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Porsche Podcast 9:11

Transcript episode 5: Design

Guests:

Michael Mauer, Porsche Chief Designer

Stefan Bogner, Photographer and founder of the special interest magazine „Curves“

Host:

Sebastian Rudolph, Vice President Communications, Sustainability and Politics at Porsche AG

Intro

[00:00:15] **Sebastian Rudolph:** Welcome to the new edition of 9:11, the Porsche podcast. My name is Sebastian Rudolph and I am responsible for the areas of communications, sustainability and politics at Porsche. With this audio magazine, we want to bring the world of Porsche closer to you and find answers to some interesting questions. We have again set up our podcast studio in the Porsche Museum in Stuttgart-Zuffenhausen, from where we have a view of the Porscheplatz, and the three-armed sculpture that projects three white 911 cars up towards into the sky.

Today, we will be talking about a topic that is to do with time: a topic that can also be timeless. Yes, dear listeners, today we want to talk about design. It often starts with a line on a white sheet of paper and an idea, a vision. The end result can be an opera house, a smartphone or a Porsche 911. I have invited two experts today and before we start, I would like to introduce them in a little more detail.

[00:01:24] **Speaker:** Stephan Bogner is a true child of Munich. He was born in the Bavarian capital in 1968, and later studied industrial design there. In 1994, he founded the design office, Design Büro fpm – factor product München. He turned to graphic design at an early stage and developed products and imagery for medium-size companies. In 2011, he started concentrating on photography, and founded the special interest magazine Curves: a car magazine without cars that is published in two languages globally. In 2016, he set up the Stephan Bogner Creative Studio, with a focus on consultation and design for customers from



PORSCHE

the automotive, hospitality, food and travel industries. The alpine enthusiast still lives in Munich with his family and travels from there around the world for his work.

Michael Mauer was born in 1962 in Rotenburg an der Fulda and studied automobile design at the Pforzheim University of Applied Sciences from 1982 to 1986. He started his professional career at Mercedes Benz AG, where he was one of the designers responsible for the design of the SLK, SL and A-class models. In 1998 he was appointed head of the Mercedes Benz Advanced Design Studio in Tokyo, and then became Chief Designer at MCC Smart. One year later, he became Executive Director Design at Saab. Michael Mauer has been in charge of the Style Porsche department since 2004. After Ferdinand Alexander Porsche, Anatole Lapin and Harm Lagaay, he is the fourth Chief Designer for the brand. Besides the Panamera, Mauer also developed the Cayenne, the new 918 Spyder and the Taycan for Porsche.

[00:03:20] **Sebastian Rudolph:** Hello Michael, hello Stefan: thank you for being here with me today. My first question is for you, Stefan: what actually makes good design?

[00:03:29] **Stefan Bogner:** Well, from an expert point of view, there are the ten principles of Dieter Rams, a famous designer. You may have heard of him as a designer for Braun – or if you have Apple devices, which also reflect the Braun design. In the 1970s, some 50 years ago, he developed ten principles. I think they are still very valid today: good design is innovative, good design makes a product useful, good design is aesthetic, good design makes a product understandable, good design is unobtrusive, good design is honest, good design is long-lasting, good design is consistent down to the last detail, good design is environmentally friendly and good design is as little design as possible. I think these things are still very true now. And I would perhaps like to add that good design is where the soul resides. The people that work in design devote a lot of energy to this, and I believe that a part of the soul goes into the products.

[00:04:31] **Sebastian Rudolph:** I think that covers everything – what do you think, Michael?

[00:04:35] **Michael Mauer:** Well, for the moment – yes. I'm also familiar with the principles and think that they still resonate. Hearing them like that makes you stop and think: wow – quite a lot needs to be taken into account. Another thing that I think is very important is that a design must be relevant to the product, the form of the product. But then, it's especially important for



PORSCHE

me with cars, that the product communicates via its form. For me, design has to visualise the values of the brand and for the customer, when they look at it, this mental image needs to be brought up immediately.

[00:05:12] **Sebastian Rudolph:** You talk about communicating via form, via functions. If you look at the 911 – it is treated as an icon, it has a timeless design. But what does it take to create such a timeless design and also to update it?

[00:05:26] **Michael Mauer:** When you have a brand that has such a strong history, one of the biggest challenges is to not lose these connections. Despite this, you must, of course, ensure that the successor and the next generations are again seen as a modern car. And I think it helps us a lot that we have simply defined a few design principles that give everyone in the design area some guidance, but also leave enough freedom to come up with new ideas outside the box.

[00:05:59] **Sebastian Rudolph:** If you work with products, and shapes and look at them from the outside –for example your collaboration with Porsche in many projects, Stefan – how easy or how difficult is it to work with such a strong brand that also incorporates timeless character in its products?

[00:06:15] **Stefan Bogner:** It's not really that difficult, I would say. Because it is such an icon.

[00:06:20] **Michael Mauer:** Well, here's another aspect: you have the predecessor, the successor... I mean, I got to know Stefan and experienced him photographing our products, models, concept cars, and I was impressed at the speed that he did it. And for me he always captured in his pictures exactly what I, or what we as a team, wanted to express with the design. Also with the 911, where it is always claimed that the new model never changes too much in comparison with the predecessor. Because I know your pictures, Stefan, I know that you always succeed in finding exactly what is new. So somehow, subconsciously, that seems to guide your hands in exactly the right way.

[00:07:08] **Stefan Bogner:** Yes, but it is very easy with the 911, I have to say. The car is so good from every perspective. I very honestly wouldn't know what you could do wrong there.



PORSCHE

[00:07:17] **Sebastian Rudolph:** When does design become art? Photography is also an art in itself, but are there any overlaps and perhaps also limits?

[00:07:26] **Stefan Bogner:** Well, design and art – that's where I have a problem as a designer. The way I see it, art is free and design has a task. If I, as a designer, design a route guidance system then it must also work. It's the same with cars, they have to drive. There are very specific tasks related to this. Art is free, art has a different task, a social one.

[00:07:45] **Sebastian Rudolph:** We've talked about the 911. In your view, are there any cars that stayed in your mind, where you said: this is a very special design, let me try to capture that? Or is every car unique in itself, and then it becomes a challenge for you in terms of the photographic design, in the photography?

[00:08:05] **Stefan Bogner:** In the past, brands certainly had very different designs. If you look at the design culture of Citroen, for example, it's not there at all today. Porsche has been very rigorous in that respect and that is also what makes the brand unique. With a look at a Porsche from the 1950s, or from today, it is not only the car and the design, but also the attitude and mindset. I also believe that there are no unnecessary frills at Porsche. There is no addition of any details that you simply do not need. The design is very functional.

[00:08:39] **Sebastian Rudolph:** And when you now launch a magazine like Curves without any frills and with a lot of functionality and creativity, without any cars – how do you come up with that and what was the special thing, the attraction for you to do something like that?

[00:08:53] **Stefan Bogner:** I was also a travel guide for a long time. I like to go and relax in the mountains, also in my car. And then I realised that there was simply nothing in this segment. There was also nothing that appealed to motorcyclists, cyclists and car drivers at the same time. So I thought, a car magazine without cars, about a route that you always wanted to drive. It's the same as with a holiday – at some point, you just have to go to Iceland or New Zealand. It's a magazine for longings, for dreaming. And I put all those ingredients together and said: let me create a monographic magazine about roads that you always wanted to travel.



PORSCHE

[00:09:30] **Sebastian Rudolph:** ... and that is very popular.

[00:09:32] **Stefan Bogner:** Yes, I did not know it would turn out that way in the beginning.

[00:09:34] **Michael Mauer:** As you say, the idea was initially a car magazine without cars – hats off to you for that. You have to have a lot of courage for that. But what I found so impressive: when you look at a car, it is the whole thing that you really clearly see. The surface is curved in this way or that, or the line, wow, the line... and the other element is what feeling it creates in you. Your Curves magazine, there are no cars on it, but it evokes exactly that for me. So I thought, that's exactly where I want to drive the car. Now, of course, I'm prejudiced because I work for Porsche – and a Porsche would be exactly the right car. So it was precisely this topic of what certain images evoke in a person that I found extremely interesting.

[00:10:21] **Stefan Bogner:** Yes, longings and dreams. It's exactly the same thing with Porsche. You dream about it and at some point it becomes fulfilled. Or you work at it so that it becomes fulfilled.

[00:10:31] **Sebastian Rudolph:** Before we go into the detail, let's listen to a few facts on the topic of design "Made in Weissach".

[00:10:42] **Speaker:** Porsche has had its Development Centre here since 1971, in the middle of idyllic countryside and just 25 kilometres from the main factory in Stuttgart-Zuffenhausen. All the new production models come to life here in Weissach. From the first drawing to the scale models, through to the development of new engines, chassis and near-production prototypes. The only Porsche Design Studio is also located in Weissach. More than 120 designers from all over the world work here. These include experts in interiors, exteriors, colours and materials, model makers, modellers and study engineers.

The design process at Porsche always starts with a sketch. In the next step, this is visualised virtually as a 3D model. If the Executive Board likes an idea, small models on a scale of one to three follow, and finally a full-scale hard model. The result at the end of the development process is a drivable prototype with an engine, gearbox and the complete technological architecture. In the case of production models such as a new Porsche 911, there are always



PORSCHE

several designs competing against each other. They are all pursued quite a long way in the design process and realised in concrete form as models.

The Porsche designers also value the exchange of ideas with creative industries outside the automotive industry, such as Hollywood. In 2019, the design team worked together with the special effects experts from Lucasfilm. In a joint effort, they designed a space glider for the fantasy universe of Star Wars. It was the Tri-Wing S-91x Pegasus Starfighter. You can recognise many shapes and details that are typical of Porsche in the compact spaceship. Who would have thought that the flyline of the Porsche 911 would also suit a starfighter so well?

[00:12:39] **Sebastian Rudolph:** Michael, we have to talk about something: Star Wars and Porsche. How did it come about?

[00:12:43] **Michael Mauer:** The Marketing department arranged it: they are always looking for opportunities for cooperations and collaborations or companies who have similar values, from which exciting projects can arise in a joint venture. This was the idea that sparked the collaboration as well as this project. It was very emotionally charged for all of us, and everyone had an amazing amount of fun. A look behind the scenes of the automotive industry is usually very interesting for people and, for us, as we already work with a lot of modern technology, it was of course also extremely exciting to look behind the scenes of Hollywood.

[00:13:33] **Sebastian Rudolph:** Hollywood is a good cue, it's not far from Silicon Valley. You once said that the Silicon Valley of the automotive industry has been located in Zuffenhausen and Weissach for a long time. What did you mean by that?

[00:13:44] **Michael Mauer:** Yes, first of all I have to say that the original sentence came from Stefan, when we exchanged ideas in our conversations. And sometimes you can't see the forest for the trees, so to speak. You work here and perhaps even lose a little bit of the feeling for how unique the place is. And then you just have to get an outside perspective – a reflection in the mirror. That's when I became aware of how we work and what a cool place it actually is. The Porsche brand, Weissach, Zuffenhausen – and what actually happens here. As I said, there is actually no reason to shy away from the comparison with Silicon Valley.



PORSCHE

[00:14:30] **Sebastian Rudolph:** How did you come up with the idea of describing that in this way, like a mirror reflection – this pointed comparison?

[00:14:37] **Stefan Bogner:** Well, what makes Silicon Valley what it is? Silicon Valley started in a garage. Everything came from a garage, with friends and family helping. There's a strong vision, totally driven by innovation. There is this trial-and-fail mindset. Things have to happen quickly, people are fully focused on the goal, fully driven and then these things become a reality. This is what Porsche has been doing for the last 70 years, more than 70 years, actually long before Silicon Valley. It also has something to do with our culture, also how it has grown. You have such a great culture, you offer such a platform to those who are crazy in a positive way. For me, as an outsider, it's simply a cool campus, something like NASA, but somehow in a very small space. Here in Zuffenhausen, everything is done here, everything is done in one square kilometre, and in Weissach too. I think it's just great. For me, it's like the holy grail or a place of pilgrimage.

[00:15:43] **Sebastian Rudolph:** It's interesting, what you say, and also in relation to culture. In sport, it's normal to talk about "intact teams". It's a kind of cement that binds them together. At Porsche, we also have our own culture with a lot of family spirit. What is the design culture that you have here in Weissach, Michael?

[00:16:03] **Michael Mauer:** The fact that we have our studio in Weissach. The fact that the test site and test track are there impressed me a lot on my first day. At lunch time, you just go there and can see racing cars driving through the corners. That's a very unique atmosphere. Then in the Design department, of course by definition, the people who work there have to enjoy change: they have to enjoy getting involved in things. That's something we try to encourage to the maximum in the Design area – that anyone, regardless of their function, can pitch ideas and there are simply no restrictions to begin with. For me, that is the basic attitude that is necessary to be innovative and creative.

[00:17:00] **Sebastian Rudolph:** Innovation, being creative – both good cues for a project that the two of you recently realised together with 'Porsche Unseen'. Michael, for the first time in Porsche's recent history, you have opened the doors to the treasure chambers, if you will: to the archives of the Porsche design studio in Weissach. And Stefan set up his camera and captured



PORSCHE

fascinating and, I think, surprising images of concept cars that were created over almost two decades under your direction, Michael. Could you perhaps briefly tell us how the project came about, and how you go about selecting the appropriate treasures, where you then lift the curtain and allow the photographer to see them?

[00:17:44] **Michael Mauer:** First of all, we commissioned Stefan in the normal way to photograph our cars for documentation purposes, to take pictures of concept cars. Again, because I was always looking for someone who is able to capture in his pictures something that goes beyond pure form. And then you get to know each other. We often had coffee together. And then one word leads to the next and eventually it was: why not show it to the world outside? Of course, I nearly stopped breathing at first, because no one had ever done that before, and those are actually the best-kept secrets. But then I became more and more convinced that it was actually a great idea to really show that beyond what you see of Porsche on the road – and this was always the key point for me – Porsche is actually the coolest car brand in the world. And to show those who have not understood it up to now what actually happens behind the scenes, with these concept cars.

[00:19:00] **Sebastian Rudolph:** What did that mean for you, Stefan? Curtain up, opening up a view of concept cars kept secret until now? Weren't you a little nervous or filled with excited anticipation? Take us on your emotional journey.

[00:19:12] **Stefan Bogner:** It's quite unique when you see it, when you're allowed to walk through. It is all very, very secret. But then you notice the corporate culture, and the architecture, for example, in your Studio. It's so transparent. Everyone sees everything. Now I know Porsche a little from my family. We had Porsche cars since the 1960s/1970s. I also bought one at some point, I collected them and am basically a "user". Ten years ago, I really got in deep, I would say. Then you look at these cars and you notice that there's a huge blind spot. I now know the Porsche 356, the racing cars, the 911, the Evolution – especially the Evolution – and there is so much more. It's like science fiction. There is so much innovative strength and also culture. Why is that not shown? A certain company has a slogan "Just do it". So, why not simply do it? What have we got to lose? Even if you look at other societies. The Asian society doesn't really know about the heritage of Porsche but they are extremely design-driven there,



PORSCHE

and I think it's a great starting point to show the Asian and Chinese people what Porsche can do. But also to say to the classic Porsche customer: there is so much more. When I ask myself which brand is really cool and I look at that, then the picture is now very, very complete.

[00:20:46] **Sebastian Rudolph:** Very complete thanks to the Porsche Unseen design studies. Michael, these cars weren't built in the end. Is there an example that makes you say: what a pity – I would have really liked to see that one on the road?

[00:20:55] **Michael Mauer:** Well, as a designer, one of the problems you have in this profession is that you become extremely emotionally connected to every project, irrespective of what it is – in this case, a car. So, it's difficult to say. Ideally, I would have liked to have seen them all on the road. Earlier, we touched on the subject of designer versus artist. We are part of an industrial process. It is one thing to have an idea and a vision but you still have to find customers for it. But yes, my heart always yearns for a little sports car. If I had to choose just one, I would surely choose one of the small, purist sports cars.

[00:21:40] **Sebastian Rudolph:** How important is it for designers to develop visions and go three, four, five steps into the future before returning to the present again?

[00:21:49] **Michael Mauer:** That is a philosophical and a strategic question but I am firmly convinced about this: as I have just said we have, of course, a highly structured process when it comes to series production vehicles. There is the start of production and the design must be completed for that so that it can then be industrialised. And then you're already quite deep in a clearly defined process. You don't allow yourself the freedom that you might sometimes need. And if you really look to the day after tomorrow, or the far future, where there are actually no restrictions – technical nor historical – then you make discoveries that you wouldn't otherwise make. These offer insights into things that might make less sense or more sense. Then, when you return to the present day with these experiences, you look at the now or tomorrow in another light. I think that's part of the success story so that, as I sometimes say, you already have answers to questions that nobody today has actually asked yet. This way you are much quicker at finding new answers.



PORSCHE

[00:23:03] **Sebastian Rudolph:** Stefan, what is your experience when you look at tomorrow and ask yourself: where could I go for the next photo shoot? Which car do you dream of? Which makes you say "I would love to realise that dream one day"?

[00:23:19] **Stefan Bogner:** Sure, I would like to take the bus now in Iceland or somewhere. Or take the 904 on the road. But I think it would be far more interesting to put them in front of a DIY store. For me, Porsche is a car that I see in an urban landscape. That is also what is so beautiful about Porsche. For me, it's a cultural asset. I see so many cars on the road and it always gives me joy to see a beautifully designed car because that's all part of it. But, it also gives me joy to see a beautiful tree. So, it gives me the same pleasure to see a beautifully designed product on the road. For this reason, I would perhaps put such a car in a completely normal life situation and watch how people respond to it. I think I would find that most exciting.

[00:23:58] **Michael Mauer:** Maybe this is the beginning of a new project.

[00:24:00] **Stefan Bogner:** There's a DIY store over there.

[00:24:04] **Sebastian Rudolph:** Before we end our conversation with a final conclusion, we would like to play a little game with you. We've heard some quotes from Michael Mauer today. Let's look at some other quotes now from famous experts in design. The question in each case is: who said it? To make it easier, I will always give you three possible answers and you can just pick one. Here we go!

"Design is not just what it looks and feels like. Design is how it works." Who said that? Industrial designer Dieter Rams, Apple-founder Steve Jobs or architect Frank Lloyd Wright?

[00:24:50] **Michael Mauer:** Probably all three. I would go with Steve Jobs.

[00:24:55] **Stefan Bogner:** Dieter Rams and Steve Jobs, I think, have almost the same principle.

[00:25:01] **Michael Mauer:** Then you say Dieter Rams.

[00:25:03] **Sebastian Rudolph:** Michael Mauer pushed himself to 1:0 there because he pressured Stefan to give the wrong answer. The answer is Apple-founder Steve Jobs and



PORSCHE

Michael leads 1:0. Second question: "The role of the designer is that of a very good, thoughtful host anticipating the needs of his guests." Was this said by industrial designer and architect Charles Eames, automobile designer Walter da Silva or fashion designer Coco Chanel? Stefan, we'll start with you.

[00:25:37] **Stefan Bogner:** I would go with Coco Chanel. It's a great quote. I must remember it.

[00:25:43] **Michael Mauer:** I'll go with Mr Eames.

[00:25:45] **Sebastian Rudolph:** Michael, it's as if you know the answers already. He's good and now leads 2:0 in this design duel.

[00:25:50] **Michael Mauer:** That was just because I thought I would take the other answer.

[00:25:56] **Sebastian Rudolph:** The last answer offers double points. "Good design must be honest." Is this a quote by graphic designer Paula Scher, fashion designer Karl Lagerfeld or former Porsche design director Ferdinand Alexander Porsche?

[00:26:10] **Stefan Bogner:** Well, actually it's by Dieter Rams. We read that out previously, I would say. I'll take number four.

[00:26:19] **Michael Mauer:** I would have said F. A. Porsche.

[00:26:21] **Sebastian Rudolph:** And F. A. Porsche is correct. So, Michael Mauer is the winner of this design duel and Stefan is the champion of hearts! Many thanks for playing with us, you two. What you couldn't see was that fists were literally bumped. Designers stick together. Now it's your turn, dear listeners. In this episode of our 9:11 podcast you have a chance to win something once again.

[00:26:48] **Speaker:** Porsche AG is offering the chance to win three copies of the book "Porsche Unseen" signed by Michael Mauer and Stefan Bogner. The competition starts now and will run up to the next edition of the 9:11 podcast. To participate, simply send an email with your answer to the competition question to 911-podcast@porsche.de. Porsche will draw three winners from all correct entries. Everyone above the age of 18 can take part. The detailed



PORSCHE

competition rules – as well as the odd hint or two – can be found in the Porsche Newsroom at newsroom.porsche.de/podcasts. Good luck!

[00:27:30] **Sebastian Rudolph:** In order to make it possible to win, we still need the question. It is also a famous quote. Here it is: "In the beginning I looked around and could not find quite the car I dreamed of. So I decided to build it myself." Who said that? Simply send your answer by email to 911-podcast@porsche.de. We look forward to receiving your answers. Today's podcast episode is now slowly coming to an end. The time has literally flown by. Michael, Stefan, thank you for the interesting conversation. But, I still have a final visionary question. Let's start with Michael. Why will the classic designer or photographer still exist even in 50 years from now despite digitalisation and artificial intelligence?

[00:28:22] **Michael Mauer:** I would say because the whole topic of creativity depends so much on feeling, on gut instinct, that I cannot, at this moment, see that this could be replaced by artificial intelligence to the same extent.

[00:28:37] **Sebastian Rudolph:** So human qualities, with the human being also at the centre. Stefan, how do you see it?

[00:28:41] **Stefan Bogner:** Yes, it's about people for people and people together. There is so much magic that happens between the lines. I think that it might be very interesting in the future, but ...

[00:28:52] **Michael Mauer:** Intuition, yes, I'm glad to be a designer. I don't think that computers will be able to replace us to the same extent. Not in my lifetime.

[00:29:03] **Sebastian Rudolph:** People for people. That's a great way to finish. Stefan, Michael, thank you very much. We had a great conversation and, dear listeners, thank you for tuning in. Please subscribe and rate us, send us your feedback and suggestions to 911-podcast@porsche.de. Thank you very much and stay healthy. Bye!