic quattro.

Audi icons –
the show car’s broad, shallow Singleframe visualizes power and sporting presence.

“Every single line leads somewhere,” says Lichte. “Audi design is always logical. The blades beneath the air intakes, for instance, continue through into the sills. The line runs round the entire car. The same goes for the spoiler edges.” In the Singleframe, the horizontal fins have a perforated structure – “a classic lightweight design element like the one previously used in the Auto Union race cars,” explains Lichte. “And the headlamps present the next-generation Matrix laser technology. Design and technology always go hand-in-hand, with enormous attention to detail.”

Andreas Mindt takes it from here. “In Audi design, there are elements with iconic status that we don’t touch,” explains the Head of Exterior Design. “Those are the Singleframe, the flowing roof arc with the window graphic and, of course, quattro. In the Audi prologue, we have accentuated the front and the rear wheels to exactly the same degree. That’s quattro for us – power from the center. We make the panel volumes visually smaller with the wide, flat surfaces around the wheel arches.”

“The shoulder line,” Mindt continues, “runs high above the wheels and forms powerful, curved edges. These are evocative of the blisters on the Ur quattro – however, we haven’t added these as afterthoughts, but integrated them harmoniously into the design. The front muscle pulls the hood into the body, making it look even longer.” Running above the door is a third, lower line. This pulls the visual center of gravity downward, giving the car an even sportier look. Andreas Mindt: “We have given the bodyshell a waistline and pulled it in tight at the rear – for a sensual and enticing feel.”

The 5.10-meter Audi prologue expresses the refinement of sporty driving and the beauty of technology in every single detail. The paintwork in diva grey crystal effect gives the exterior skin a warm, silky shimmer. An aluminum frame encases the side windows, while the low roof arch flows into a broad trim piece. On the right flank of the show car, this area houses the electrically operated tank flap. In the trim along the base of the windows are illuminated touch sensors; electric motors push the doors open by a few centimeters.

The rear end of the Audi prologue is slanted forward, as on a yacht – giving the large coupe forward impetus, even at a standstill. Andreas Mindt explains the finer details of the design. “The concave curve of the rear windshield is, typical for a large coupe, fixed in place, but its cut still provides a relatively large load opening. The rear light clusters are made from 3D glass, which gives a sculptural effect. The tail light forms a band binding the two units together – a visual carried over from the Ur quattro. The shape of the exhaust outlets corresponds with that of the lights. They are integrated into the height-adjustable diffuser, which demonstrates our expertise in aerodynamics.”



IN AUDI DESIGN, THERE ARE ELEMENTS WITH ICONIC STATUS, LIKE THE SINGLEFRAME, THE ROOF ARC AND QUATTRO. WE DON’T TOUCH THEM.

ANDREAS MINDT, HEAD OF AUDI EXTERIOR DESIGN

The interior perfectly reflects the character of the large Gran Turismo, as Ulrich Beierlein, Head of Interior Architecture shows at the mock-up: "The interior is generously proportioned like a lounge. All the lines flow in one simple, calm sweep. The wrap-around stretches like a horizon around the front and rear seats. The slender look of the dashboard stands for Audi lightweight design. And the center-tunnel console seems to float, as do the front seats."

From the moment they climb in, the four-seat coupe receives its passengers with courteous refinement. Intelligent software known as "Butler" identifies them via their smartphones and adjusts the seats and air conditioning to their preferred settings. "Butler" also makes recommendations for music and route planning to suit the preferences of the user.

The dashboard is also presented as a new union of technology and design architecture. Its continuous front consists of three flat touch displays. Two of them are reserved for the driver. With the third, a widescreen display, the passenger can configure infotainment and navigation files and send them to the driver with a swipe gesture. "Communication has a strong tradition at Audi," says Beierlein with a wink. "Christian Geistdörfer was Walter Röhrl's tour guide in the World Rally Championship. Everything here uses touch technology – customers want to find in their cars what they already know from their smartphones."

The center-tunnel console houses another, super-slim display made from organic LEDs (OLED). When the car starts, it lifts up at an ergonomically perfect angle. Also fully digital is the Audi virtual cockpit future, where three mirrors generate fascinating 3D images of astonishing depth. "The operating and display concept in our show car," says Beierlein, "is more than a new piece of technology; it is a true work of engineering art."

IT IS MORE THAN A PIECE OF TECHNOLOGY; IT IS A TRUE WORK OF ENGINEERING ART.

**ULRICH BEIERLEIN,
HEAD OF INTERIOR ARCHITECTURE**



Progressive and sensual – the Audi prologue is a new expression of the brand's character.

**FOR US AT AUDI,
LUXURY IS SOMETHING
NATURAL AND
AUTHENTIC.**

**SIMONA FALCINELLA,
HEAD OF COLOR & TRIM**

Like a lounge – the interior has a spacious, calm feel. The imagery is dominated by large touch displays.

The interior of the Audi prologue creates an experiential environment for the senses, with all details documenting the sure hand of the designers and the uncompromising quality standards of the brand. A perforated fairing covers the air-vent strip. If the air conditioning is turned up, it retracts downward. LED light guides trace the smoothly flowing interior lines. The aluminum element that forms the steering wheel spokes harmonizes with the trim pieces on the driver display and the door pulls. All the aluminum parts have matte surfaces with polished edges – resulting a wonderful interaction of textures. The stitching on the seat center panels echoes the fins in the Singleframe grille.

All colors and materials in the show car underscore the impression of breadth, calm and composure. Simona Falcinella, Head of Color & Trim, explains the concept behind it: "We use cool and warm tones – in some areas, the light is reflected, in others absorbed." The new velvety leather, Passion, that covers the seat surfaces, and the nubuck leather on the seat backs, are both light in color. The wrap-around and the dashboard set accents in contrasting shades of brown and grey.

The trim inlays also feature fascinating contrasts – the aluminum strips are paired with elements in silver gray elm. Its open-pored veneer is cut extremely finely, enabling it to follow the interior's flowing lines. "We placed a great deal of emphasis on authenticity in the material selection for the Audi prologue," explains Simona Falcinella. "For us, luxury is something natural."

As the meeting ends, chief designer Marc Lichte sums up, "The Audi prologue brings the phenomenal skill of our engineers to life, on the exterior and in the interior. Our design is derived from the brand values. And if we continue to filter this essence, Audi will be even stronger than it is today."



**THE INTERIOR FEELS
LIKE A LOUNGE.
ALL LINES RUN IN ONE
CALM SWEEP.**

Innovative – the OLED display on the center tunnel console.

INTERVIEW MARC LICHTER

THIS IS A DREAM COME TRUE
FOR ME HERE AT AUDI.



Herr Lichte, you have been at Audi for a few months now. What do you think of it so far?

Lichte: This is a dream come true for me. I almost went to Audi in 1996 after completing my design studies in Pforzheim, but then I opted for Volkswagen. Now I get to give the brand a new face. It's the best and most exciting job I can imagine.

What do you think is the status of Audi design at the moment?

Lichte: The last ten years were a phase of sustained brand definition. The Singleframe gave our cars a distinctive face, as our main competitors have had for a long time. For me, Audi is the premier design brand, mainly because our design is very enduring. It's based on the rules of geometry, on Bauhaus; it comes without embellishment and fancy effects. When you look at the roadscape, I find it fascinating how long our cars retain their freshness. It is hi-tech in timeless clothing – that's Audi; that's what sets us apart.

So what do you want to change?

Lichte: There's still a lot of potential for our cars to express Vorsprung durch Technik. We are reinforcing the way technology is seen and experienced, both in the interior and on the exterior – the connectivity, the light-weight design, the aerodynamics and, of course, the quattro drive. We have it in every model range, from the S1 to the A8, and we will express it in different ways through the design.

How spectacular is acceptable for Audi design?

Lichte: Our brand stands for sustained design development – our cars will not be trendy and they will obviously remain free from decoration. But they will be progressive and sporty, sensual, desirable and sexy. Audi design will work all over the world because it's so strong.



Marc Lichte's boat – an XP 33 from Danish specialist X-Yachts. Lichte modified the design himself.



Will you make the individual model ranges more distinctive from one another in future?

Lichte: The TT offroad concept study already shows how we could envisage a Q face in future. But among the sedans, too, we will vary the specific proportions of the body structure and the face between sporty and status-oriented. My team and I have developed a whole matrix of solutions in just a short time. We will introduce the new design language from top to bottom across the model range.

Are you a car guy, Herr Lichte?

Lichte: I'm afraid so. When I was a boy, I was influenced by two people. One of them was my grandpa. He was an artist – he sculpted, painted, built all sorts of things. The other was my father. He was a car fan and hobby race driver and took part in hill climbs and slalom racing – and I was always allowed to come along. He was also a sailor, and he has passed this passion on to me, too.

How often do you manage to go sailing?

Lichte: Before I had children, I was actually quite successful. I won the regatta in open sea sailing at the Kieler Woche three times. Now I spend my vacation time and lots of weekends with my nine and eleven year-old daughters on my boat in the Baltic Sea. It's where I find my creativity – away from work and immersed in this other world; I switch off and recharge the batteries. I actually modified the design of the boat I'm currently sailing.

What else is important in your free time?

Lichte: In winter, I like to go skiing. And then there's a band from Iceland called Sigur Rós. The guys sing in Icelandic and have a very distinctive sound. One of them plays the electric guitar with a violin bow. I'm obsessed with this music and listen to it every day – in the car, at home and often at work, too. I went to all five of their concerts during their last tour of Germany.

Audi design boss Marc Lichte – "There's still a lot of potential for our cars to express Vorsprung durch Technik."



THE TEAM

“EVERYBODY HERE IS PASSIONATE ABOUT THE BRAND,”
SAYS MARC LICHTE.



Beauty experts –
Marc Lichte
with Simona
Falcinella,
responsible for
Color & Trim.



Audi architects –
the Head of
Design in discus-
sion with
Ulrich Beierlein,
the Head of
Interior Archi-
tecture.



**EVERY CULTURE
BRINGS ITS INPUT AND
THE YOUNG DESIGNERS IN
PARTICULAR HAVE
ESPECIALLY EXCITING IDEAS.
THERE’S A LOT OF
INTENSE DISCUSSION OF
EVERYTHING FROM
THE TINIEST DETAIL TO THE
OVERALL PICTURE.**

**MARC LICHTE,
HEAD OF AUDI DESIGN**

**Precision
is a matter of
honor –**
Lichte and
Andreas Mindt,
Head of
Exterior Design,
beside
the show car.



Marc Lichte is 1.95 meters tall, he takes big steps and he does so very quickly. Since he moved from Volkswagen to Audi in February 2014, the man from Westfalia has been blowing a breath of fresh air into the brand’s design. Teamwork is incredibly important to Marc Lichte. During his first days at Ingolstadt, he called his staff together to discuss their joint approach – what does Audi stand for? And how do we give the brand values a new form? Further such discussions have continued on a regular basis since then. These have brought the more than 300-strong design team at Ingolstadt even closer together, despite the fact that, due to the construction of the new Design Center, they are currently spread over seven locations.

For March Lichte, team spirit is not a matter of physical proximity. The chief designer firmly incorporates the Group studios in Munich, Potsdam, Santa Monica (California) and Beijing into his projects, allowing them to compete with each other and with Ingolstadt. “We have people from 30 different countries on our team,” says Marc Lichte. “Every culture brings its input and the young designers in particular have especially exciting ideas. There’s a lot of intense discussion of everything from the tiniest detail to the overall picture.”

Marc Lichte faced some very big expectations when he took on this job. Now, ten months later, his new lines are established in everyone’s minds, three future production models have already been signed off. The chief designer enthuses about his working environment, “Everyone here at Audi is passionate about the brand – from the security man that greets me with a friendly word in the morning, to the Board of Management. Everyone wants to achieve something big and everyone in my team is fully on board. Our vision is becoming more focused with every single day. And I keep thinking to myself: What a great team!”





It starts with the idea - Marc Lichte loves to sketch and does so at every opportunity.



AUDI DESIGN IS BASED ON FUNDAMENTAL GEOMETRY. IT SUCCEEDS WITHOUT ANY FORM OF DECORATION.

MARC LICHTER, HEAD OF AUDI DESIGN