"Like a tailor-made suit":
What makes the decals for the Audi Q6 e-tron prototype unique

- **Individual accents for vehicle sculpture: design and craftsmanship for the first fully electric Audi from Ingolstadt**

- **The goal is to abstractly reflect and visually reinforce the character of the model through decals**

- **Designer Marco dos Santos: "The decals serve as a means to transform technology into a captivating visual language that initiates engaging discussions"**

Ingolstadt, Juli 26, 2023 – Each design is one of a kind: Since unveiling the Audi e-tron in 2018, the brand with the four rings has been fitting prototypes and one-off models with individual decals, Audi's so-called "livery design" – most recently the S1 Hoonitron and the Formula 1 show car. The brand with the four rings has already presented more than 20 vehicles featuring this special exterior, all designed by Marco dos Santos, who is responsible for Design Branding at Audi. His latest vision now decorates the Audi Q6 e-tron prototype. Marco dos Santos uses his latest decals to explain the philosophy behind the expressive design, how men's suits factor in, and what makes even a designer nervous.

"Audi's design language is taking the next step with the Q6 e-tron, and we wanted to make that clear in the decals," says dos Santos. "A vehicle's architecture and character are always unique and so is each individual decal design. It always starts with deciding which elements on the vehicle you want to highlight and emphasize." While the new project also draws on previous design elements – such as the neon red color also used on the Audi Q6 e-tron, widely familiar from the memorable decals on the 2018 Audi e-tron – each new model also opens a new chapter. dos Santos remarks. "At Audi, technology and design are inextricably linked and form a single entity. As our technologies become more powerful and precise, this is also visible in our design, choice of materials, and storytelling," dos Santos explains.

According to dos Santos, the decals translate the vehicle's technical elements into a memorable visual language. "Basically, we want to start a conversation with the decals." What makes the design language unique is that this conversation can be held globally. "Certain things are perceived differently in different countries, but in the end, design either works everywhere – or nowhere."

Shapes have smooth interflow to emphasize key elements
In the case of the Audi Q6 e-tron, large graphics identify the vehicle as a prototype at first glance, which, dos Santos believes, are "always in a very special field of tension." "When it comes to a prototype, the decals create opportunities for us to converse about the design, which is actually still largely under wraps. This allows us to stay vague, while already nailing down certain aspects."

Sharp lines and high contrast: Large-scale radial graphics in Gloss Fierce Fuchsia meet a detailed geometric mesh and stripe graphics in Silver. The shapes flow smoothly into one another, emphasizing key elements of the vehicle's architecture. The lower rocker panel is set off from the body in white, accentuating Audi's e-tron philosophy, which places emissions-free driving at the heart of the design. The five-arm dynamic rims and the Singleframe that defines Audi's look are also completely white. Neon red inlays, called the "e-tron Powerstripes", emphasize the upper area of the rocker panel. As the seat of the battery, this is the beating heart of the fully electrified vehicle.

Another stylish neon red line runs around the rear and highlights the quattro blisters – the body contours that support the flat-sloping D-pillars. The blisters are reminiscent of the original Audi quattro and are a core element of Audi's design DNA. "Making technology visible" is the name of this central design principle of the brand with the four rings. A close-meshed grid runs along the upper edge of the body, giving the vehicle its technoid profile. The greenhouse is completely set off from the body in black, except the D-pillars.

"The decals have to work from 360 degrees."
The decal design process is similar for each vehicle. Using detailed renderings from exterior designers, the team works together to decide which elements make up the model and which parts of the body to focus on. The aim is to abstractly reflect and visually reinforce the character of the model through decals. "The original idea always has to remain the guiding principle."

That is when dos Santos' design process really begins. With lots of hand-drawn sketches on paper ("I just need that connection between head, pencil, and hand"), the vision is finally translated into the vehicle using image and graphics software. The car is completely covered in decals, a process that takes several days due to the high level of meticulousness and precision required. "This is the moment of truth," dos Santos elaborates, because "lines that looked straight before no longer appear straight at all on the body due to its many corners and edges." During this phase of the work, dos Santos says, "a lot is thrown away, rethought, and redesigned." In the process, dos Santos always has to consider how people will later view his design. "You never know which angle a person will see the Audi Q6 e-tron from for the first time. It's not like in a movie with a camera, where you get to decide to focus first on this part, then that part. The vehicle is a sculpture. The decals have to work from 360 degrees, around the whole car, all the time."

In the end, when the livery design has been perfectly matched to the car's various geometries, dos Santos will have created a custom suit for the model. "It only exists once in the whole world, only for this exact model."

About Marco dos Santos: Marco dos Santos was born in Munich in 1987 to a German mother and Brazilian father. After graduating from high school, he studied interdisciplinary design in his hometown. He has been working for Audi in Design Branding since 2014 with his main focus on e-tron, AI, and motorsports. Beyond the automotive world, he also works as a freelance designer – creating logos, products, and posters, as well as album covers for gold and platinum artists in the music industry.

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