

Audi A6 e-tron: As exciting as the show car

- In this interview, exterior designers at Audi discuss developing the design for the Audi A6 e-tron series
- Sascha Heyde and Wolf Seebers reveal how they brought their visionary concepts to series production
- Wolf Seebers remembers: “I still get goosebumps when I think about it.”

Ingolstadt, 31. July 2024 – They live next door to each other, with garages adjacent, and that is where they love spending their time together. Sascha Heyde and Wolf Seebers are car guys through and through and have been friends for 20 years – and as Audi exterior designers, they shaped the A6 e-tron family together. They first revealed their vision in the stunning [A6 e-tron concept](#) and [A6 Avant e-tron concept](#); now, they have brought the design and technology of these vehicles to series production. But how does one make one’s ideal a reality? A conversation about and with two real brothers of design.

Mr. Heyde and Mr. Seebers, the story of the Audi A6 e-tron* began with two show cars. Do we still need concepts today?

Sascha Heyde: We think of concepts as visions unbridled. Free and uncompromising in terms of their conception and implementation. We live in a unique age for automotive design. The importance of sustainable solutions, suitability for everyday use, personal freedom, and the evolution of Audi’s high-performance and premium quality [DNA](#) for the electric age – design can take many approaches to help shape this transition. Concepts let us quickly and systematically break down old barriers, create new worlds, and look for answers. They are leaders in innovation, representing a vision of design and new technologies.

Wolf Seebers: Cars are no longer just about getting from A to B as comfortably, quickly, and conveniently as possible. That is far too short-sighted these days. Cars in the premium segment are more like companions, design objects, and an expression of your personality. Concepts help us explore, define, and create such spaces without limitations.

In 2021, the Audi A6 e-tron concept, designed by you, was launched as the forerunner of an innovative family, with an all-electric drive and as a Sportback. So back then, there were no boundaries, no requirements? Were your hands completely free?

Sascha Heyde: At the very beginning, we define whether a concept car will act as a forerunner for upcoming production models or whether it will anticipate future developments.

The equipment, data and prices specified in this document refer to the model range offered in Germany. Subject to change without notice; errors and omissions excepted.

**The collective fuel/electric power consumption and emissions values of all models named and available on the German market can be found in the list provided at the end of this text.*

When it comes to a production-oriented concept, we can initially ignore the purely technical requirements and prioritize proportions above all else because they are what is most important for a good design. This means that designers tend to exaggerate a little here. The result is that concept cars tend to have a somewhat flatter, broader stance than would be possible for the production models.

Wolf Seebers: We showed concrete forms very early on for many of our concepts. Take the [Audi TT](#): When Audi unveiled the concept at the 1995 IAA in Frankfurt, no one would have believed that the car would be on the road in that form just three years later. Even though safety-relevant guidelines led to a good deal of fine-tuning, you couldn't tell from the exterior. In my view, we accomplished something similar with the Audi A6 e-tron*.

“Highlight the area where the heart of our electric models beats.”

The basis for the A6 e-tron* is the new technology architecture, [the Premium Platform Electric](#), or PPE for short. How did that influence the design?

Wolf Seebers: As Sascha has already remarked, proportions are everything. We were determined to give the A6 e-tron* the attractive proportions of the concept car. I'm talking about the classic Sportback silhouette that Audi fans are familiar with. The Audi A6 e-tron* is the first low-floor model on the PPE and an electric car – in terms of design, it was a real challenge. In an e-tron, the battery is the heart of the car. Aesthetically speaking, it makes the vehicle higher than we designers would like to see on this body style. To get the very best out of it, this is where the negotiation for every millimeter began. We developed the inlay in the rocker panel to introduce a horizontal cut to the car, adding another segment to the side profile to visually compensate for the additional height.

Sascha Heyde: The inlay has become a real family trait that our electric models share. You can see it in the Q6 e-tron*, the high-floor counterpart of the A6 e-tron*, and the new e-tron GT series. We consciously decided to highlight the area where the heart of our electric models beats. We also wanted to keep the front end of the A6 e-tron* very close to the study. The progressive face looks high-tech and futuristic due to the inverted Singleframe and the highly accentuated daytime running lights. When you look at the face of the A6 e-tron*, it looks right back at you with two eyes – thanks to the most progressive and slimmest lights we've ever designed at Audi. The main technological light features in the headlights take up space. They would have visually increased the car's height, so we integrated them in the dark mask encircling the Singleframe. We used the same trick for all the functional elements in the lower part of the car, our 'technical unit'. This approach lets us continue the concept car's very flat silhouette to the front and rear.

Wolf Seebers: Very progressive, very new. And still typically Audi.

Sascha Heyde: We wanted the design of the A6 e-tron* to echo the imposing, almost sculptural appearance of the concept cars – that is new. At the same time, we are transferring the familiar Audi genes, such as our quattro muscles, the Singleframe, and the light language, to the fully electric, digital world.

Wolf Seebers: The great thing is that these design tools enabled us to give the Sportback 95 percent of the show car’s basic proportions.

Sascha Heyde: Yes, what you see here is practically the study 1:1. We are really happy. Now, customers can basically drive the show car. The special thing is that the RS model will have even more extreme proportions than the concept. That is a novelty – reality has caught up with the vision.

“The lean of the C-pillar is the decisive factor.”

In 2022, just one year after the Sportback, you upped the ante with the Avant concept, which will also be on the road in 2024. A fully electric Avant – how are you able to combine innovation like that with tradition?

Wolf Seebers: “Beautiful station wagons are called Avant.” We’ve all completely internalized that slogan. So, our first fully electric Avant should not be an exception. To visualize the sportiness and suitability for everyday use that have always characterized this body style and have now become a true part of our DNA, we created, re-created, and discarded a great many designs. The entire silhouette of the Avant relies on the extremely fast C-pillar, so we had to get it just right. The concept car emphasized the C-pillar with its strong interpretation of it.

Sascha Heyde: The next step, of course, was transferring it to series production. It’s true; the lean of the C-pillar is the decisive factor. If it’s too fast, it gives the roofline an unaesthetic arch. If it’s too upright, it loses what makes it a typical Audi Avant pillar. No, it must have the perfect angle to exude that perfect speed, so we spent hours working on the clay model together. Our design classics, such as the Audi 100 C2 Avant, already had this dynamic pillar, giving them a strong forward lean. What made this challenge even harder was that we wanted to open a new electric Avant world for customers, so we needed something genuinely unique, something unprecedented, an add-on. To do that, we completely recreated the roof structure. The chrome trim now connects with the roof spoiler as a distinct design element. It visually reduces the height and its dynamic aesthetics further emphasize the sporty, elegant Avant character.

Making technology visible is the credo that unites the entire Audi Design team. The Audi A6 e-tron* gets top marks for aerodynamics. Did the technical requirements limit you?

Wolf Seebers: Good design must be functional; that is, it has to work. From the beginning, it was clear that the electric range and, thus, the aerodynamics of the A6 e-tron* would play a huge role. So, we had already been thinking about the topic when we created both concepts.

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Throughout the design process for the production cars, we worked with our colleagues on the Aerodynamics team to fine-tune, test, and adapt.

When all was said and done, we didn't have to make any compromises on either side. In fact, we were able to create an incredibly cool aero design, where everything was worked out to the last millimeter but was done with such subtlety that no one would notice the huge impact the elements have. The result is a true harmony of form and function.

I remember when my phone rang, and my colleague from the Aerodynamics team practically screamed in my ear: "0.21! You won't believe it, but we did it!" Together, we achieved the best Cd value ever for a series Audi model. I still get goosebumps when I think about it.

Talking about goosebump moments: You are not only exterior designers but also friends outside the Design building. How important is good collaboration for creative work?

Wolf Seebers: Our collaboration was awesome, and we usually agreed very quickly. Sascha essentially did the creative part while I was the link to our technological counterparts, the engineers. We poured ourselves into every detail of the A6 e-tron* with abandon. There is a story behind every line. That's why our teamwork was so essential - those last few percent ultimately have the greatest impact, which can only be achieved through true passion.

Sascha Heyde: We also collaborated closely with Gerhard Lawall, a member of the Surfaces team who helped us finalize the data for the visible surfaces. He was our link between the Design and Construction departments because all the surfaces on the model's interior and exterior had to be represented digitally and geometrically to an accuracy of one-hundredth of a millimeter before the car was finalized.

Gerhard was one of our most experienced Surfaces colleagues, having worked at the Four Rings for almost 40 years. He accompanied countless Audis on their journey from the Design Center to the road – the A6 e-tron* was his final project. This is just one of the stories behind our designs that Wolf mentioned. It was so special that he could again put all his experience into such an important, groundbreaking model. That is what makes Audi so strong – the way we combine tradition and innovation time and again.

Wolf Seebers: Yes, we really have a special job. Now the A6 e-tron* will be copied for our customers thousands of times. To us, however, it will always be a once-in-a-lifetime sculpture.

All information, images, and videos related to the new Audi A6 model series are available in the [Audi MediaCenter](#).

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In 2023, the Audi Group delivered 1.9 million Audi vehicles, 13,560 Bentley vehicles, 10,112 Lamborghini vehicles, and 58,224 Ducati motorcycles to customers. In the 2023 fiscal year, Audi Group achieved a total revenue of €69.9 billion and an operating profit of €6.3 billion. Worldwide, an annual average of more than 87,000 people worked for the Audi Group in 2023, more than 53,000 of them at AUDI AG in Germany. With its attractive brands and numerous new models, the group is systematically pursuing its path toward becoming a provider of sustainable, fully networked premium mobility.

Fuel/electric power consumption and emissions values of the models named above:

Audi A6 Sportback e-tron performance

Combined electric power consumption in kWh/100 km (62.1 mi): 15.9-14.0;
combined CO₂ emissions in g/km (g/mi): 0 (0) CO₂-class: A

Audi A6 Avant e-tron performance

Combined electric power consumption in kWh/100 km (62.1 mi): 17.0-14.8;
combined CO₂ emissions in g/km (g/mi): 0 (0) CO₂-class: A

Audi S6 Sportback e-tron

Combined electric power consumption in kWh/100 km (62.1 mi): 16.7-15.7;
combined CO₂ emissions in g/km (g/mi): 0 (0) CO₂-class: A

Audi S6 Avant e-tron

Combined electric power consumption in kWh/100 km (62.1 mi): 17.4-16.4;
combined CO₂ emissions in g/km (g/mi): 0 (0) CO₂-class: A

Audi Q6 e-tron

Combined electric power consumption in kWh/100 km (62.1 mi): 19.6-16.5;
combined CO₂ emissions in g/km (g/mi): 0 (0) CO₂-class: A