



"We wash cars with light": the Volvo Retail Experience in the Luleå showroom

A film interview with Erik Stigmar, Senior Manager Retail Experience Volvo, Göteborg

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The new retail design concept of the Swedish automotive brand Volvo is based on contrasts – soft and hard, warm and cold, tranquillity and dynamism as well as light and shadows. Accent light from ERCO Light Board spotlights brings out the best of the products and their features and creates the right atmosphere. We got together with Erik Stigmar, Senior Manager for Retail Experience at Volvo Cars from Göteborg, the location of the newly designed Volvo showroom at Luleå. As the responsible brand architect, he talks about the concept behind the "Volvo Retail Experience" and the importance of perception-orientated lighting for compellingly presenting merchandise.

'Volvo is a brand targeted to its users.'

—Erik Stigmar

When Erik Stigmar walks into the Volvo car dealership in the northern Swedish town of Luleå, he first strokes the shiny, meticulously positioned cars. As a trained architect, the Senior Manager for Retail Experience at Volvo Cars from Göteborg places great value on the precise implementation of his new design concept. As he states, "Volvo is a high quality brand, and that has to be reflected in the retail design."

The "Volvo Retail Experience", the new store concept behind the Swedish premium vehicle brand, is currently being rolled out worldwide in Volvo dealerships. The approach reflects Scandinavian inspired values of calm, clean lines, communicates the brand values and creates an environment for the customers with high levels of visual transparency. These factors are experienced in the atmosphere, the materials, colours and light.

An inherent part of the concept are two areas with completely different atmospheres and functions—a cosy, contemplative "living room" is located in the centre of the showroom, fitted out with organically designed seating by Hans Wegner and other Scandinavian icons of design. The waiting area provides a warm welcome with natural materials, timber, textiles, soft shapes and friendly colours and is intended to support relaxed conversations at an informal level. Here, there is coffee available, customers can make use of the free internet and there's also a children's play corner with Scandinavian toys.

The second area frames this living room zone and is reminiscent of a street—it's where the very latest Volvo models are dynamically displayed. Black, white and grey tones dominate, along with cool, hard materials. Brightly illuminated and lively, this product zone is the most important area of the showroom and can also be seen from the outside through the glazed facade.

A focus via contrasts and depth from wallwashing

The perception-orientated lighting concept is an inherent part of Volvo's new retail design. Despite the high ceilings, hard accent lighting serves to focus the visitors' attention on the vehicles whilst the circulation zones between the products recede into the background as darker areas. Using the sense of contrast as a stylistic device intensifies the brand experience for visitors in the Volvo dealerships, and the differences in brightness levels create a sense of tension and an impression of speed in the street zone. The crisp light beams also create an individual backdrop for each of the vehicles —"what we're actually doing is washing the cars with light," explained Erik Stigmar. "We also use additional highlights to display the striking contours, high quality of the materials and important details

such as door handles."

In addition to the rhythmic accent light some of the walls are washed uniformly with light, giving the spaces a wide, open impression in keeping with the Scandinavian mood and identity. ERCO wallwashers also define the lines of the gently curved paint samples and surfaces of the refined, natural-coloured upholstery patterns in the vertical plane. A touch screen recessed into the wall, used for configuring individual vehicle models, is illuminated completely without glare. "This lighting concept focusing on perception really achieves the ideal product presentation for us," confirmed Erik Stigmar. Volvo also places high importance on sustainability. "We also save quite a lot in energy overheads because we're only illuminating the target plane."

