

MOMENTS

FEATURING

Mauro Ravizza Krieger
Stephen Hawking
Usain Bolt
Marcel Wanders
Giuseppe Santoni

Making
History

SHIFTING PERSPECTIVES

Like many young men, Christian von Koenigsegg dreamed of creating his perfect supercar. The difference is, he actually did it – at just 22 years old. Now the mastermind behind the most powerful performance hybrid in production car history, it's safe to say he's living his dream.

Words by Laura Brown



The Regera replaces the traditional gearbox with a revolutionary new powertrain system



Far away from car racetracks, deep in the rugged terrain of the Scandinavian countryside, Christian von Koenigsegg, owner of his eponymous car brand, built his empire. Considering the extraordinary remoteness of the setting, the location of the factory is, in fact, surprisingly fitting for a forward-thinking car manufacturer. The steel barracks of the factory once hosted fighter planes from the Swedish Air Force 'Ghost Squadron' – the flying ghost insignia on each Koenigsegg manufactured in the headquarters is a small reminder – and the airstrip is a perfect space for high-powered test-drives. No Koenigsegg leaves the factory without personal and written approval from the man himself. This is where you buy a high-performance, high-design car; signed, sealed, and delivered – although the latter is very much optional, as many buyers prefer to drive their new purchases home themselves. In fact, special requests are something that Koenigsegg has become rather accustomed to since he started the company in 1994, with every single one of his cars handcrafted and specified to accommodate every client's personal whim and fancy; sometimes the customer even thinks of something Koenigsegg hasn't. "Of course, we attract a certain type of customer, one who is interested in performance cars and technology," he confirms. "Their input and ideas can be valuable." While restrictions and rules of homologated cars can limit the design process for some of the more unique requests Koenigsegg receives, special features like 24-karat gold-plated interiors, diamond-encrusted fittings and a raft of custom-made detailing (cigar holder instead of a cup holder, and fine ostrich leather upholstery, for example) are not unusual in Koenigsegg's crazy world where seemingly nothing is impossible. Undoubtedly a mastermind of technology, Koenigsegg's



ethos is so pure and simple, it almost seems obvious: every detail of every Koenigsegg is optimised to its purest form, without losing logic, performance nor function. "Established car brands are innovation shy," Koenigsegg says of his mainstream competition. "It is risky, costs money and the market is not asking for it. For us, it's our competitive advantage to create something that doesn't exist – it is the reason to buy Koenigsegg." Koenigsegg doesn't actually own one of his brand's cars – possibly for a person who continuously innovates, he has yet to envision his ideal version of the ultimate driving machine. His free time is spent just off the coast in southern Sweden on his boat with his wife and two sons – "relaxing in a compact way," as he describes it. Work is always present. His office is only a few steps away from the designers' desks and the engineering space, leaving little time or space to really get away from it all. "This is our lifestyle," he says,

The Agera RS is also being made alongside the Regera - the first time the factory has produced two models at the same time



the Regera drives in a single gear that uses electric power and an internal combustion engine working in concert. And Direct Drive is far from the only innovation to come out of the Koenigsegg factory. Their inspirations come from breaking the mould – often literally. Koenigsegg fabricates its own brake calipers, knowing they can do it better. The extremely powerful yet efficient engine used for the Regera (capable of pushing out 1,500bhp, for those curious) has its birthplace in the same factory as the hollow carbon fibre wheels, which are left unpainted to keep them as light as possible. “If you think about it, it is very naked, though inside the car it’s still a very comfortable place to be,” says Koenigsegg of his latest creation. What you see is very much what you get. Of course, it takes time to build these extreme cars – especially when they are customised to the owner’s wishes. At the moment, for the first time ever, two models – the Regera and the Agera RS – are being made in the factory simultaneously, with the majority of the new cars destined for the US, Europe and the Middle East. While Koenigsegg

admits that he would consider mass production if demand were to increase drastically, for machines like these, the kind of precision required is achievable only with manual craftsmanship. “We are harvesting the fruits of technologies we have created step by step,” says Koenigsegg. “We learn as we apply and we are continuously maturing.” While Koenigsegg won’t be drawn on the nature of his next creation, he does concede that he already has a name in mind – not that he will share it. Instead, he’s setting his sights a little further ahead when asked about what the future may hold for the company: “The flying car!” he replies without a second thought. For transportation, daily public or personal needs, Koenigsegg believes autonomous flying drone pods will be the future. “I think pods can be propeller based or even function with jet engines. We can re-use our technological innovations to make other cars, or even other products, more useful in their field. Why drive when you can fly somewhere and do other things in the meantime?” Maybe the Koenigsegg office’s former Swedish Air Force base location isn’t such a coincidence after all...



chassis. When you find things that make drastic differences in functions, you always force yourself to think further, and by continuously doing so, you get a different type of car – lighter, better functioning, even multifunctional.” It’s often the case with geniuses of design that their abilities begin to shine through from a very early age, and this was certainly true for Koenigsegg. “As far as I can remember, I was always a curious child,” he says. “I was always taking stuff apart – especially electrical items.” While an interest in cars has always been there, Koenigsegg started out as a young entrepreneur running a successful import/export business. He also came up with ideas for a range of items – one of his early designs bears an uncanny resemblance to what we all now know as the iPod. However, his career really got going in 1994, when a then 22-year-old Christian von Koenigsegg decided to follow his dream of building the world’s greatest supercar. Built using a loan from his father, Koenigsegg’s first prototype had to be a world-beater to justify its existence, and sure enough, the car was such a hit that it sold for just short of AED 1.5 million half an hour before its unveiling at the Paris Motor Show in 2000 – two years before the actual production and without being seen by the buyer. Then, in 2002, just eight years after the company was launched, Guinness World Records certified the engine in the Koenigsegg CC8S as being the most powerful engine in a series produced car, in the world. Since the company’s spectacular debut, several new models and variants have passed through the production line, each with new technology under its flying ghost insignia. The latest model, the Regera, represents a complete overhaul in the way cars traditionally work, doing away entirely with the gearbox and replacing it with a revolutionary powertrain battery system Koenigsegg calls Direct Drive. In essence,

looking over his empire. “We spend most of our time doing this. It’s our way of life. Call it a hobby – something I always wanted to do – it is my dream and I don’t see my day at the factory as work.” Since the birth of the company, every single car that has rolled out of the factory doors has helped Koenigsegg define exactly what a modern supercar should be. As well as a painstaking attention to detail when it comes to the materials and technology, he and his design team always ensure the car has the aesthetic it deserves. “We are the only car – let alone the only extreme, race-like road car – in the world that allows the roof to be removed and stored in the car, and when the roof is on, the car doesn’t give away it being a convertible or roadster,” Koenigsegg says proudly. “I try to avoid compromise when building a car. I always try to find more than one function for each part – the chassis has integrated the fuel tank and the radiator is also part of the

