Polestar’s latest concept shows it thinks differently about design



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- The Polestar Precept isn’t destined for production, but many of the ideas we see here will show up in the Polestar 3, a performance electric SUV due in late 2021.
- The Precept’s styling is quite unlike that from established rivals in Europe or from Tesla, for that matter.
- Among the features I adore are the Precept’s front lights, which call out to the family link with Volvo.
- On the other hand, its designer Max Missoni says his favorite angle of the Precept is from behind.
- The rear incorporates an aeroblade, which cleans up

airflow as it detaches from the back of the car.

- Another neat detail I hadn’t seen until we got these images is the external battery-status light. It’s hard to see where it lives on the car from this shot, but scroll to the next image in the gallery.
- As you can see, that LED battery indicator is incorporated into the C pillar.
- The Precept’s suicide doors and lack of a B pillar probably won’t make it to production, but other ideas will.
- The seats use fabric woven from recycled PET plastic bottles.
- Another look at the seats.
- The material at the back looks like carbon fiber, but it’s actually a natural composite called Bcomp.

The Polestar Precept was one of the cars I was most looking forward to seeing in person before the Geneva auto show got cancelled. The brand is a new one, spun out of Volvo with a fully funded mission to build exciting electric vehicles. And the Precept is a statement in that regard, with some interesting things to say about the way an EV can look, both outside and inside, that aren’t just a rehash of decades-old conventions. Polestar was evidently sad that it couldn’t show off its latest design study to the wider world, too, and so it sent us a bunch of new images of the car while designer Max Missoni hopped on a phone in Sweden to talk to me about the Precept.

Although the Precept is just a design study, it has been designed in parallel with the Polestar 3, a coupe-like SUV that should arrive before the end of 2021. “However, we are always careful to not overpromise and do design studies that are so far away from reality that none of it could be imagined in production,” Missoni told me. “A lot of the elements of the Precept are going to resurface in Polestar 3. So, the dimensions and features and design language is quite

realistic.”

The car’s shape has been heavily influenced by the demands of aerodynamic efficiency, which is why there’s what looks like a floating-wing element over the nose, as well as a rather unusual rear end.

“[Aerodynamics] is important in car design,” he said. “But now, with where it really translates to kilometers of range, I think it is becoming even more important. So that’s why, with the Precept, we wanted to show off and introduce our features and our ideas when it comes to optimizing the airflow around the vehicle. So a lot of those things you will see popping up in future Polestars, like the air curtain and aeroblade.” (For the record, Volvo is not making the Precept’s drag coefficient public as of now.)

The headlights are a comforting family link

The car’s look is not just being driven by the wind tunnel or computational fluid dynamics, though. Either side of the front wing are LED headlights that provide a link with Polestar’s Volvo origins and that brand’s signature “Thor’s hammer” look. “I was quite keen on taking a big step away from Volvo but, at the same time, keeping some kind of link to the brand, because I think it’s a big advantage for Polestar to be connected to Volvo,” Missoni said.

“You know, there’s quite a few startups in the industry, and we never really know ‘Can we trust them in terms of safety, in terms of customer service agents, the dealer network that conducts the service and all of this?'” he told me. “So, in this case, people understand, ‘OK, it’s part of the Volvo family, and we will be fine’ in terms of, you know, quality, technology, safety, and so on. So I think it’s just important to also link back to Volvo in some way, but then to really

establish the brand in terms of design that has a unique expression, and I think I feel that we got that balance quite well with the Precept."

What's Missoni's favorite angle?

Missoni told me that his favorite angle of the Precept is looking at it from behind. "Because it's so different to conventional cars," Missoni said. "And that's just for two reasons. One reason is the rear screen [the rear windshield]; we're using a camera to replace the rear screen, which gives us a great advantage in terms of aerodynamics and in terms of headroom and in terms of the tailgate opening, which is becoming much bigger because of that. So, that has a big impact on design. It looks much more robotic and futuristic, because it doesn't have the conventional layout in the rear view. And that's in combination with the real lamps which also serves as an aeroblade, you know, in order to extend the rear, where the air cuts off in the rear. It extends that out and creates a bit of a free-floating vortex behind the rear. So it really enhances the aerodynamic properties."

The interior says luxury doesn't have to be leather and wood

The one thing I really can't quite tell from the pictures is how the use of recycled materials in the interior worked out. The seat fabric is called 3D-knit, and it's made entirely from recycled PET plastic bottles. 3D knits have become commonplace in footwear of late, but this might be the first time I've seen it used for car seats. The shells of the seats look like carbon fiber but are actually made from something called Bcomp, a composite that uses natural flax fibers instead of artificial carbon ones. Recycled fishing nets and cork also find their way into interior materials.

“We looked at how can we leverage those materials and create a new sense of luxury. If you look into traditional premium cars you will see a lot of leather, wood, and chrome in order to create a feeling of luxury, and we really set ourselves the task to say “let’s look at these materials like what we have in this kind of cork-based vinyl and like this natural fiber composite like Bcomp material that we use, or 3D knitting from recycled yarns which, when you combine them cleverly, they really create a new sense of luxury that I don’t see so much in other premium vehicles. So that is, you know, leveraging sustainable materials in order to create a new design direction for the interior,” he said.

“There’s so many cues from the past which, as you said, have been here since the era of coaches. Where things in car design really haven’t moved on that much because these recipes have worked for decades so, hey, why not keep hanging in there? And we thought that you can’t really seriously create a new brand in our times and then say let’s just use the recipe that people have used for a hundred years. And so we really felt an obligation to try something else,” Missoni said.

Listing image by Polestar

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