



illuminating insights!

Ingolstadt, December 3, 2024 – Lighting technology and lighting design may seem to have a lot in common at first glance but, in fact, a careful balancing act between aesthetics and functionality takes place behind the scenes. In this article, Stefan Staudacher, head of rear lighting development, and lighting designer Christoph Häußinger shine some light on how designers and developers work together to find the best solutions, despite their different requirements.

The new A6 e-tron is the first Audi vehicle to feature illumination of the four rings at the rear. How did this development come to be?

Christoph Häußinger: We thought long and hard about the right way to present the rings. After all, we're talking about our logo – one of the most important symbols of the Audi brand and a key identifying feature of our vehicles. We wanted to showcase this trademark at night too. Some of our concept cars actually had illuminated rings, and people were really excited about that.

The next step was to transfer this element from the concept vehicles to series production. What did that collaboration look like? Design had a vision, and Development spoiled the fun?

Stefan Staudacher: (laughs) I hope we weren't spoilsports, but illuminating the rings was actually more complicated than we originally thought.

Christoph Häußinger: It is, after all, our brand logo – it simply has to look exceptional both during the day and at night.

Stefan Staudacher: Then there was the issue of compliance with legal requirements, because the use of illuminated rings was a real innovation. At the time, there were no regulations for the European market. Together, we had to react very flexibly and swiftly to developments in the draft legislation right up until the final regulations were in place.

What was the biggest challenge you faced?

Christoph Häußinger: Without question, the design specifications for the illuminated rings! Our brand logo has to look precise and high-quality when the lights are off, as with all our vehicles. However, when the lights are on, we need the perfect shade of red to ensure a harmonious overall appearance with the other rear lights. To do that, we had to create the ideal shade of red that shines through white paint. It doesn't sound that difficult, but it took a great deal of work to achieve the perfect result.



Stefan Staudacher: Once we achieved that result, we decided to add the black styling package; that happened towards the end of the development cycle. In this package, the front and rear rings are dark. Once again, it was a challenge to create the same coherent image to ensure not only the sporty styling but also the high-quality look of the dark rings.

The development of the illuminated rings was not your first joint project – you have been working together for a very long time. What excites you about your job?

Christoph Häußinger: Audi lights are highly technical components. I find it inspiring to bring these components to life in a way that touches people emotionally. On the one hand, customers can choose different digital light signatures based on their preferences and tastes. On the other hand, personalizing their Audi fits perfectly into their everyday digital life. Nowadays, people are not only controlling their homes and appliances remotely, but also the lights of their Audi – thanks to extensive digitalization. I find this interaction between people and vehicles particularly exciting.

Stefan Staudacher: From a technical point of view, I am fascinated by the complete networking of our vehicles, including of course the headlights and rear lights. Digitalization facilitates individualization, as Christoph just explained, but it also supports safety. The communication light, which warns other road users in advance of accidents or breakdowns, is only possible thanks to our second-generation digital rear lights. We are proud to be able to offer our customers these functions. And that is just the beginning of a completely new light-based communication between road users.

Communication, safety, digitalization, individualization – how do you manage to juggle all those factors in two such different areas?

Christoph Häußinger: With hard work, good communication, and a clear understanding of the different requirements our colleagues have, anything is possible! I am responsible for the design, the appearance of the lights, while Stefan is responsible for what happens on the inside, the technology that makes our vehicles visible from the back. But we are both also significantly influenced by the exterior design. For example, what about the cutouts for the lights? What does the design language look like? And the surface treatment of the body? In the end, the vehicle must have a cohesive overall look on the road.

Stefan Staudacher: Our close collaboration shows that teamwork makes the dream work. We strive to achieve the best possible results, and our customers can now look forward to very attractive and, above all, illuminated rings on the rear of the A6 e-tron (laughs).

Short biography

Stefan Staudacher, head of the Rear, Side and Ambient Lighting Development team at Audi AG since 2021. Driven by his enthusiasm for emotional automotive design and his fascination with technology, Staudacher started his professional career in design implementation and remained true to this passion for over two decades in various specialist and management roles. For him, lighting development combines design, innovation, and safety in a unique way and creates many emotional and inspiring moments both during the development process and through the customer experience. This is what pushes lighting developers at Audi to continue bringing light into the darkness every day.

Christoph Häußinger, passionate lighting designer at AUDI AG since 2009. Häußinger's professional journey began in Erlangen with a degree in mechanical engineering from Friedrich-Alexander University. He then continued his studies at the Technical University of Dresden, specializing in technical design. During that time, he completed an internship in the field of lighting design at AUDI AG. Häußinger finished his studies in 2008, focusing on lighting design for his thesis, and right after graduating, he started his career as a lighting designer at AUDI AG. Since then, he has been jointly responsible for designing the lights of the TT, R8, A8 and most recently the A6 e-tron and Q6 e-tron.

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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.
