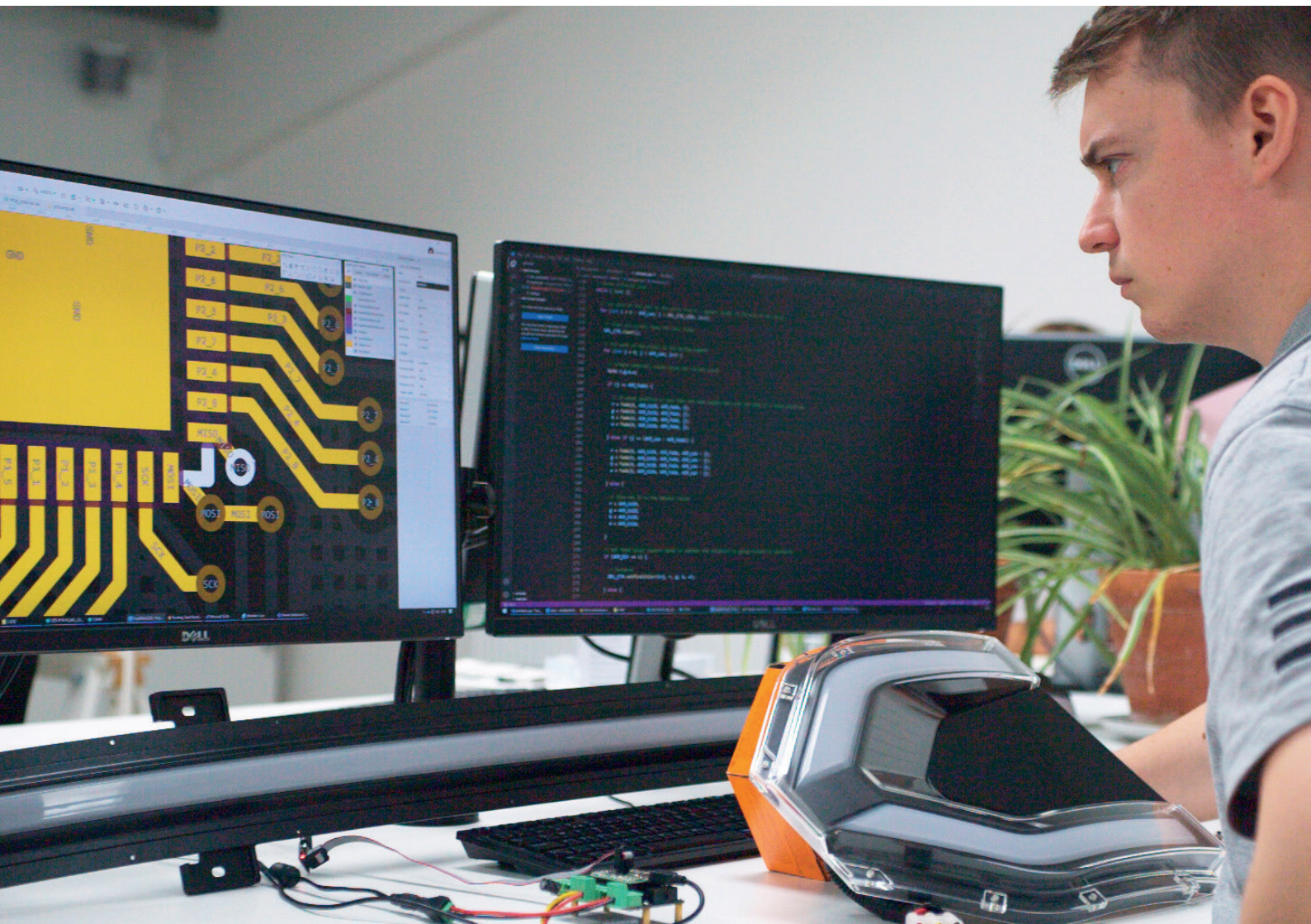


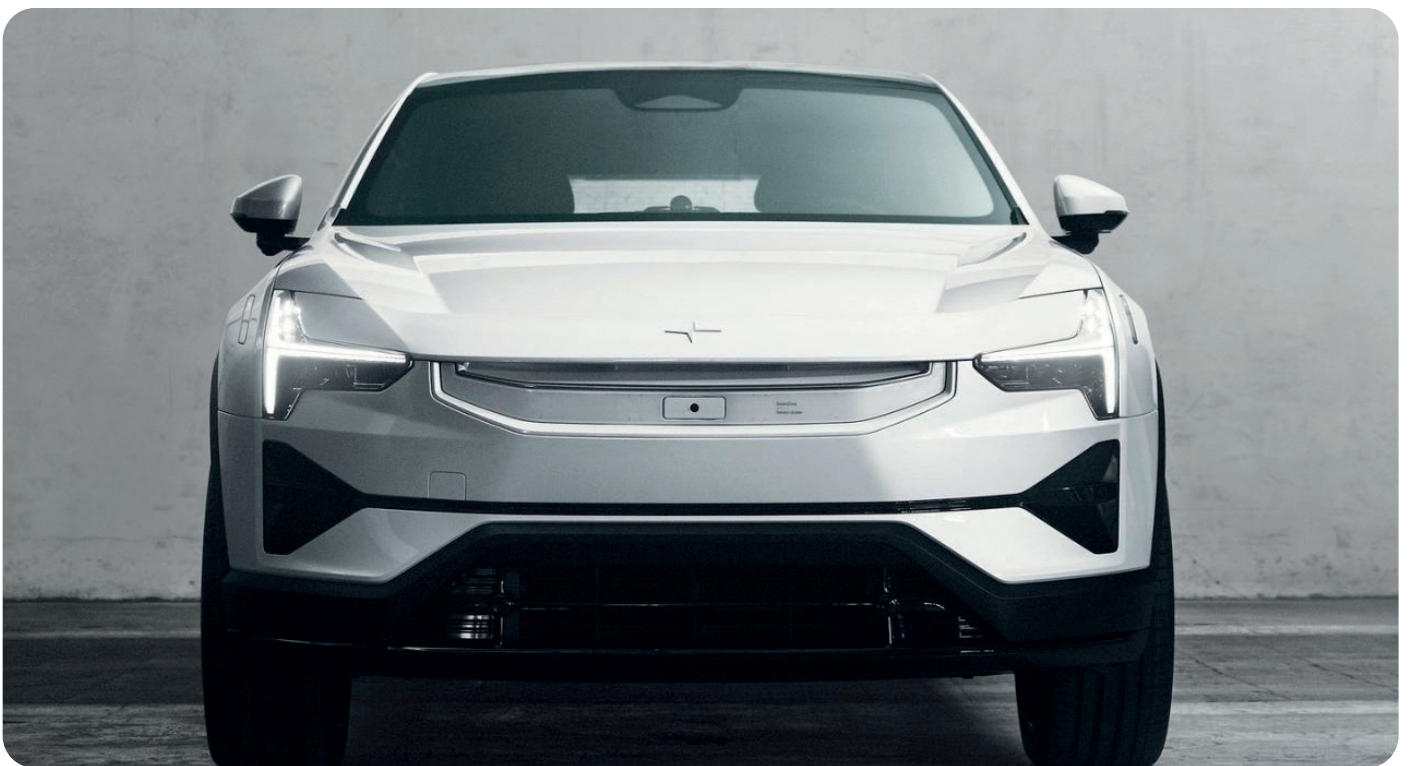
ASTHEIMER DESIGN



TECHNOLOGY WITHIN AUTOMOTIVE DESIGN

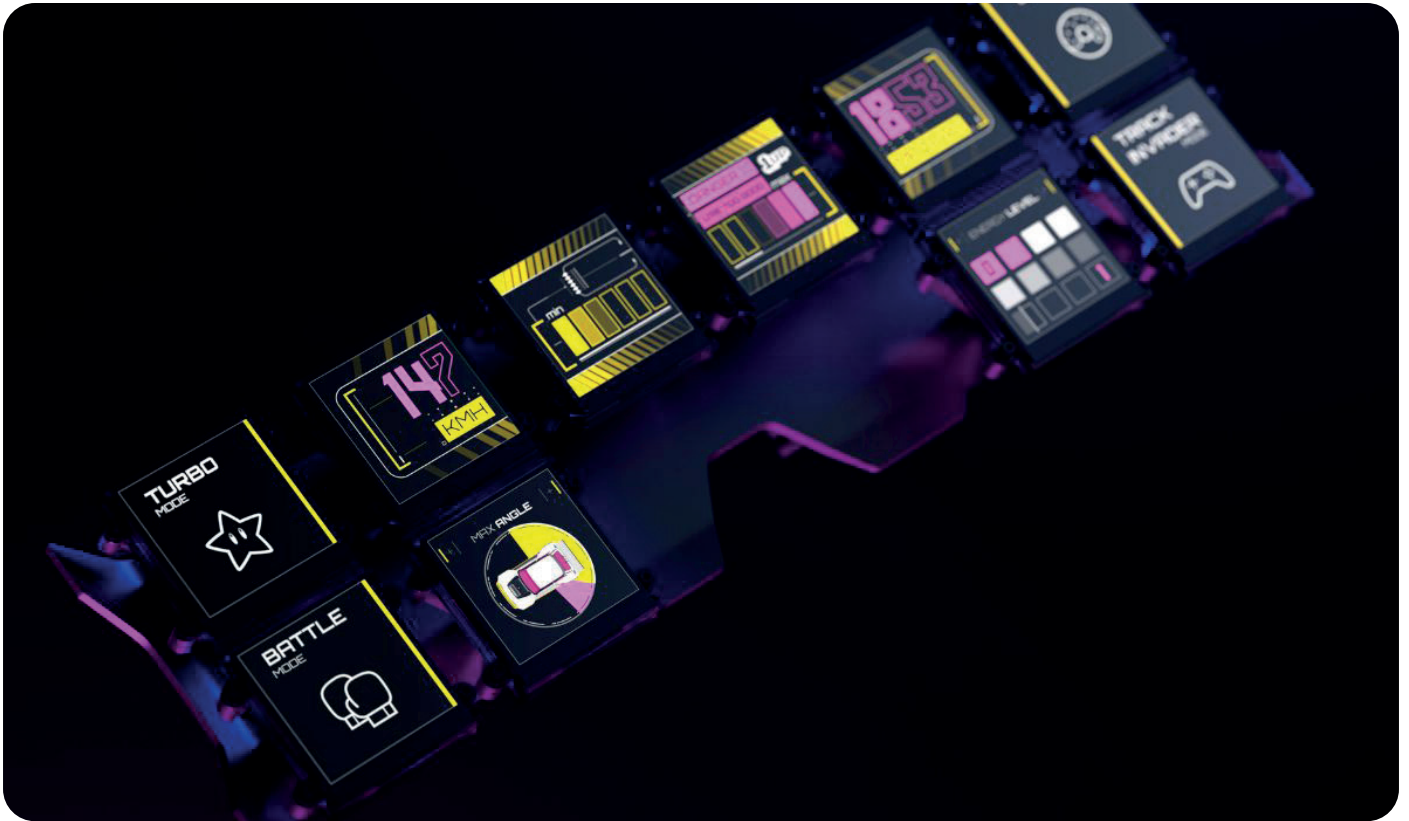
Technology has long been intertwined with the automotive industry. Since the introduction of basic tools like satellite navigation, to the latest developments in hybrid and electric powertrains, without technology in our vehicles we would quite literally find ourselves lost and powerless. Until recently though, the actual hardware enabling these features has seldom been made visible within automotive design. Standard practice has historically taught us to keep anything that the consumer won't readily understand tucked away, shielded within unassuming black boxes, hidden deep within the depths of our vehicles.

As OEM groups worldwide turn their attention towards electrification and autonomy however, technology is transitioning from being a value-added luxury to becoming the primary differentiator between vehicle brands. No surprise then that advance design studios are starting to experiment with technology first aesthetics, as brands strive to build trust in their advancements by reinventing themselves to appeal to the next generation of tech curious consumers.



While some integrate technology in subtle ways, like Polestar and their graphically outlined Smart Sensor Array, some lean more towards the outrageous. The heavily stylised Renault R5 Turbo concept at the Paris motor show was a true showstopper, with its dazzling lightshow, floating dashboard littered with visible electronics and gamer style OLED tiles, and... are those GoPro's instead of headlights? The playful integration of tech here is clearly design by, and for, Gen-Z. A generation that game on glass sided computers bathed in LED light, who wield super computers in their hands and view life as a continuous stream of 'content'.

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This new audience is far less likely to attend the petrol head focused motor shows of the past. Many OEMs today are holding back their brand vision concepts from domestic motor shows in favor of presenting them at the world's premier tech event: CES. Peugeot is one such example, presenting their Inception Concept in Las Vegas as dreamy video game inspired vision of the future. Inside, the reinvented i-Cockpit centres around a new human machine interface, the Hypersquare: a softly squared off programmable steering wheel with stylized pictogram information displays and steer by wire technology.



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Our most recent design sprint for hardware start-up EVware demonstrates that the tools required to implement real HMI advancements aren't far away. Having commercialized the in-wheel display developed for our very own Aura concept car, EVware have revealed their first product at CES called Core Halo. Designed with an engineered simplicity reminiscent of the old G5 Mac Pros, this all-in-one circular display and compute unit continues the trend for applying aesthetic consideration to what would otherwise be an innocuous black box. Aiming to be intuitive, essential, and empowering through both form and function, the unit features an expressive illuminating Halo to communicate vehicle functions as well as a GenZ friendly specification that reads more like a smart phone than a traditional automotive ECU, with an Android Auto operating system, cameras for Face-ID style vehicle unlocking, and always on cellular connectivity.



Peering into the future beyond the dazzling onslaught of LED bejeweled concept cars, there are several impending collisions of technological phenomena on the horizon. The transition to zero emission powertrains, the rise of AI and autonomy, and the increasing prevalence of digital services as a revenue generator, will significantly broaden the domains within which design studios operate. It is clear that conveniences of consumer technology will continue to influence automotive design to create more featureful and seamless experiences.

If design is the problem-solving tool we use to integrate and enhance our interaction with technology, the design challenges yearning to be tackled will inevitably take on a more human flavor. Not least, how do we comfortably transition from a generation of drivers actively involved in piloting our vehicles, to passengers with free time and space open to new experiences and engagements? Technology will surely need to continue to evolve from its black box genesis to take on a more visible, personable and understandable flavor. Ultimately, we may find that long term consumer traction perhaps won't be achieved with gimmicks or gamified distractions, but rather transparency, understanding and trust in the previously invisible technology which the car of the future will most heavily rely on.

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