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# This isn't your father's old Mack

The German manufacturer of the aerodynamic rig says it could be the future design of long-haul trucks

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BY **ERINN CONNOR**   
THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

It was compared to a submarine, a bullet train and even a helicopter. Throughout the morning, workers at the American Electric Power transmission training facility in Pataskala trickled out of the building, taking pictures of it with their cell phones.

The center of attention yesterday was a truck, but not the kind of tractor-trailers you see around here. This one is from Germany, its front windshield is round, with three wipers that make it resemble the face of a clock. The cab sits 3 feet higher than a standard semi, with its engine jutting out in front of it.

The rig was in Pataskala yesterday as part of a 49-city tour sponsored by Germany-based Reinhausen Manufacturing. Its unusual appearance makes it one of the most aerodynamic and fuel-efficient trucks in the world, the company says, getting 8.7 miles per gallon. Trucks in the U.S. typically get a little over 4.5 mpg.



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What could pass as the viewport of an underwater submersible is the three-wiper windshield of the new-style rig, designed by Luigi Colani and built in Germany. The truck was at the AEP training facility in Pataskala yesterday. Colani uses rounded shapes in most of his designs.



"We're here to show what is possible," said Armin Bauer, truck and tour manager for MM Promotion, which built the truck. Bauer, also from Germany, is driving the truck throughout the East Coast and Midwest tour.

It was designed by Luigi Colani, a Berlin-born designer who has been working with automobiles since the 1950s. His other projects include headphones, pianos and sports cars.

Currently, seven other hand-crafted Colani trucks are on tour around the world.

The company hopes to start a subsidiary and begin production in the United States soon. Talks with a truck manufacturer are ongoing, Bauer said, declining to give specifics.

Despite its outward appearance, the mechanicals are standard, Bauer said, and repairs could be handled in the U.S. without a problem.

Currently, each truck takes as long as a year to manufacture and costs 300,000 euros, or a little under \$425,000.

That compares with \$110,000 to \$130,000 for the average cab made by Navistar, based in Warrenville, Ill., said Roy Wiley, a Navistar spokesman. Wiley also said that its ProStar truck is noted for its fuel efficiency; it gets about 7 to 8 mpg.

But the Colani truck's odd shape and German license plates have turned others on the highway -- even the police -- into paparazzi.

Bauer said he's seen other truck drivers hang out of their windows in the pouring rain to take pictures. He's come out of restaurants to see TV stations setting up for a broadcast, knowing



Jon Cronin, who works for AEP transmission region operations, checks out the truck, which gets about 8.7 miles to the gallon, about twice that of U.S. trucks.

nothing about the truck except that it looks funny. He was held up for nine hours in Missouri because the authorities thought it was illegal for the truck to be in the United States. He's been pulled over by police officers who just want to take pictures.

"It's part of the job," Bauer said. "I don't care. If a picture is the only thing they're asking for, that's OK."

The truck has a German license plate, and obtained a temporary permit from the U.S. Department of Transportation to tour the country. It took 16 days by ship for the truck to get overseas.

Behind the cab, a trailer displays other Reinhausen products like on-load tap changers and transformer components used to regulate voltage that goes out to homes and businesses, so there's not too much or too little. Employees at AEP received training in using the products yesterday -- after getting a good look at the outside of the Colani truck.

Tim Walker, technical skills training manager at AEP, said after the truck arrived last night, an older couple followed it to the AEP facility to get a closer look.

"The wife was from Germany and saw the flag on the side," Walker said. "It's attracted a lot of attention, that's for sure."

The tour will continue through the Midwest until the end of the month. Another tour is being planned for the West Coast sometime next year.

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