

Media Information

February 8, 2021

**“Responsibility and reliability are of the greatest value.”**

The BMW Group celebrates 50 years of global cultural engagement.

**Munich.** Red. Yellow. Blue. Everything started with three large-scale paintings by Gerhard Richter that BMW commissioned from the artist in 1971. Today, BMW is committed to cultural engagement around the world and takes its social responsibility seriously as a corporate citizen. Over a hundred long-term cultural initiatives of the BMW Group in the fields of **modern and contemporary art, classical music, jazz** and **sound** as well as in **architecture** and **design** have been well established throughout the decades.

**Ilka Horstmeier, member of the Board of Management of BMW AG, Director of Human Resources and Labour Relations:** “During times of rapid change, responsibility and reliability are of the greatest value. As is culture. For half a century now, we have firmly established our cultural commitment around the world as long-term partners. At the BMW Group, we believe that our arts cooperations are an integral part of our social sustainability – in the past, present and future. It is with utmost joy that the BMW Group can look back on 50 years of incomparable partnerships based on mutual appreciation which connect us to the world’s most renowned cultural institutions and artists.”

From the Guggenheim Museum to Tate Modern, from the Centre Pompidou to the Neue Nationalgalerie. From the opera house Staatsoper Unter den Linden and Milan’s La Scala to Moscow’s Bolshoi Theatre. From Art Basel to Frieze and the Kochi-Muziris Biennale.

**Corporate citizenship** and **intercultural dialogue** are at the core of a successful business enterprise such as the BMW Group. Unconditional **creative freedom** and **sustainable** and **long-term** cooperations are essential for true partnerships in the cultural realm. Shared expertise, network and knowledge enable an **interaction** instead of the monetary transaction that defines mere sponsorship.

**1971 – Gerhard Richter receives commission of three large-scale paintings**

The BMW Group laid the foundation of its cultural commitment with the commissioning of three large-scale works by German artist Gerhard Richter. In 1971, he was asked by Eberhard von Kuenheim, then chairman of the board at BMW AG, to create three paintings for the foyer of the newly built headquarters in Munich. Ever since the opening of the iconic four-cylinder building by architect Karl Schwanzer in 1973, the three commissioned works “Rot”, “Gelb” and “Blau” have been on display in its entrance hall.

**1973/74 – Plant Dingolfing and exhibitions at BMW Group**

From its inception, the company’s cultural commitment was driven by a focus on its employees. In the early 1970s, BMW opened its plant in Dingolfing. Without autobahn access at that time, Dingolfing quickly emerged as an attractive area for skilled staff, as the BMW Group worked hand in hand with cultural institutions to create access to the local art and culture scene. At about the same time, a new gallery exhibiting the art of employees opened up on the premises of the BMW Group in the north of Munich. In addition, an exhibition space was created to present shows such as “The Automobile in Contemporary Art”, which led to cooperations with institutions such as Haus der Kunst and the Pinakotheken, Munich’s renowned museums of fine art.

**1975 – The birth of BMW Art Cars**

Initiated by French race car driver and art aficionado Hervé Poulain and conceived in collaboration with the founder of BMW Motorsport Jochen Neerpasch, the first BMW Art Car was commissioned when both asked Alexander Calder to design Poulain's BMW race car in 1975. The idea resulted in a painted BMW 3.0 CSL that was raced at the 24 Hours of Le Mans, where, thanks to its striking exterior, it became an instant favorite with the public. Since then, 19 artists from around the world have created BMW Art Cars on the basis of contemporary BMW race cars and automobiles, including Roy Lichtenstein (1977, BMW 320i), Andy Warhol (1979, BMW M1), Robert Rauschenberg (1986, BMW 635 CSi), Esther Mahlangu (1991, BMW 525i), David Hockney (1995, BMW 850 CSi), Jenny Holzer (1999, BMW V12 LMR), Jeff Koons (2010, BMW M3GT2), Ólafur Eliásson (2007, BMW H2R), John Baldessari (2016, BMW M6 GTLM) and Cao Fei (2017, BMW M6 GT3). These "rolling sculptures" are a fascinating representation at the crossroads of motorsports and design, of art as well as technology.

**1979 – One of Germany's first cultural public-private partnerships**

Together with the city of Munich, the BMW Group founded Spielmotor München e.V., one of Germany's oldest public-private partnerships. The collaboration aims to establish and further develop the city as a regional and international hub of culture. Gradually, Spielmotor expanded its program to include the Münchener Biennale for new music-theatre in 1988, the experimental theatre festival SPIELART in 1995 and the festival of contemporary dance DANCE in 1998.

**Highlights and digitalization**

Over the course of the past five decades, the cultural commitment of the BMW Group has grown far beyond the design of BMW Art Cars by renowned artists. It has expanded its portfolio to include renowned musicians such as Daniel Barenboim and Anna Netrebko, who enchanted tens of thousands of listeners at Berlin's Bebelplatz, as well as young artists such as Samson Young and Leelee Chan, who left their artist's studios behind to make the entire world their source of inspiration. Together with other partners, the BMW Group developed its own range of initiatives including the BMW Guggenheim Lab, BMW Tate Live, BMW Open Work by Frieze, the BMW Welt Jazz Award, the BMW Art Guide by Independent Collectors, the BMW Art Journey and the free concert series Opera for all in Berlin, Munich, Moscow and London. With the Rolls-Royce Arts Programme and various design cooperations of MINI, all brands of the BMW Group are active agents in the cultural sector. In addition, the BMW Group supports leading museums, art fairs, orchestras, jazz festivals and opera houses around the world. With BMW OPERA NEXT, its digital partnership with Staatsoper Unter den Linden since 2019, the BMW Group has used the opportunities presented by digitalization to open up the world of opera to younger audiences and to make high culture more accessible. Initiatives such as the Art/Tech Grant by Moscow's Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, hundreds of choreographed drones flying across the night sky over the Gulf of Mexico in collaboration with Studio Drift, the strategic cooperations with Artsy and Acute Art or Cao Fei, who presented her BMW Art Car via App and AR in virtual space, illustrate how the BMW Group as a technology company engages with the digital transformation and will continue to do so with its cultural commitment in the future.

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**About BMW Group Cultural Engagement**

For 50 years, the BMW Group has initiated and engaged in over 100 cultural cooperations worldwide. The company places the main focus of its long-term commitment on contemporary and modern art, classical music and jazz as well as architecture and design. In 1972, three large-scale paintings were created by the artist Gerhard Richter specifically for the foyer of the BMW Group's Munich headquarters. Since then, artists such as Andy Warhol, Jeff Koons, Daniel Barenboim, Jonas Kaufmann and architect Zaha Hadid have co-operated with BMW. In 2016 and 2017, female artist Cao Fei from China and American John Baldessari created the next two vehicles for the BMW Art Car Collection. For years, the BMW Group and its partners have been initiating and establishing their own formats such as BMW Tate Live, BMW Welt Jazz Award, BMW Open Work, the BMW Art Journey and the Opera for all concerts in Berlin, Munich, Moscow and London. The company also partners with leading museums, art fairs and orchestras as well as jazz festivals and opera houses around the world. With BMW OPERA NEXT, the new partnership with the Staatsoper Unter den Linden, the opportunities presented by digitalisation are used to open up new ways of accessing the world of opera for young audiences. As part of its art programme Muse, Rolls-Royce partners for the initiative The Dream Commission with two internationally esteemed art institutions. Together with Fondation Beyeler and Serpentine Galleries, emerging and established artists are invited to submit a moving-image work that delivers an immersive sensory experience. The artists are nominated and chosen by renowned personalities of the art world like Daniel Birnbaum, Suhanya Raffel, and Theodora Vischer. The BMW Group takes absolute creative freedom in all its cultural activities for granted – as this initiative is as essential for producing groundbreaking artistic work as it is for major innovations in a successful business.

Further information: [www.bmwgroup.com/culture](http://www.bmwgroup.com/culture) and [www.bmwgroup.com/culture/overview](http://www.bmwgroup.com/culture/overview)

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**The BMW Group**

With its four brands BMW, MINI, Rolls-Royce and BMW Motorrad, the BMW Group is the world's leading premium manufacturer of automobiles and motorcycles and also provides premium financial and mobility services. The BMW Group production network comprises 31 production and assembly facilities in 15 countries; the company has a global sales network in more than 140 countries.

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In 2019, the BMW Group sold over 2.5 million passenger vehicles and more than 175,000 motorcycles worldwide. The profit before tax in the financial year 2019 was € 7.118 billion on revenues amounting to € 104.210 billion. As of 31 December 2019, the BMW Group had a workforce of 126,016 employees.

The success of the BMW Group has always been based on long-term thinking and responsible action. The company has therefore established ecological and social sustainability throughout the value chain, comprehensive product responsibility and a clear commitment to conserving resources as an integral part of its strategy.

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