



The design direction of Thomas Ingenlath: Releasing the full potential of the Volvo brand

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The work of Thomas Ingenlath, Senior Vice President Design at Volvo Car Group, has been one of the best-kept secrets in the automotive industry for over a year. Until now. Volvo Cars was already transforming rapidly when I joined the company in 2012. My team and I have focused on creating a new interpretation of the design language. It will help taking this great brand in the desired direction, says Thomas Ingenlath. This is how Thomas Ingenlath expresses the new design direction for Volvo Cars.
Why Volvo Cars? Everyone that knows me well would agree that Volvo is a perfect match for me. I have never been an instant crowd-pleaser who likes fast and loud designs. I am thoughtful. I like to explore the intellectual elements below the surface. If you do that right, the aesthetics will come naturally.
Volvo is a human-centric brand with an exceptionally strong heritage. It is exciting to create a new design expression that supports the established brand values as well as the repositioning towards a more distinctive premium brand.
Whats your view of Scandinavian Design? Well, since Volvo Cars is the only remaining automotive brand in Sweden, we are by definition the only carmaker that can create original Scandinavian Design. The challenge is to create a modern, desirable interpretation.
To me, Scandinavian Design according to Volvo is firmly rooted in the values of the Swedish society and the way of life enabled by this unique environment. Our approach goes beyond just bringing Scandinavian design items and signatures into our cars. Our job is to understand the spirit and the confidence that make Scandinavian design so special. Then we must translate it into car design.
What is your approach? It is important to recognise that Scandinavian design will only be perceived as attractive if it is crafted with precision and attention to detail. Meticulous execution and consistent quality are prerequisites to qualify for the premium league of automakers.
Explain the new design direction. In my opinion, Volvo design has always had a certain authority. We aim to extend this calm, intelligent and strong side of our brand with a greater potency, modernity and expressiveness. Concept Coupé clearly expresses this direction.
Outdoor activities are an important part of the Swedish lifestyle. We will continue to refine Volvos strong connection to these activities with more emphasis on modernity. Its about making functionality an emotional experience. Just like an exclusive goose down jacket, our cars will have a true feeling of sophistication with an underlying strength and capability.
Creativity is thriving in the Swedish society. This includes design and technology as well as the fashion, music and art scene. We use this as an inspiration for creating a new kind of attainable luxury. Our future cars will show that there are new, exciting ways to express the soul of Sweden.
What opportunities does the new Scalable Product Architecture create for the designers? The new architecture enables us to create the great proportions that are important to achieve a premium look. The dash to axle ratio is more generous than any other architecture I have worked with before. This gives us the opportunity to be up there among the top premium brands when it comes to proportions.
The hip point is another example of the new opportunities. It is low enough to create a low profile on a sleek sedan without compromising headroom.
Which are the most prominent new design signatures? Every strong brands needs a set of visual keys that makes it unique. Future Volvos will be characterised by the distinctive iron mark in the floating grille, flanked by the T-shaped DRL lights. The larger bonnet with its new topography, the beltline spanning an elegant bow along the whole car and the sharpened shoulder connecting with the new rear light are other important design signatures. They all contribute to the confident stance. The overall simplicity, both exterior and interior, has a strong connection to the Scandinavian lifestyle.
How about the interiors? We will continue to build on the premium feel in the new Volvo V40. The new user interface with a large, portrait touch-screen in the centre console allows us to remove almost all buttons. This simplicity is perfectly in tune with our Scandinavian design heritage. It opens up clean surfaces that give us the opportunity to create a luxurious interior experience with new forms.
We will deliver on our brand promise to make Volvo customers feeling special by blending, classic handcrafted elements with distinctive, surprising delight details.
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