

EVENTS/CAUSES

Audi stirs urban planning, mobility discussions with Columbia University partnership

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By RACHEL LAMB

Audi of America is continuing its Audi Urban Future Initiative by partnering with Columbia University's Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation to identify new paradigms of motion, mobility and design in its Experiments in Motion program.

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The partnership aims to bring together global thought leaders from the university, Audi and a network of professionals to test new theories of mobility and architecture. The collaboration kicked off with a dinner and workshop last week led by GSAPP dean Mark Wigley.

“Experiments in Motion is the beginning of a new dialogue on mobility and represents a radical new way of collaboration between a corporation and a research institution,” said Anja Kaehny, manager of lifestyle communication and corporate social responsibility of [Audi of America](#), Herndon, VA.

“At the same time, the program is designed to foster emerging talent and empower young, bright minds that will both shape the future and live in it,” she said. “Experiments in Motion is designed as an evolving series of experimental forms of research, debate and

communication centered in GSAPP.

“Audi hopes not only to learn from the world’s leading visionary design schools but also to require them to rethink the very professionals they are producing, inspiring a new form of architect equipped to take on a new type of city.”

Driving forward

Experiments in Motion represents the U.S. pilot of a series of locally-driven, interdisciplinary research and student programs with the world’s leading institutions and schools, according to Audi.

This allows the automaker to ensnare the greatest potential of academic intelligence and emerging talent in this field.

“Those research programs define a new phase of the brand’s larger Audi Urban Future Initiative, which seeks to shape the city of the future through new ways of communicating, never-before-seen concepts of living spaces, new versions of roadways and vehicles and infrastructure solutions for decades to come,” Ms. Kaehny said.

"The research program is rooted in dual objectives born of the belief that the urban challenges of the future can only be approached through collective interdisciplinary thought and design," she said.



Audi of America chief marketing office Mark Scott Keogh and GSAPP's Mark Wigley

The event last week demonstrated new theories and images of motion.

A custom-made table served as a centerpiece, which was specifically designed to spark conversation and mobility between those who attended.

Mr. Wigley also led an internal workshop with the experimental research of both Audi and Columbia. This discussion focused on how an interrogation of the concept of motion can destabilize conventional thinking in both architecture and the mobility industry, according to Audi.

The collaboration is meant to ignite dialogue by handing the torch to a curated group of experts including those of historians of science, filmmakers, artists and curators.



Guests at last week's dinner

Experiments in Motion is set to continue through 2012. In the spring, for example, a new set of student architecture design studios focused on New York will connect to the school's global network of urban research labs based on discussions from last week.

Then, the experiment will open the project to public participation in the summer of 2012.

Sustaining a reputation

Experiments in Motion is just a small part of the Audi Urban Future Initiative, which aims to establish a dialogue on the synergy of mobility, architecture and urban development by means of a view into the future, according to Audi.

In addition to Experiments in Motion, Audi assisted in building a scale model of New York in 2030 that was on display during the Festival of New Ideas in May ([see story](#)).

Audi is not the only automaker to get involved in urban planning and mobility.

For example, German automaker BMW has partnered with New York's Guggenheim Museum to create an interactive, educational event space that will travel to nine cities worldwide promoting urban sustainability ([see story](#)).

Audi is striving to be a forward-thinking brand. In fact, it plans to spend \$16 billion on new products and technologies over the next few years.

"As the Audi Urban Future Initiative as a whole represents a clear commitment of Audi to help shape a new mobility epoch, engaging the overall organization and reaching out to interdisciplinary partners and sources of knowledge," Ms. Kaehny said.

"For Experiments in Motion as pilot and New York City as a test case, the goal is to provide the forms of public participation required to potentially catalyze these initial small sparks into something with the social impact of architecture like the Highline or communication tools like foursquare," she said.

"And by pairing up local markets with other cutting-edge institutions, we ultimately hope to create many of those sparks in different countries and regions, to support megacities

learning from each other and, together with the other formats, create a rich ecosystem of global knowledge on mobility.”

Final Take

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