How the Calty Design Research Team Brings “Tacoma-ness” to Life in the All-New 2024 Toyota Tacoma

August 29, 2023

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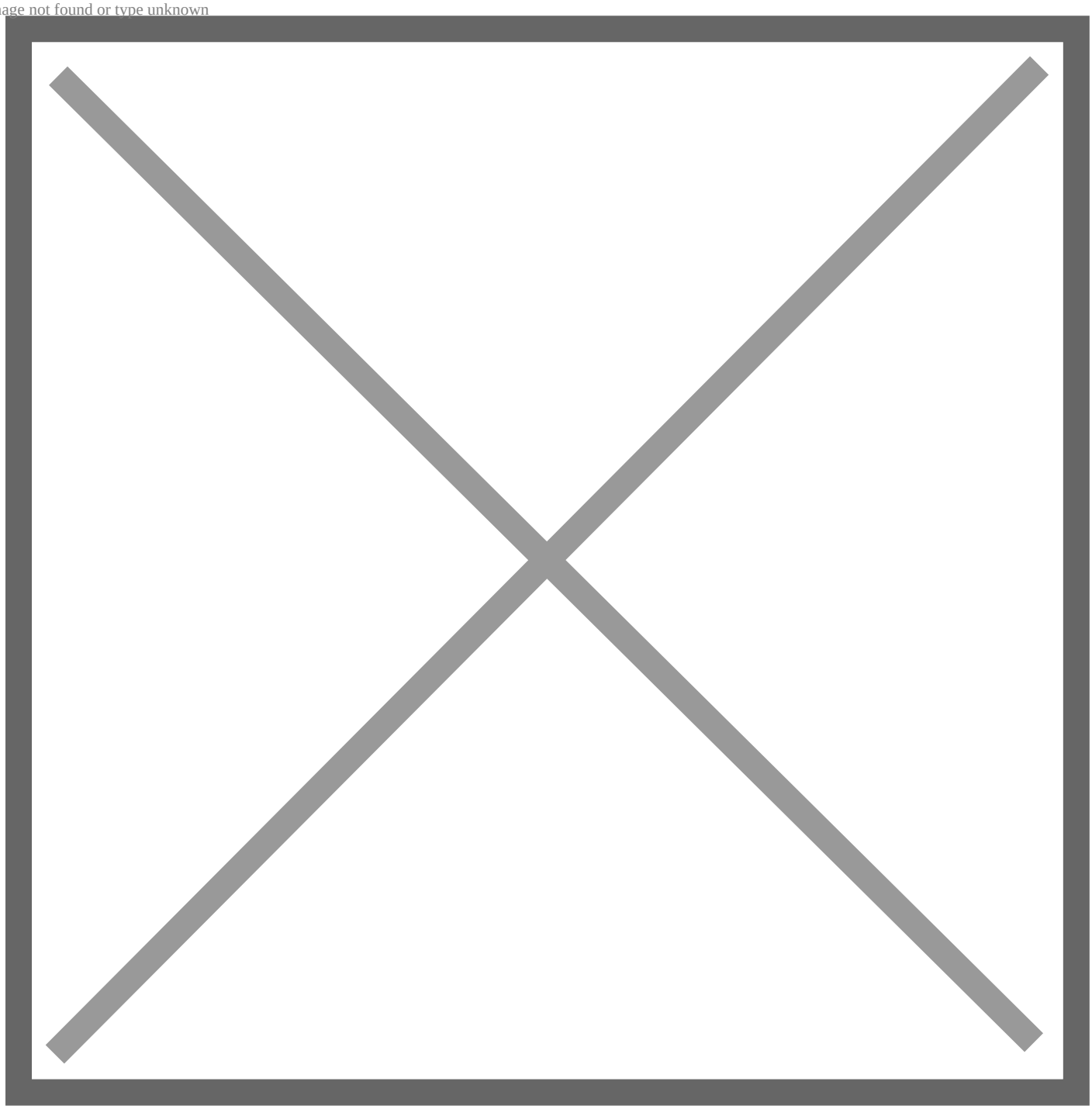


For 50 years, Toyota's Calty Design Research studio has provided innovative vehicle designs for the Toyota and Lexus brands. According to Adam Rabinowitz, Calty's exterior chief designer of the all-new 2024 Tacoma, the next-generation truck is another great product designed by the team.

"Usually, in the push and pull between design and engineering, there are compromises," Rabinowitz says. "The standard definition of compromise is that no one comes away happy. But with this Tacoma, we are all very happy with the end result."

Calty Design Research is Toyota's North American-based design studio. Originally established in California in 1973, Toyota opened another location in Michigan in 2003. Today, Calty has over 100 employees across the two studios, with the California studio focusing on future innovation and creativity, and the Ann Arbor location focused on production design development for North America.

"As a chief exterior designer, my purpose is to support a fantastic team so we produce a great product," he says. "A key part of that is to put in place enough guardrails to make sure everyone is going down the same road. Yet at the same time, you need to give everyone the flexibility they need to create the best product possible."

In his nearly 14 years with Calty in Ann Arbor, Rabinowitz is a part of a team that has worked on the brand's "four brothers": Tundra, Tacoma, 4Runner and Sequoia, as well as other iconic vehicles. The new truck has a clear family resemblance, sharing design cues with its "brothers," while still being uniquely Tacoma.

"There is a pressure to live up to the Tacoma's tremendous history," he says. "We're talking about the number one seller in the segment for seemingly forever. Those are some big shoes to fill. It has definitely been a stressful journey to get here, but we believe we have hit a home run."

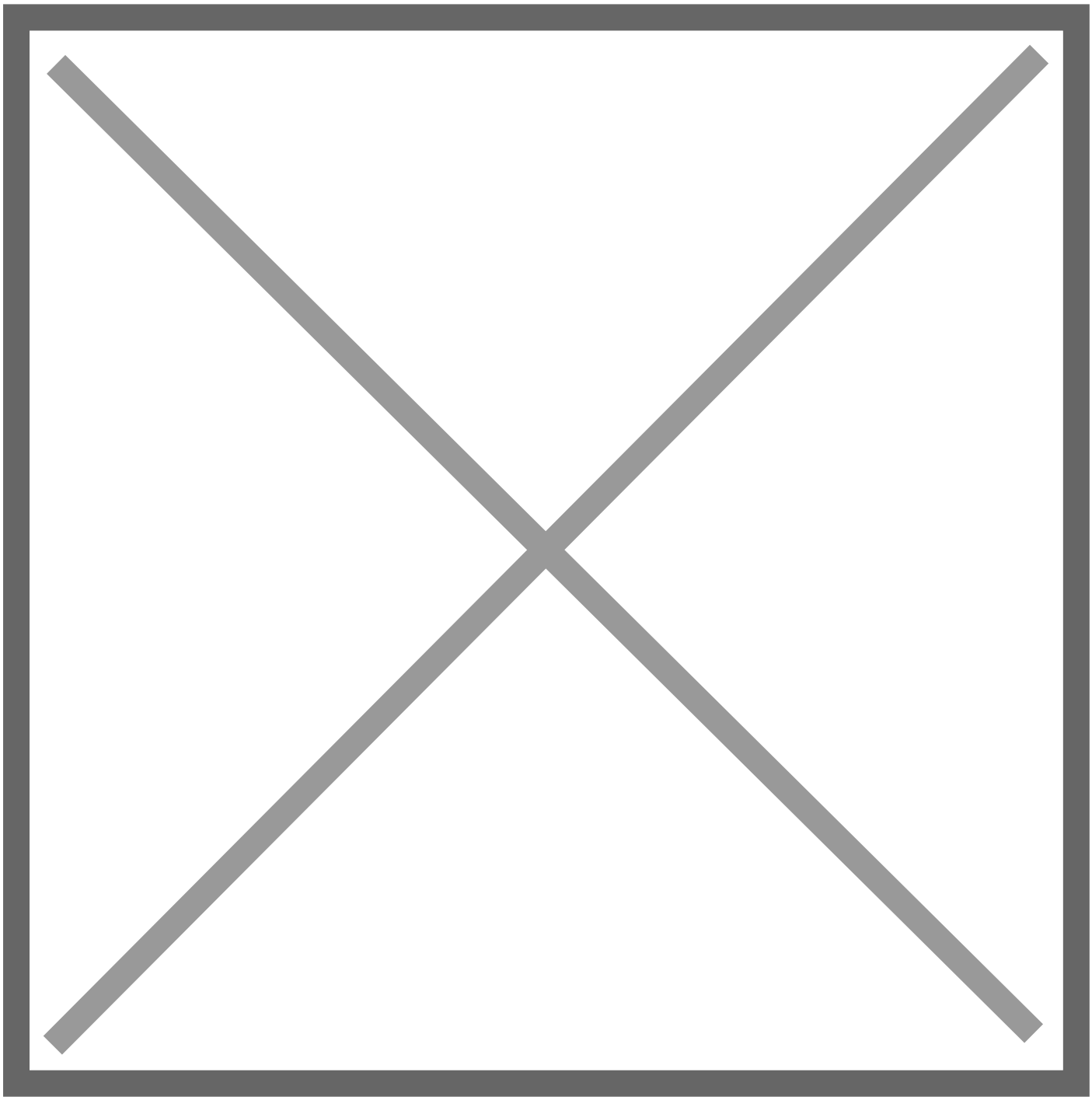
Bringing Design to Life

Inspired by Baja trucks that race in the desert, the 2024 Tacoma has an authentic off-road feel, featuring an ultra-rugged stance, high lift, and big tires.

"I look at this Tacoma and I think, 'We got everything.' So, I'm anticipating a lot of positive feedback," Rabinowitz added.

Customers were at the forefront of the overall design of the 2024 iteration. The Calty team knew Tacoma drivers typically modify their vehicles, so accessories played a big role in the design process. Rabinowitz says it was extremely important that the truck was "accessory-ready," so the team co-developed many of the Genuine Toyota accessories for drivers to make the trucks their own.

"Seeing someone interact with what you have dedicated years to develop is a really great feeling," he says.



The Importance of Collaboration

Throughout the development process, Rabinowitz says it was important for his designers at Calty to work closely with every team that touched the all-new Tacoma, including the entire CAD [computer-aided design] staff, clay modelers, and the research and development engineers.

“Collaboration was critical,” he says. “What engineering came up with, and what we ran with, was the concept of a ‘badass adventure machine.’ When we first heard that, we said, ‘Well, we can work with that!’ And we did.”

With a project of this complexity, Rabinowitz says that he felt very supported by the chief engineer, Sheldon Brown, because there was mutual respect between the two teams.

“Sheldon often said, ‘Styling sells our trucks.’ And we looked at his group and said, ‘Well, capability is what makes our trucks great.’ It really was a case where everyone got what they wanted,” Rabinowitz says. “When I look at this Tacoma, I see a ton of successful battles where both teams won.”