



Press release  
October 2012

## **Change as a constant. A portrait of Karim Habib.**



Karim Habib has been in charge of BMW Design since June 2012. The Lebanon-born Canadian heads a team of designers and developers working to constantly enhance and redevelop the designs of current and future BMW models. A sophisticated designer who grew up in five countries with vastly different cultures, he is committed to the idea of evolving design and is always striving to expand his range of skills. To this end, he doesn't merely apply himself to his immediate field; he also appreciates the more technical aspects of his work. The art of continuous self-improvement is one he developed early on as a member of the Canadian U-20 national fencing team and has put to use in various roles throughout his career. Apart from a short absence of two years, he has been part of the BMW Design team since 1998.

### **A passion for design.**

The desire to give expression to his own aesthetic ideas came early to Karim Habib. Even as a child, he revealed his fondness for automobiles, enjoying nothing more than sketching cars and even creating his own marque, complete with a range of different models.

Karim Habib studied mechanical engineering at McGill University in Montreal and then focused on what would become his true passion – automotive design. He did postgraduate study at one of the most prestigious talent

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hotbeds for the automobile industry, the Art Center College of Design in Switzerland, also spending time at its USA branch. While working on a project there supervised by a tutor from the BMW Group, the budding designer had the opportunity to see at first hand the independent mentality of BMW Design. He was encouraged to question the design process itself and impressed his mentors with his daring and innovative work. Habib was won over by the fact that such a major car manufacturer was prepared to challenge and redefine accepted ways of thinking. Consequently, after finishing his studies, he started working for BMW's Interior Design team, followed by spells in the Exterior Design and Advanced Design departments.

### **Design as a way of shaping your world.**

For Karim Habib, consciously designing things is a means of expressing the desire to change the world according to his own values. This implies a close examination of both the product's environment and each of its aspects, since these factors in turn have a decisive influence on the way he approaches his own environment. A pivotal moment in his career was the development of the BMW Concept CS show car, which was masterminded by him and unveiled in 2007. For this concept study of a four-door Gran Turismo, the convex/concave bodywork, so-called flame surfacing, was toned down – a new departure that influenced subsequent models of the BMW fleet.

Questioning fundamental factors continues to play an important role in successful development for the Canadian. He believes the evolution of design styles to be indispensable for long-term success, since only those who constantly challenge and reinvent themselves can survive and keep on improving. In order to ensure this happens, in his capacity as head of BMW Design he aims to implement a system that actively supports creative freedom. Moreover, he places great value on involving everybody engaged in the design process, from the actual designers to the engineers. He sees a comprehensive understanding of all employees' roles as one of the keystones of successful design results and can call on the technical expertise from his mechanical engineering studies to help him in this.



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## **On the personal side.**

Karim Habib favours a pared-down design style. He is an admirer of the work of Ronan and Erwan Bouroullec and Patricia Urquiola, as well as the architectural designs of Rem Koolhaas, Herzog & DeMeuron and Zaha Hadid. He is particularly fascinated by their intellectual involvement with their own work. The minimalism of Mark Rothko's works is also a source of inspiration for him.

He and his partner live in Munich with their daughter.

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### **The BMW Group**

The BMW Group is one of the most successful manufacturers of automobiles and motorcycles in the world with its BMW, MINI, Husqvarna Motorcycles and Rolls-Royce brands. As a global company, the BMW Group operates 29 production and assembly facilities in 14 countries and has a global sales network in more than 140 countries.

In 2011, the BMW Group sold about 1.67 million cars and more than 113,000 motorcycles worldwide. The profit before tax for the financial year 2011 was euro 7.38 billion on revenues amounting to euro 68.82 billion. At 31 December 2011, the BMW Group had a workforce of approximately 100,000 employees.

The success of the BMW Group has always been built 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. As a result of its efforts, the BMW Group has been ranked industry leader in the Dow Jones Sustainability Indexes for the last eight years.

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