

Motivating Future Mobility Designers - Porsche, Honda, Lexus, Genesis, Rivian, Lucid & Tesla Designers @ the ArtCenter Invitational

Lynn Walford - Oct 31 2022



The ArtCenter College of Design in Pasadena, California plays a vital role in training automotive designers. At its recent ArtCenter Invitational prominent automotive designers offered inspiration for ArtCenter students and future designers. Designers from Toyota, Lexus, GM, Honda, Rivian, Genesis, Lucid and Tesla were available to students.

The event started with an introduction from ArtCenter president Karen Hofmann, "Today is to celebrate the amazing work that you're seeing from our alumni who are here. What is very special about today is pulling together alumni from different generations who were schooled here. They went out into the industry. Then elevated their careers to a whole other level."

"ArtCenter has influenced transportation design going back to 1930. The founder of our transportation design department, Strother MacMinn discovered automotive design right on Colorado Boulevard: nearby here at Walter W. Murphy coachbuilders, designing fabulous bodies, particularly for Duesenberg. The history of Pasadena is very rich. So Pasadena could not be a better place for Art Center College of Design," said Stewart Reed, ArtCenter Department Chair, Graduate and Undergraduate Transportation Design.

The stage was a platform on top of a race car transporter. The designers talked about their designs while the vehicles were driven in front of the stage.



ArtCenter Designers Stories Behind the Designs

ArtCenter graduates gave insights into the designs of the Porsche Cayman, Honda Element and Lexus LC.

Professor Mark Clarke revealed that he worked on the design of the Porsche Cayman in Huntington Beach, California, "Porsche had a small design studio there. The Carrera GT concept was done there. The Cayman followed. It is based on a Boxster platform. But the idea was to have a closed coupe car and to give it a different personality."

"The Honda Element started as a small project from alumni who just graduated and started working at Honda. We wanted to make a car we called 'the anti-Civic' - something we live inside, something we can experience. There was nothing like that at the time," said Jose Wyzsogrod, Honda Design Director.

Fellow Honda Element designer and ArtCenter Alum, Eric Shumaker, brought his original Honda Element sketches to share with students. He noted that ten people from ArtCenter worked on the Honda Element.

Ian Cartabiano, Vice President, Advanced Design, Caltly, showed the Lexus LC and talked about how the design concept started.

"The LC is basically a work of art from the beginning. The only project we had was - make a beautiful coupe," said Cartabiano.

"To discover the exterior form language - there was this beautiful aloe plant and we scanned it. We 3D-milled it out. We vacuum-formed plastic aluminium sheets over that plant. Then, I had the designers cut them up and make photo collages. That is where the fender form language came from. It is where the interior came from. The big sweep of the centre console was actually a plant leaf. The idea was that there was a technology sitting inside the leaf," said Cartabiano.



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Luxurious Lucid, Adventurous Rivian And UFO Cybertruck

Derek Jenkins, Vice President of Design at Lucid Motors talked about the Lucid Air and ArtCenter.

"Starting from scratch, we needed to think about our DNA. First and foremost, as a brand. What do we want to stand for? We established early on that we were going to represent ourselves with efficiency and performance in a luxurious space. Everything is very flush and clean. We are down now to a .197 coefficient of drag. The best coefficient for a sedan in the world right now. I am super proud of that. The Lucid Air is a clean timeless aesthetic, something that feels more authentic and more aircraft-like rather than a typical automotive trend was a big focus for us," said Jenkins.

ArtCenter plays a paramount role in the future of car design, explained Jenkins.

"Lucid's studio continues to hire a lot of ArtCenter graduates. I feel like there's a legacy here that lives on. They're embracing the new technology. They're finding new ways to inform and educate and instill good design values and good automotive understanding in students. That's really valuable," said Jenkins

Jonathan Sczcupak, Director of Exterior Design, Rivian, explained to Auto Futures that Rivian vehicles are about adventure.

"We did a ton of research early on for how people were using vehicles. We observed people going surfing early in the morning. We create adventurous vehicles, forever changing the way you'd expect people to go off-roading or go to adventure events, a road trip or whatever," said Sczcupak.

"We started with a clean slate. Looking at the customer trying to understand how they use the vehicles and trying to design special little things for them. It has been amazing. It feels very much like we're designing for the future," said Sczcupak.

A crowd formed when Franz von Holzhausen, Senior Design Executive at Tesla, showed the Tesla Cybertruck.

"The number one question we get now is - is this really what it's going to look like? And When can I get one? It is going to look like this -and it's coming next year," said von Holzhausen whose design philosophies behind the Cybertruck and other vehicles will be profiled in a future Auto Futures' article.



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ArtCenter's Past, Present And Future Design Students Speak And Advise

The ArtCenter students took selfies near the Cybertruck and commented about the design. Many transportation students started in high school learning about design through ArtCenter extension and online classes.

Diego Giraudet took ArtCenter online classes and is now a student in the Transportation Design degree program.

"This event means a lot. I can see past graduates from ArtCenter and their products. It is very inspiring to imagine that one day I could potentially work on these," said Giraudet.

The vehicle that excited him the most at the Invitational was the Cybertruck.

"The stance is huge. People think it is a flat vehicle. It has very flat sections and panels. But I don't think that's the case. When you look at it closely, you see that most of the panels have a little bit of crown everywhere. Yet- the design sensitivity of it is very real," said Giraudet, "Everything is beautiful. I think the proportions are right on. It looks like a spaceship - a UFO on the road," commented Giraudet, who is working on a Mars rover project at ArtCenter.



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There were not as many women at the event as men. However, ArtCenter is working to promote women in the industry. Several women spoke on the panel, 'Women in Transportation Design'.

Kerrin Liang, the former Senior Interior Designer at Genesis, advised future women designers, "Be confident in yourself. If you are a female with a passion for design, people will appreciate your love and your passion. People will purchase them(cars) and that's our product, our goal. It is a spectacular experience. I truly enjoyed it. I highly recommend it to anyone who wants to be a designer."

Sofia de los Santos, a high school senior at Pasadena High School, has been studying design in ArtCenter extension courses and is considering attending ArtCenter.

Her favourite vehicle at the event was the classic American luxury performance car, a Wedgewood Blue 1962 Oldsmobile Starfire.

"I think it is a really cool car to look at. It is different from today's squash Lamborghini. It is more about the body and less about looking sharp," said de los Santos about the Starfire.

Reed commented: "We are looking forward to the next generation of students coming - and - we couldn't be more excited for what the future holds."

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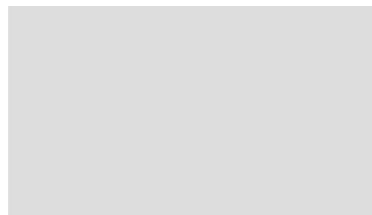
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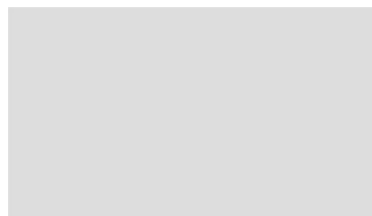
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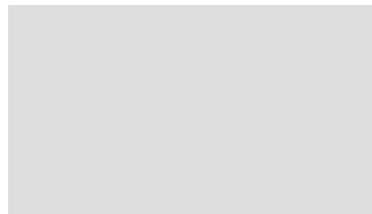
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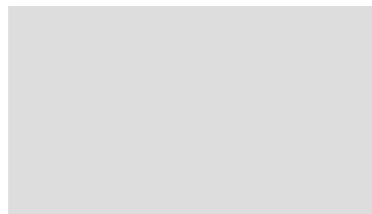
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