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WHAT IS SPECIAL ABOUT THE BUGATTI DESIGN PHILOSOPHY

2026 BUGATTI AUTOMOBILES S.A.S.


VERIFICATO

Design Director Achim Anscheidt on the challenge posed by homage editions

Bugatti's hyper sports cars speak for themselves: they're elegant, modern, timeless and exceptionally beautiful.
And the man responsible for them is Achim Anscheidt, Design Director at Bugatti. ''But I'm only responsible to a certain extent, because the credit for these fantastic cars rightly belongs to the team of designers and creatives. We're working together to develop new ideas and thus new Bugatti models, such as the current hyper sports cars in the spirit of the coachbuilding tradition,'' says Achim Anscheidt. ''Basically, this includes the entire Bugatti team. Because at Bugatti, the form follows the performance. That's why we work in close partnership with the engineers,'' says Anscheidt. Adopting any other approach simply wouldn't work with these highly complex and technically extraordinary hyper sports cars. Technical development at Bugatti is pretty dominant, with some justification. The incredible W16 engine, with its eight litres of displacement and outputting at least 1,500 PS, is truly magnificent.

''In design, we often say you have to look back in order to look forward. That means we first have to understand the past, analyse and define the significance of the car in question in its environment at that time. Only then can we work out what stylistic challenges were faced back then, how they were overcome, and how this could be reinterpreted as a construct in the future,'' explains Anscheidt.

This is possible if we understand the original to its fullest extent, recognise which lines were fashionable in those days and which were down to the whims of the designer. ''It doesn't have to be bad. But there are often significant details that have something to do with an extraordinary situation back in the day, like we see in the Bugatti Type 57 SC Atlantic,'' explains Anscheidt. Like Jean Bugatti's ambitions and how he saw the world in terms of style. But also how cars were produced back then. ''These are all important factors that help us to understand why models were designed the way they were. Only then can we identify interesting feature details that we can 'borrow'. That really is making the most of our past history,'' says Anscheidt, who's now 57 years old. There are often just two or three features available to use, not ten. But that's enough to create a modern homage.

The ''La Voiture Noire''* — the ultimate gran turismo for any Bugatti enthusiast launched in March 2019 — provided a holistic interpretation of the Type 57 SC Atlantic. The coupé created by Jean Bugatti was a 1930s super sports car, unsurpassed in its elegance. ''The historic Atlantic is a fascinating car — in terms of its shape, and in terms of its proportions. Rethinking this coupé for the modern era was a rewarding task as its shape represents a natural approach to the overall design of the new car,'' explains Anscheidt. In automotive design, the proportionate impression of the car is crucial. Only then do onlookers consider the details.

The overall appearance of the Atlantic, with its muscular yet simple appearance, was extraordinary back in those days. The new interpretation, which Bugatti called the La Voiture Noire2, also demonstrates this simplicity and elegance in its muscular accentuation. ''There's not a single line in the La Voiture Noire2 that we could leave out, our design work is so clear-cut,'' says Anscheidt. What is more, the distinctive central fin — a technical necessity in the Atlantic — was transferred to La Voiture Noire[1] as stylistic DNA.

LOOKING BACK AT THE EB110 FOR THE CENTODIECI

With the Centodieci[2] (the name is Italian for 110) which was introduced in summer 2019, Achim Anscheidt and his team first had to understand where the EB110 originated from and what the significance of the model was in terms of its presentation. ''In the early 1990s, the EB110 was quite simply the best super sports car in the world,'' says Anscheidt. Not only did Bugatti introduce a new model, they also designed it on a sheet of white paper — and created a new factory, the Fabbrica Blu in Campogalliano. It was a state-of-the-art facility at the time and offered some of the best working conditions in the area.

''Stylistically, the overall shape of the EB110 represents, in a sense, an Italian wedge on wheels. We wanted to take that into account when designing a new, modern interpretation as an homage to the EB110,'' says Anscheidt. But the EB110 was more than just a new super sports car. It was the first newly built Bugatti model for almost 35 years, and an important intermediate step towards the Bugatti Veyron, the first hyper sports car of modern times.

Achim Anscheidt was also inspired by architect Giampaolo Benedini when designing the Centodieci[2]. The cousin of then-Bugatti owner Romano Artioli designed the factory and the entire property, and he was also the final designer responsible for the last designs of the EB110. He created one of the most fascinating super sports cars of the 1990s with an almost Bauhaus-like approach to automotive design. ''He mastered it with style, and for that I respect him. I'm still hugely impressed by him. His way of thinking meant we were able to achieve this very graphic, almost geometric approach to the details, and that's reflected in the Centodieci[2],'' explains Anscheidt.

INSPIRATION THROUGH THE BUGATTI PHILOSOPHY ALONE

Bugatti's Design Director isn't only inspired by nature or architecture for new projects, but by the Bugatti philosophy: ''form follows performance''. For a technically highly complex car such as the Chiron[3], the designers work closely with the engineers to develop a new stylistic design. ''We resolve issues together, so the new model meets the stylistic requirements we were hoping for, as well as the technical challenges,'' explains Anscheidt. A good example of this is the Bugatti Divo[4], a hyper sports car optimised for lateral acceleration.

The challenge with the Divo[4] was to find a technical and stylistic way of giving the hyper sports car new character. ''From the outset, we wanted people to see straight away that the Divo[4] is designed for more lateral dynamics, that it's lighter and more agile than the Chiron[3]. We had to visualise this lightness,'' explains Anscheidt. With the Divo, this was achieved by varying the distribution of the proportions. The graphical arrangement and all the elements that achieve this are actually performance elements. ''Our Bugatti philosophy, 'form follows performance', is particularly evident in the Divo[4]. Every visible component has a genuine aerodynamic reference,'' he says.

EVERY HOMAGE EDITION HAS TO LOOK LIKE A REAL BUGATTI

The most difficult part of his work involves striking a balance between complex and challenging technical development and stylistic variations in respect of the Chiron. Moreover, every homage edition must still come across as a typical Bugatti. Even great design in vintage cars can never be translated like-for-like and brought into the 21st century. ''The car must be able to appear at a Concours d'Elegance and maintain its significance as an authentically designed automobile of its time, even in 50 years' time. Then I can stand right behind it, walk around the car and explain exactly why the details look the way they do,'' says Achim Anscheidt.

The development of the virtual world is the most exciting aspect of his work at the moment. Nowadays, designers develop 90 percent of their stylistic ideas virtually, with no plasticine or clay models. ''Then we learn an extra nine percent, and the final one percent is accounted for by perfection. This is incredible progress compared to how we used to work even five years ago,'' says Anscheidt. The virtual models are very realistic and can be altered quickly, and the team saves a lot of time thanks to them. As a result, they can plan Bugatti cars with greater precision and beauty. And that will continue in the future.

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[3] Centodieci: WLTP fuel consumption, l/100 km: low phase 40.3 / medium phase 22.2 / high phase 17.9 / extra high phase 17.1 / combined 21.5; CO2 emissions combined, g / km: NA; efficiency class: G

[3] Divo: WLTP fuel consumption, l/100 km: low phase 43.3 / medium phase 22.2 / high phase 18.0 / extra high phase 18.3 / combined 22.3; CO2 emissions combined, g/km: 506; efficiency class: G

[3] La Voiture Noire: WLTP fuel consumption, l/100 km: low phase 43.3 / medium phase 22.2 / high phase 18.0 / extra high phase 18.3 / combined 22.3; CO2 emissions combined, g/km: 506; efficiency class: G