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The Future in 3D

Talk about planning ahead. In January 2005, the participants in a top-secret initiative at Volkswagen of America Inc. (VW) — dubbed the Moonraker Project — began to research what the consumers of the future, circa 2015-2020, will seek in their lives, their environments, and, of course, their vehicles.

In late 2005, this ad hoc task force of trend scouts revealed its findings. But not in the usual PowerPoint-kind of way. Instead, the Moonraker Project showcased its key predictions with a series of four life-sized, three-dimensional Life Settings depicting futuristic consumer lifestyle themes and the new GX3, a VW concept car.

The four Life Settings included a natural biosphere meant to represent environmentally aware consumers of the future; a welcoming safe haven entirely enveloped in a red membrane, representing calm and relaxation; a family-focused utilitarian workspace; and an adaptive-technology-driven environment.

Before the installations were unveiled to the public, VW held a series of events for internal staff and its numerous partners that had contributed time, technology, and materials to the research and the sets. The VW staff and partners saw the environments for the first time and gleaned their own insights into what consumers of the future will want at home and at work.

Another benefit of the project and the unveiling events, says Stefan Beese, a production designer at Los Angeles-based architecture firm Graft LLC, which designed the sets, is that the project opened the door for future collaboration with atypical partners, including vendors such as sneaker company Royal Elastics Inc., which contributed sneaker-customization materials to the project, and Holopro-Germany, which pitched in a holographic projection screen.

