

A Fine Line



Why does the Panamera look the way it does? As with every Porsche, the answer entails much more than a few good ideas by creative designers—the form alone demands more. The genesis of the Gran Turismo is the story of intensive deliberations on values, proportions, requirements, and, most of all, the company's sense of identity.

Panamera

Special

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It seemed to come out of nowhere. As if the place it now occupies had been reserved just for it. Space and power are the building blocks of the self-confidence with which the Panamera claims the right to inhabit a class of its own. Dynamism, elegance, and emotionality are an innate part of the make-up of this new four-seater Gran Turismo. It embodies all the genes that distinguish a Porsche—with the expression of an intentional lightness. In reality, however, it is the result of intensive aesthetic and technical deliberations on the part of Porsche designers, loosely following the maxim of the great U.S. American architect Frank Lloyd Wright: Form and function should be one, joined in a spiritual union.

The first relationship with the Panamera concept was anything but romantic for Michael Mauer, Porsche's head designer. In our endeavor to answer the question as to why the Panamera looks the way it does, we quickly encounter the issue of proportions. The proportions are determined by the dimensions. Not each single dimension, but always their relationship: height to width. A proportionality that Mauer expresses as follows: "In terms of proportions, the Panamera is even more dramatic and sportier than the 911!" The compact length, its comparatively low height, and the accentuated width create the initial framework for the car's design.

It is a visual message that takes root in the subconscious as the Panamera identity, one that brings a satisfied smile to Mauer's

lips: "The message is unequivocally 'sports car'." It is the product of the Porsche genetic code. A DNA that insists that the fender always be higher than the hood; that there should never be a classic radiator grill, only air intakes; that the shoulders on the rear should be distinctly pronounced and the rear window tapered; and that the tailpipes should be visible. Mauer knows he can depend on these genes: "When I apply these traits during the second stage of our design process, I already have the feeling that the basic body alone makes the Panamera a Porsche; it will be recognizable as such at first glance."

Enter Phase Three. The creative idea and the contours of the Panamera are sharpened through the details and the demands placed on the fourth model series. It must drive like a Porsche, and it must sound like one too. It must be a Porsche through and through. It must also be a genuine four-seater that offers practicality, functionality, and flexibility. According to classic model theory, the requirements thus expressed can be fulfilled by a coupe, a sedan, or a wagon. Within the inherent tension of this triangle, the fourth dimension of Porsche emerges under the working title "Space Coupé": the Panamera has found its own position and defined its own class. The performance potential it harbors is written all over its face.

Using a glowing red line, Mauer projects the silhouette of the Panamera into a dark room. The individual and innovative profile becomes vivid, malleable. This is a line with substance. It is ▶



Panamera

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A fine line: The visual message of the Panamera leaves no doubt—it follows the Porsche genetic code

Space and power are the building blocks of the self-confidence with which the Panamera claims the right to inhabit a class of its own. Dynamism, elegance, and emotionality are an innate part of the make-up of the four-seater Gran Turismo.

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Porsche design chief Michael Mauer

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reduced, yet it simultaneously promises more. “Not too much, not too little,” says Mauer. This is called harmony, and it’s also understood as a conscious signal against sensory overload. A line so clear that it embodies timelessness. Another Porsche that is not bound to follow every trend, to try to please everyone. Its line serves to evoke values. It is the steadfast implementation of an idea, of the conscious reflection on long-held values.

“There has never been a concept like it in this category,” Mauer says. In the Panamera topography, the higher fenders, the seamed graphics of the front hood, the strong shoulders, the shape of the windows, and the clearly visible tailpipes can all be found. Nevertheless, it is a genuine four-seater. But in a shape and combination the likes of which only a Porsche can possess. “The Panamera has extremely attractive proportions. I am convinced that its concept will polarize people. That’s what Porsche has always done. The difference from all other competitors has led to the creation of Porsche’s own DNA,” says Mauer.

The character of the exterior is maintained in the interior. The Panamera enters a segment in which the highest standards and an instantly identifiable quality must be met. And yet here as well, the instantaneous Porsche familiarity prevails—cylindrical instrument gauges with the tachometer in the middle, classic buttons for the operation of all functions, the clear operation with no complicated menu navigation. The upwardly sloped center console, taken from the Carrera GT supercar, is a visual signal that leaves no room for doubt.

Now that the Panamera has seen the light of world public opinion, Mauer reviews the stages of its visual development. “There are several phases of insight that one goes through in the creation of an automobile. Within this process, the Panamera became more and more concrete.” The drawings take on three-dimensionality; models also play an important role in Weissach. The epiphany comes when the full-scale car is standing in the yard for the first time. Mauer recalls the reactions: “After the first second, it was clear to the observers that this vehicle was following a concept different from all the others.” It also has something to do with the standards of the designer. When Mauer took on the position of director at the Weissach design studio in August 2004, a small strategic group was working on the Panamera idea. For Mauer, it was a chance “you don’t get often in life—a new job, the Porsche brand, and an entirely new model series.”

And even the drivers who tested the Panamera when it was camouflaged, with Mauer riding shotgun, confirmed his view: “The proportions were not to be denied.” For the first time, he had the opportunity to see this car in visual interaction with other vehicles, to observe it in the rearview mirror, and watch it approach.

Michael Mauer searched for a word to describe the visual effect of the Panamera. In the end he came up with two, but they flow together into one: “understated refinement.” Lines lead to thoughts, feelings, and ultimately a powerful appearance. It is also the sense of identity that makes the Panamera so unique. ◀