

SPEED

In Miami, the land of luxe autos, how do you make a car stand out? Automakers work to imbue their speedsters with both “down-the-road graphics” and visual details that define the brand. This spring, several striking new models express their given visual lexicon, where the part sums up the whole and where innovation expresses a noble tradition.

By Phil Patton | Photography by Claudia Uribe



The Porsche 911 Carrera's lower roof, more angled windshield, and dramatic rear-window fly line refine the iconic model's silhouette.

IN SIGHT

Bloodlines and Rooflines

The silhouette of the new Porsche 911 Carrera channels both heritage and evolution.

The Porsche 911 has matured into a classic since its introduction 50 years ago. But it's also grown more like itself, so to speak—"an icon, continuously refined," as Porsche AG Head of Design Michael Mauer likes to put it. At the Porsche Museum in Zuffenhausen, outside the German city of Stuttgart, a display of the silhouettes of 911 models over the years shows how similar and yet how unique each iteration is, with the roofline being its essence. The latest 911 is no exception. The key to its identity, says Mauer, "is the width-to-height ratio. The roof of the new car is only slightly lower, but [the vehicle] appears flatter and lower, especially from the front. The windshield is more angled." The rear window, which the Porsche designers call the fly line, falls away more dramatically.

The Porsche 911 is in its seventh generation—a sacred mark for the company. Fittingly, the roofline of the current car echoes that of the one unveiled at the Paris auto show in 1963 by F.A. "Butzi" Porsche. But there are refinements, what Porsche designers call its "flat, stretched silhouette."

The changes in Porsches from one generation to the next seem fairly small, incremental at the time—even the shift in 1998 from an air-cooled to a water-cooled engine did not radically reshape the body. It's a nifty design achievement of both bloodline and evolution: Look at the first 911 and the latest 911 and the difference is marked, yet the cars are immediately identifiable.

The new 911 offers more power but nevertheless has better fuel economy, with its 3.4-liter base engine putting out 350 horsepower, fed through a seven-speed manual transmission. It is lighter thanks to more use of aluminum. Other innovations including the active anti-roll system, called Porsche Dynamic Chassis Control, are state of the art. But these things lie underneath, behind the car's iconic outline. MSRP: \$84,300

The roofline of the current 911 echoes that of the one unveiled in 1963 by F.A. "Butzi" Porsche.





Dark Knight

The Bentley Continental GT Speed's grille harks back to aristocratic, chivalric combatants.

Think Bentley and what comes to mind? The diamond-patterned wire grille of the Bentley bespeaks the entire heritage of the storied British marque. Similarly patterned grilles, tougher than fence wire, are found on the rugged “blown Bentley” supercharged racers of the 1920s.

These cars famously raced express trains from the South of France to England driven by the “Bentley Blowers,” a band of aristocratic daredevils who might have stepped out of the front hall at *Downton Abbey*. But the diamond pattern reaches even further back, to the helmets and chain mail of battling knights.

On most Bentleys today, beginning with the landmark Continental GT, which restored the glory of Bentley a decade ago, the grille is gleaming bright chrome, like jewelry. On the new, more athletic-looking Continental GT

Speed, however, the marque has chosen to take the grille in a darker direction, with a black-tint chrome finish. “Black speaks of high technology more than pure luxury,” says Luc Donckerwolke, Bentley’s new director of design, “but black is also one of the most elegant colors.” Combining elegance and

On the new Continental GT Speed, Bentley has chosen to take the grille in a darker direction, with a black-tint chrome finish.

technology says a lot about Bentley. The brand’s lineage “began as extreme,” says Donckerwolke, as Le Mans-winning racers and aristocratic toys. Then the company was sold to Rolls-Royce, and for decades Bentley played second fiddle. But 10 years after its rebirth with the first Continental GT, Bentley regains its superpowers with

the Speed model. Behind the blackened grille and enameled winged B emblem is a menacing 616-horsepower W-12 engine. The GT Speed, which achieves zero to 60 mph in a startling four seconds, according to the company, is the fastest production Bentley ever. MSRP: \$249,755

The black diamond-patterned grille and winged B emblem of the Continental GT Speed attest to a pairing of decades-old elegance and 21st-century technology.





The R8 is the first car of the marque designed with cutting-edge, jewel-like LED headlights.



All in the Eyes

The Audi R8 boasts headlights whose very function begets sheer beauty.

“Progress through technology” is how Audi’s motto translates, and nowhere is the advance of industrial science more visible than in the company’s headlights. Audi pioneered the auto industry’s use of LEDs (light-emitting diodes), those gleaming, jewel-like high-tech beacons that are more efficient than lightbulbs and last much longer. At first, they were practical only for daytime running lights. Now, on the R8, the marque’s top-of-the-line sports car with racecar origins, they can be used for headlight beams as well, taking the form of tubes and bars.

“With lighting, we always use the system that performs the best,” says designer Cesar Muntada, who specializes in lighting. As the top of the Audi line, the R8 gets the cutting edge of road illumination—it was the first Audi model to have all lighting functions handled by LEDs. According to Muntada, it has been Audi’s philosophy to show off technology with the conviction that it will have aesthetic value. “The key to all Audi design is giving the purest expression of technology,” he says.

Designers Stefan Sielaff and Wolfgang Egger, along with Muntada, have devised a scheme for varying the LEDs to represent each of the brand’s family of vehicles—the A sedans, the Q crossovers, the S sports models, and the R racecar-derived sports cars.

Like the DNA of a family over generations, explains Sielaff, Audi design cues share common elements but vary in significant ways. “We have subfamilies,” he says. Each Audi line has somewhat different headlights, but they all relate like an extended family, sharing resemblance and diverse details. Though the lights are a thing of beauty, much of the R8’s technology remains somewhat hidden: The carbon-fiber sidebands and mid-placed engine make the car light and balanced, while the 4.2-liter, 430-horsepower V-8 or 5.2-liter, 525-horsepower V-10 engines mean the R8 expresses itself most fully on the track. MSRP: \$185,450

“The key to all Audi design is giving the purest expression of technology.”

—Cesar Muntada

Location courtesy of 1111 Lincoln Road, a residential and commercial project of concrete and glass designed by world-renowned architectural firm Herzog & de Meuron. Already a Miami Beach landmark, the building's seventh floor offers 25,000 square feet of premium production and event space with dramatic vistas of the city. *1111 Lincoln Road, Miami Beach, Ste. 760, 305-538-9320, ext. 101; 1111lincolnroad.com*



Maserati GT Sport

A Driver's Throne

To sit behind the wheel of the Maserati GT Sport is to revel in the triumph of customization.

A Gran Turismo car (that's GT, or "grand touring") means travel in style—your style. So the essence of the Maserati Gran Turismo Sport is not necessarily the finely formed body, designed by the famed Italian firm Pininfarina, or the engine—a Maserati 4.7-liter V-8 with 454 horsepower just upgraded by a former Ferrari Formula One chief—but the driver's seat itself. The seat of any good sports car balances comfort with sensitivity to the power of the car and the g-forces of a turn. The GT Sport's does it in style, bearing the bold Maserati trident emblem, said to have been borrowed from the statue of Neptune in Bologna. The redesigned driver's seat is reinforced and made firmer than the passenger's seat, and though its side bolsters are deep enough for serious driving, the angle still allows for ease getting in and out of the car—helpful when making a debonair entrance at the W South Beach or in front of the

crowd at Prime One Twelve. It is the visual equivalent of the throaty engine sound that opens up when you touch the sport button, both highly functional and useful for putting on a tasteful show.

A bright work grille is tucked between the seat and integral headrest, and the seat replies to the sturdy steering wheel, an interior intimacy of sorts. The wheel itself is flattened at the bottom, racing style, with shifter paddles, and is available in four different wraps, combining leather, Alcantara, wood, and carbon fiber.

The entire car is about options: On the exterior, there's a choice of two pastel, nine metallic, six special, and three opaque paint colors. Inside, the seat and fittings are offered in numerous varieties, including Poltrona Frau leather and Alcantara upholstery. Taking bespoke a step further, even the stitching color can be personally selected. (Pictured is Poltrona Frau leather in Bianco Pregiato with blue stitching.) MSRP: \$137,315 **OD**

The redesigned driver's seat is reinforced and made firmer than the passenger's seat for serious driving, yet allows for ease getting in and out of the car.



The driver's seat, bearing Maserati's bold trident emblem, can be customized in a variety of leathers and colors.