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Architexture promotes interior design evolution with Manta project

The Manta project and a new series of workshops held by Architexture will help CMF designers push the envelope on interior design

Sight, sound, smell, taste and touch – the five senses that make up our world. The last, but by no means the least, of these senses is particularly reliant on the texture of objects and surfaces. Vehicle interior design teams are having to focus more on surface treatment than ever before as they hope to create textures that can be aesthetically pleasing, pleasing to touch, and functional.

“There is an evolving requirement for materials and aesthetic differentiation in electric and autonomous vehicles,” says Mike Miller, head of design at Architexture Design Consultancy and Standex Engraving Mold-Tech. “We must be able to



Top: The manta project was developed to demonstrate the design capabilities of Architexture

Left: Architexture used in-mold graining (IMG) tools to create unique soft surfaces, which allowed for faster development

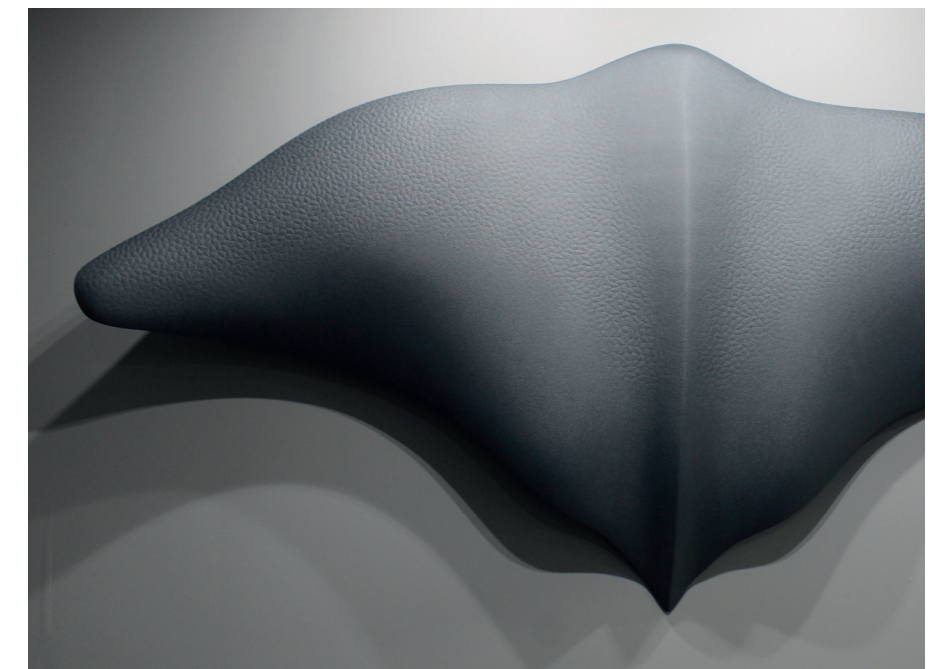
create bespoke textures and high quality surfaces with functional non-leather materials to satisfy a more environmentally-concerned customer.”

To show the industry what could be done, Architexture Design Consultancy, the specialist design arm of Standex Engraving Mold-Tech, launched its Manta project back in 2021. Instead of using chemical and laser engraving, the company turned to in-mold graining (IMG) tools to create unique soft surfaces. This, explains Miller, has numerous advantages over conventional engraving technologies. “IMG allows for sculptural texturing of the surfaces immediately, making it much faster than the traditional technologies,” he says. “We can do super rapid 3D texture prototypes and there is an unlimited design scope, which is crucial for customisation and differentiation. We can also use non-leather materials that have the functional qualities of leather.”

Numerous prototypes were revealed at Auto Interiors 2021 in Stuttgart, Germany, taking the form of large sweeping sculptures shaped like manta rays to mimic the curves and surfaces of an instrument panel. Different skins were used to trim a selection of models, showcasing numerous bespoke surface treatment options. Since then, several carmakers have shown interest in the project and its potential advantages for vehicle interiors. “We have had some serious interest from leading German luxury brands,” says Miller. “We recently held the first ‘live demo’ event, and also had a visit from a major French brand a few weeks ago, which was very positive. And we are now at the beginning of taking the Manta on tour to the OEM studios – it really needs to be seen to be believed.”

As well as showcasing surface innovation and the evolving opportunities for interior design, the Manta project reflects Architexture’s capability of being a one-stop-shop for carmakers. “We have a design, verification and production route that enables us to be a one-partner solution for OEMs,” says Miller. “We alone can do this by putting the pieces of the puzzle together. This level of dynamism in the CMF arena has not been achievable before now. Architexture is making industry trends by evolving the design capability and technical innovation. We need to show these innovations and physically make them, otherwise the CMF community will not evolve.”

In the hope of sparking further progress, Architexture has recently announced plans to host ‘Texture Design and Refinement Workshops’



at its studio in Manchester, UK. Attendees are invited to get their hands dirty, researching and refining ideas before physically printing samples. These workshops, says Miller, allow for a calm and creative exploration of possibilities. “They are a break away from the day-to-day churn,” says Miller. “We are an open door, with no secrets and nothing hidden. Knowledge is power, and so if we work together and educate one another, car design will evolve and grow.”

To watch a film documenting the creation of the Manta project visit manta.mold-tech.com

Top: Numerous prototypes of the manta were revealed at Auto Interiors 2021 in Stuttgart

Above: The manta project reflects Architexture’s capability of being a one-stop shop for carmakers