

Grand Opera: New Audi Tradition exhibition “125 years of Horch”

- **Special exhibition from June 10 to December 31, 2024, at the Audi Forum Neckarsulm**
- **A variety of exhibits – from the first to the last Horch – bring the glamour of the luxury brand to life**

Neckarsulm, June 7, 2024 – It was 125 years ago that Audi founder August Horch started A. Horch & Cie., his very first company. Audi Tradition is celebrating the prestigious anniversary with a new special exhibition. Open from June 10 to December 31 at the Audi Forum Neckarsulm, it showcases premium exhibits framed by renowned opera houses – hence the title: “Grand Opera – 125 years of Horch”.

One of the most glamorous brands in German automotive history, Horch, was the market leader in luxury class during the 1930s. It was not a foregone conclusion that the founder, August Horch from Winningen an der Mosel, who originally trained as a blacksmith, would become a pioneer of automotive engineering. And yet, after graduating from the Mittweida Technical School in Saxony in 1890 with a degree in engineering, the curious and technically adept Horch quickly developed his vision of the perfect car. In his autobiography “Ich baute Autos” (English: I built cars), Horch looks back: “Whatever it took, I was determined to build only large, high-quality motorcars with first-class materials.” August Horch began his career under Carl Benz in Mannheim, where he eventually became production manager for motor vehicles during his three-year tenure. However, Horch felt he was lacking the freedom he needed to develop his ideas, so went into business on his own, 125 years ago. Together with draper Salli Herz, Horch started his first company, A. Horch & Cie., in Ehrenfeld, Cologne, on November 14, 1899.

Pioneer August Horch: The originator of many technical innovations

It was in the very first A. Horch & Cie. Workshop, set up in a former horse stall, that the young entrepreneurs initially began working on engines. Only one year after starting the company, August Horch unveiled his first automobile in December 1900, the Horch No. 1 with two cylinders and 4 to 5 PS. When the car failed to succeed commercially, Horch moved the company’s headquarters in search of investors, first to Reichenbach, Vogtland, and then to Zwickau in 1904. There, Horch transformed his company into a stock corporation. The first successes soon followed: A sufficient number of cars were sold, and Horch branched into motorsports, whereby the Horch brand quickly becomes famous. In 1909, however, Horch and the supervisory board disagreed over the company’s strategic direction, and Horch was forced to leave. He refused to give up however, and that very year he founded a new company near the headquarters of his old company. Legally, the company was no longer allowed to use his family name – and so “Audi” was born, which is the Latin translation of Horch.

Throughout his life, August Horch was an outstanding engineer whose pioneering spirit led to many innovations. Among the first patents he filed in the early 20th century was a break-spark rod for magneto ignition systems, which made the engine start faster. Horch introduced the cardan shaft drive and used light metal for casting crankcases and for transmission and differential housings; he also used chromium-nickel steel for gearwheels subject to high loads and was the first to control the fuel supply to the engine by means of suspended valves.

The difficult economic conditions of the early 1930s reuniting Audi and Horch: On the initiative of the State Bank of Saxony, the four vehicle manufacturers Audi, DKW, Horch, and Wanderer merged in 1932 to form Auto Union AG, the second-largest motor vehicle group in Germany at the time. The company logo of the new group showed four interlocking rings, representing the inseparable unity of the four founding companies. The brand names Audi, DKW, Horch, and Wanderer were kept. Each of the group's four brands was assigned a specific market segment: While DKW was active in the motorcycle and small cars segment, and Wanderer built and sold mid-size cars, Audi marketed cars in the deluxe mid-size segment, and Horch represented luxury cars at the top end of the market.

In the 1930s, the Horch brand was able to maintain its leading position in the luxury segment. Back then, everyone who was anyone drove a Horch, from author Thomas Mann and boxing legend Max Schmeling to actor Harry Piel, to name just a few prominent drivers. With the outbreak of the Second World War, the company was forced to begin arms production, with the Horch brand ceasing to exist after the war. But the Horch name has not disappeared completely: Since 2022, the Audi A8 L Horch has held a special place in the Audi model range. It is the top version of the Audi A8 luxury model for the Chinese market – and built in Neckarsulm. It is therefore fitting that Audi Tradition is bringing to Neckarsulm its celebration of the 125th anniversary of the eventful and unique history of the Horch brand.

Luxury cars in a prestigious setting – Grand Opera

The exhibition “Grand Opera – 125 years of Horch” from June 10 to December 31 at the Audi Forum Neckarsulm offers the public a one-of-a-kind collection of cars: In addition to the first Horch, replica of an original chassis, visitors can look forward to seeing the first eight-cylinder series production car sold in Germany, a Horch 8 Type 303. The Horch brand also made history with Germany's first twelve-cylinder high-volume production car, the Horch 670 built in 1931. This car will also be part of the special exhibition, along with a car that was long thought lost before it was rediscovered in Texas. Built by Auto Union GmbH in Ingolstadt in the post-war era, the last Horch, as the car is known, made its way to the United States before being rediscovered by Audi Tradition in 2008. Stefan Felber, curator of the Horch anniversary exhibition, commented: “As a fitting backdrop for these elegant and unique cars, the exhibition places them on the world's greatest stages. All Horch exhibits can be seen framed by the interiors of famous opera houses, photographed by the internationally renowned and award-winning photographer, Rafael Neff. This collaboration results in a wonderful symbiosis of automotive and architectural works of art – Grand Opera!”

Audi Forum Neckarsulm

Opening hours: Monday to Friday, 8 AM to 4 PM, free admission; tours are available through the exhibition. The Audi Forum in Neckarsulm is closed Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays, For more information, please visit [Visitor service | Audi Forum in Neckarsulm](#).

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The Audi logo consisting of the four rings symbolizes the Audi, DKW, Horch, and Wanderer brands, which were merged into Auto Union in 1932. Auto Union and NSU merged in 1969 and played a major role in shaping the development of the automobile. Finally, in 1985, Audi NSU Auto Union AG became AUDI AG. Since 1998, Audi Tradition/Auto Union GmbH, together with NSU GmbH, has been maintaining and presenting Audi's extensive and wide-ranging history. The Audi museum mobile at the Audi Forum Ingolstadt is open daily from Monday to Friday between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. and from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Saturdays, Sundays, and public holidays. The August Horch Museum Zwickau is open Tuesday through Sunday from 9:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. AUDI AG and the city of Zwickau each hold a 50 percent stake in August Horch Museum Zwickau gGmbH. www.audi.de/tradition

Audi Tradition supports the work of Audi Club International e.V. (ACI). The umbrella organization officially recognized by AUDI AG represents all of the Audi brand clubs as well as the clubs of the predecessor brands of today's AUDI AG. For more information, please visit www.audi-club-international.de

The Audi Group is one of the most successful manufacturers of automobiles and motorcycles in the premium and luxury segment. The brands Audi, Bentley, Lamborghini, and Ducati produce at 21 locations in 12 countries. Audi and its partners are present in more than 100 markets worldwide.

In 2023, the Audi Group delivered 1.9 million Audi vehicles, 13,560 Bentley vehicles, 10,112 Lamborghini vehicles, and 58,224 Ducati motorcycles to customers. In the 2023 fiscal year, Audi Group achieved a total revenue of €69.9 billion and an operating profit of €6.3 billion. Worldwide, an annual average of more than 87,000 people worked for the Audi Group in 2023, more than 53,000 of them at AUDI AG in Germany. With its attractive brands and numerous new models, the group is systematically pursuing its path toward becoming a provider of sustainable, fully networked premium mobility.
