

Modern takes:
 Modern reinterpretations of characteristic features from the Porsche tradition find their way into contemporary Porsche Design

DESIGN

INNER VALUES

When they hear the term “automobile design,” most people probably think of sleek curves and shiny paint. But a car does not live by its exterior alone. Our talk with Michael Mauer, director of Style Porsche, reveals that a car’s character has a lot to do with its “inner values”—and that it’s constantly evolving.

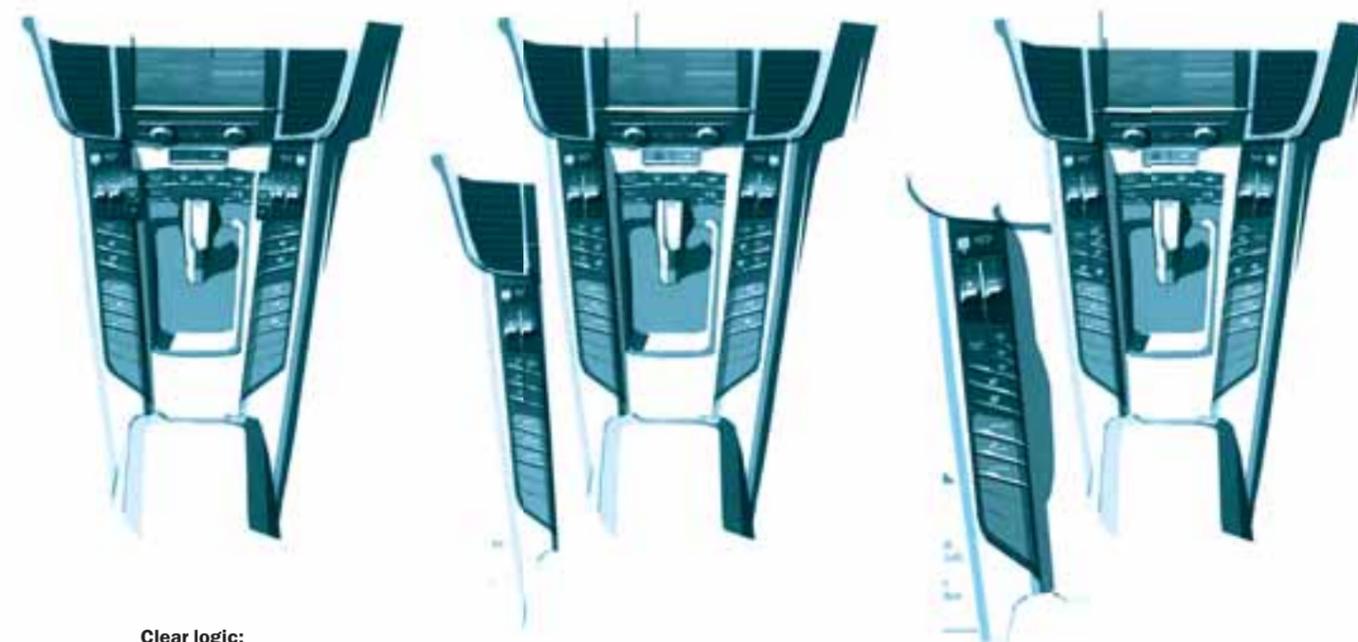
By Till Daun

Porsche's head designer is a boyish fellow with a mischievous twinkle in his eyes and a relaxed manner. He is impeccably dressed and exudes self-confidence without the slightest hint of vanity or arrogance. His movements are calm and deliberate, and his speech, with its soft consonants and elongated vowels, bears the unmistakable mark of the many years he spent in Stuttgart.

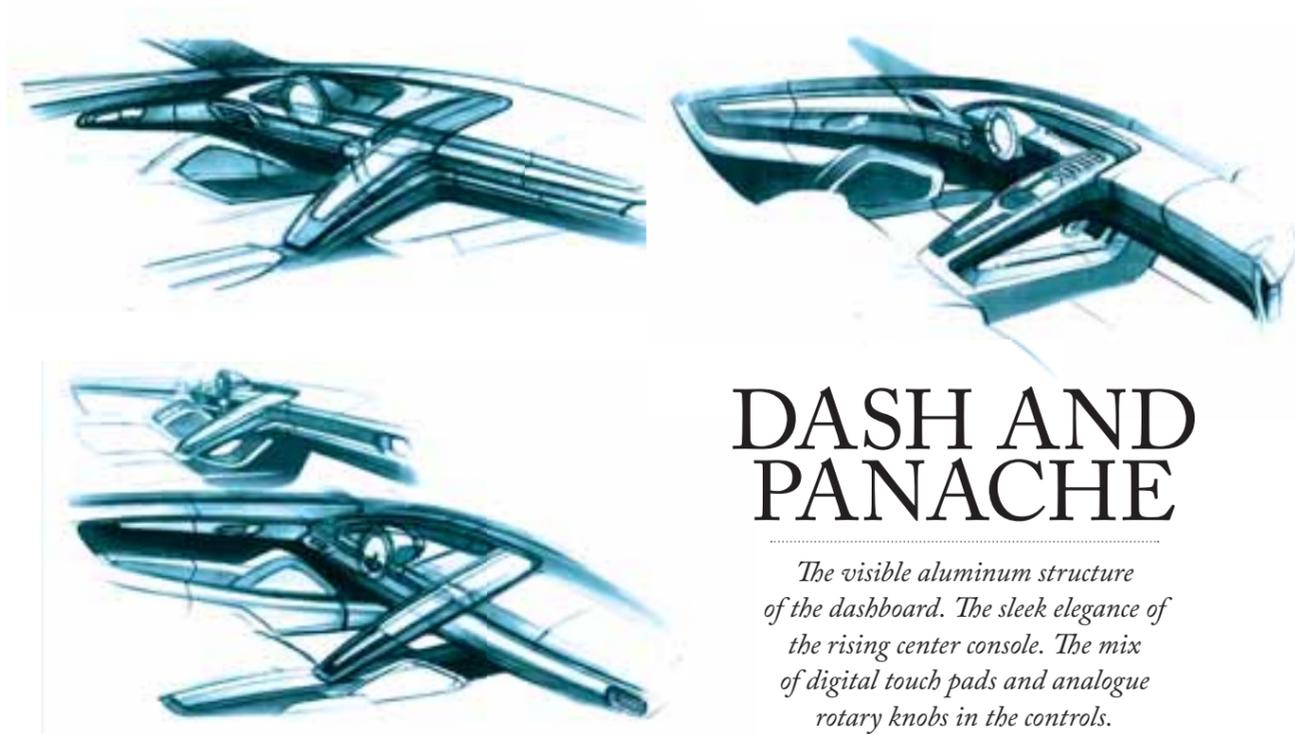
Michael Mauer is a good listener and an excellent observer. At first he just gazes down and smiles politely, rolling a pen between his fingers and listening intently as I nervously rattle off a whole list of questions. Then he suddenly looks me straight in the eye and gives me a well-considered reply: "If you want to know what we care about and what inspires us and want to get an idea of where Porsche interior design is likely to go, I suggest that you take a look at the 918. The 918 has a distinctive product identity, and it's also a great example to give you an understanding of the Porsche brand and of our vision for the future."

Now I'm the one smiling politely; I'm not quite sure what Mauer means. He picks up on my questioning look and doesn't leave me hanging for long. "It's quite simple really. The things you immediately associate with Porsche are part of Porsche's brand identity. The ignition lock to the left of the steering wheel, the signature round instruments encased in tubes, the sporty three-spoke steering wheel—you'll find all of these elements in every Porsche model. Some of them have a long history, while others may have been features for only a few years. But either way, they are—and will remain—characteristic of Porsche."

Mauer carefully smooths a design sketch he has spread out on the table to demonstrate the difference between brand identity and individual products. "Product identity has to do with design elements that distinguish the various models from one another." I'm starting to get what Mauer is driving at: round air vents, a sleek, minimalist layout—these features are typical of Porsche's mid-engine sports cars. The cockpit of



Clear logic:
Direct access to all functions is de rigueur with Porsche



DASH AND PANACHE

The visible aluminum structure of the dashboard. The sleek elegance of the rising center console. The mix of digital touch pads and analogue rotary knobs in the controls.

the 911 is just as straightforward, but overall it seems more powerful and more functional. It almost appears not to have been styled at all—a no-nonsense car.

Mauer nods with satisfaction that the coin has dropped. "Exactly. And if you compare the current Cayenne with its predecessor, you'll recognize a dynamic in the development that transcends mere design. We gave it distinctive elements that emphasize its product identity as a sporty all-terrain vehicle—the grab handles on the doors and the center console, the high placement of the multimedia system, vertical outlet nozzles extending to the dashboard. But we also thought about how we could make it more 'Porsche,' so now you really sit 'in' the car rather than being perched 'on' it. That's typical for a sports car, and our interpretation sets the Cayenne apart from all its competitors."

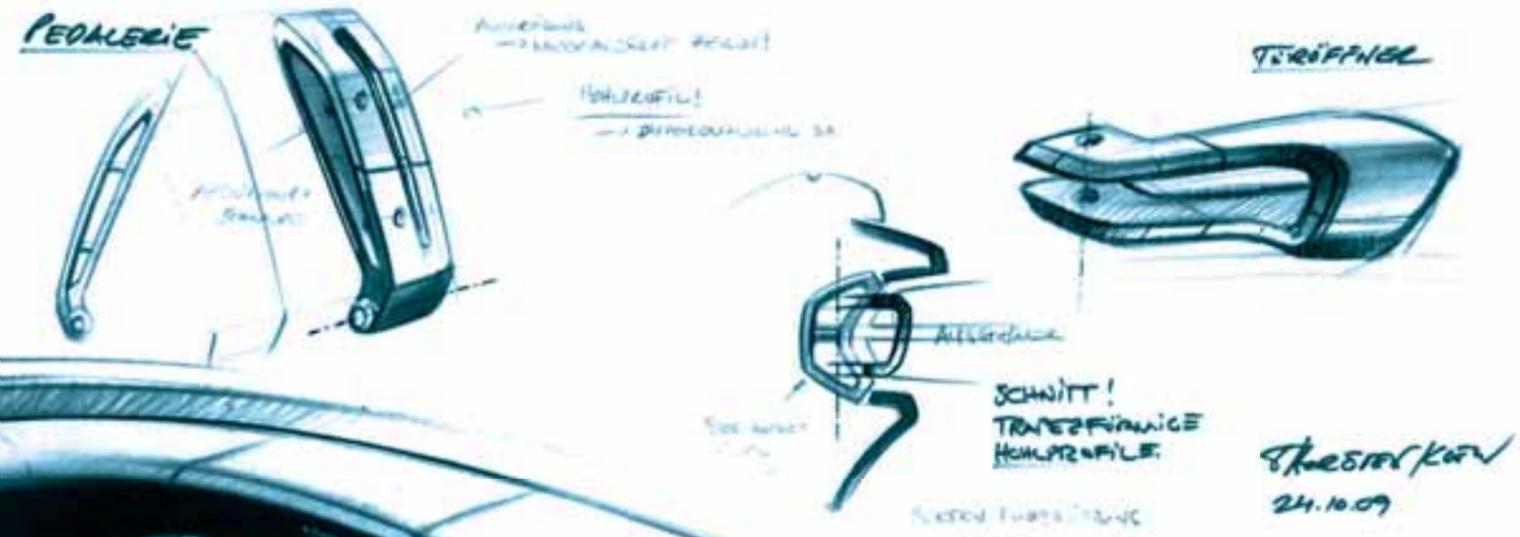
Isn't the rising center console itself a characteristic feature of the Cayenne? Mauer answers without hesitation: "Yes and no. It's an element we've been working with since the Carrera GT, and it's well on its way to becoming a distinguishing feature of Porsche brand identity. The slope of the center console actu-

ally isn't that dramatic in the Cayenne; it's much more pronounced in the Panamera." Now we've hit on a topic that really gets Mauer going. He reaches for a large portfolio full of sketches and drawings. "When we were working on the concept for the Panamera, we realized that we couldn't just launch into a new segment where a lot of very accomplished competitors have done very well and expect to be successful just like that. We knew the Panamera needed to make a unique statement and had to be a very special car. The interior was key in this respect, because functionality, comfort, and multimedia content are very important in this class."

But how did the rising center console of the Carrera GT get into the picture? "I was always intrigued by it. Just think of the gear knob of balsa wood—incredibly lightweight, and at the same time you have that contrast of natural material in a high-tech environment. And so easy to reach, too..." We share a laugh. Indeed, at the time a gearshift lever at the same height as the steering wheel was a feature people expected to see in family minivans, not sports cars. On the other hand, you do often see gearshifts of this type in real race touring cars. "I see absolutely no reason why a



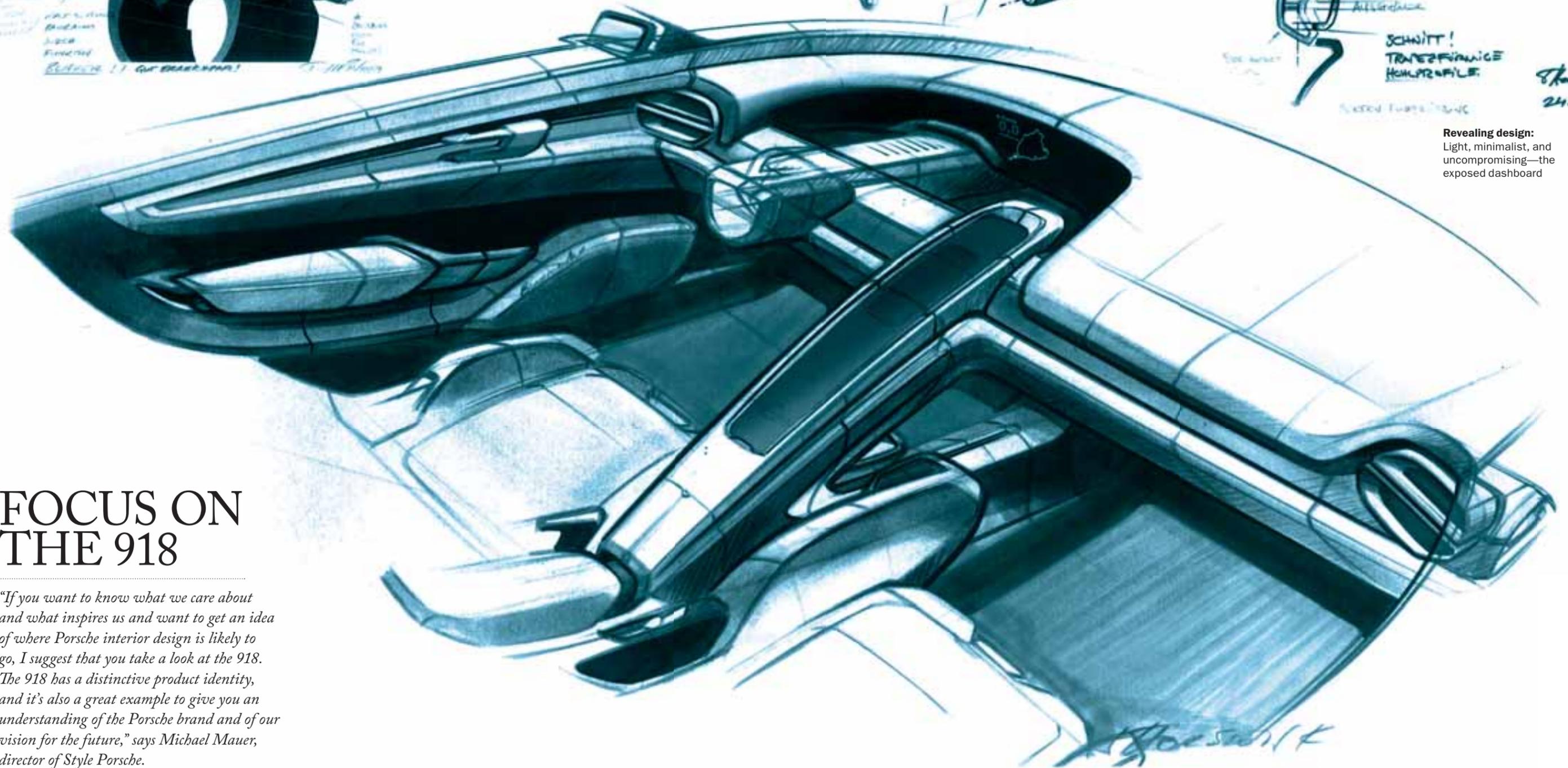
Classic numbers:
Round instruments
encased in tubes
are part of Porsche's
brand identity



Revealing design:
Light, minimalist, and
uncompromising—the
exposed dashboard

FOCUS ON THE 918

"If you want to know what we care about and what inspires us and want to get an idea of where Porsche interior design is likely to go, I suggest that you take a look at the 918. The 918 has a distinctive product identity, and it's also a great example to give you an understanding of the Porsche brand and of our vision for the future," says Michael Mauer, director of Style Porsche.



sports car shouldn't have a raised stick shift. How much longer there will be stick shifts at all—now that's another, perhaps more interesting question," Mauer says. Then he grins and continues: "But we were going to talk about the 918. What elements appeal to you particularly?"

The author as test subject for market research—an unorthodox approach. But it takes me only a few seconds to answer: the visible aluminum structure of the dashboard, the sleek elegance of the rising center console, the mix of digital touch pads and analogue rotary knobs in the controls. "Bingo," says Mauer, and he spreads another drawing out on the table. "Designing a dashboard without any facing at all would be a dream, of course—a great look, lightweight, no superfluous material. But we have a long road ahead of us before we'll have an interior like that ready for series production. I would say the rising center console is a key element. It allows us to provide the most direct access possible to the controls for all functions, which is in keeping with our philosophy of offering maximum driver control. So whether we

want to feature a center console in a sports car and are aiming for a light, sleek look, or whether we're aiming to put control of all multimedia systems and comfort features in a vehicle like the Panamera at drivers' fingertips, the sloping center console has a promising future at Porsche."

Or you could put it this way: it can offer many features, but above all has character. ●



MICHAEL MAUER

Born in 1962, Michael Mauer has been director of Style Porsche at the Weissach Research and Development Center since 2004. "The way we see it, our role is to be a driving force for innovation," he says of his role as a designer.

It all started here:

The rising center console premiered in the Carrera GT

