



# Making it Beautiful, Making it Work: Design Insights from the Lexus LC Convertible's Chief Engineer and Chief Designer

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What does it take to make “the world’s most beautiful convertible?” For the team behind the new Lexus LC Convertible, achieving that dream called for much more than simply swapping the LC Coupe’s fixed roof with a soft-top. There are clearly strong family ties between the two amazing Lexus LC models, but it’s actually the details under the skin that count the most, according to Chief Designer Tadao Mori and Chief Engineer Yasushi Muto, as they provide insights into the Lexus LC Convertible design process.

“Our biggest challenge was always how to keep the trunk line low, while still allowing room for load space and stowing the roof,” says Mori. “With other car makers, you’ll often see a high rear line, but we wanted to make this the most beautiful convertible, keeping the best lines whether the roof is up or down. We’re really proud of how we have kept the top of the rear wings so low, keeping the feeling of a low centre of gravity.”

Achieving this was no simple task. It meant the roof had to be folded into what seemed an impossibly small space behind the rear seats.

“To make this possible, every bend in the roof had to be a different size, so we had to engineer a complex and unique mechanism,” Muto explains. It’s the first soft-top car that Lexus has made, and the team worked in close collaboration with specialist supplier Magna in Austria to achieve the perfect results.

In addition to the smart, compact roof design, Lexus’s famed quality is also evident in the way the LC Convertible’s roof opens and closes. “When you operate the roof, you’ll notice there is a pause at the beginning and end of the sequence, with faster movement in between,” says Muto. “This is intentional, it’s a way of communicating elegance in moving parts that has been part of the Lexus DNA right from the start with the first-generation LS saloon.”

There is no value in a car that looks great but is impossible to live with, so beauty had to be balanced with practicality. “The balance itself isn’t difficult to understand – we call it functional beauty – but achieving it was very difficult,” says Muto. “For example, we had to add bracing to keep the body rigid, but also needed to keep space to stow the roof. So we developed a new rear suspension brace made of aluminium that gives good rigidity but is also compact. It’s design also helped us keep the car’s beautiful silhouette.”

Both Mori and Muto profess a love of top-down driving (Mori drove a classic MG sports car for more than a decade) and they enthuse about the special sense of freedom it gives and a connection with the natural world around you. Asked about his favourite aspect of the new car, Muto responds: "When I'm on a winding road and I press the accelerator or the brake so the car downshifts, I love the sound of the engine – it's direct and exciting and unique to a naturally aspirated V8. I also love the view from the rear of the car. You can see just how the interior design merges with the exterior to make a very beautiful thing."

For Mori the joy is in the details: "For example, the button to open and close the roof is hidden in a palm rest like a little gem. It's not on show, it's a special control that nobody else can see. The seats, too, are sports-level quality, covered in a leather with a special perforation that's not just functional, but also creates a beautiful pattern and high-quality feel."

And as to whether there will be more Lexus convertibles in the future? "If you want one, just tell us!" says Muto.

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