

Media information

01 March 2024

**Art meets innovation: The BMW i5 Flow NOSTOKANA.**

+++ Tribute to BMW Art Car by Esther Mahlangu +++ World premiere at Frieze Los Angeles +++ Colour-change technology reinterprets distinctive ornamentation +++ Complex colours and patterns showcase future potential for customised vehicles +++

**Munich/Los Angeles.** The BMW Group presents a fusion of art and innovation at the Frieze Los Angeles art fair in the form of the BMW i5 Flow NOSTOKANA. The one-of-a-kind vehicle combines colour-change technology developed by BMW with the artistic language of South African artist Esther Mahlangu. The designer piece, with sections of attached film that can be electronically animated, embodies the latest development in colour-change technology for vehicle surfaces in cooperation with E Ink. The BMW i5 Flow NOSTOKANA celebrates its world premiere at the fair opening on 29 February. The contemporary tribute recalls the BMW Art Car designed by Mahlangu in 1991. "The BMW i5 Flow NOSTOKANA honours the history of the BMW brand and continues the story of our global cultural engagement in a unique way. It combines art and design through progressive technology. Here, technology itself becomes art," says Adrian van Hooydonk, head of BMW Group Design.

In 1991, Mahlangu designed the 12th BMW Art Car, based on a BMW 525i – becoming the first woman and first African artist to do so. "Her art inspired me years ago, back when the concept of colour change on a car was just an idea in my head," says Stella Clarke, Research Engineer Open Innovations at the BMW Group. „Now, being able to realise this idea, and work with Esther Mahlangu, is absolutely surreal." The 88-year-old artist's signature colours and geometric patterns are perfect for bringing the innovative Flow technology to life in the BMW i5. The versatility of the electrophoretic colour changes makes the fully electric sedan a dynamic work of art. "It is fascinating to me to see how modern technology can expand my art and make it accessible to a completely new audience," says Mahlangu.

**Mahlangu's art meets cutting-edge technology.**

In the BMW i5 Flow NOSTOKANA, which is named after Mahlangu's first son, sections of film that can be electronically animated are applied, with two strips each across the roof, bonnet and rear section, as well as the vehicle's sides. Like an e-book reader, there are several million microcapsules in each E Ink film. The structure and arrangement of the colour particles they contain

can be changed by applying an electric voltage. This allows the typical colours and patterns of Mahlangu's art to be generated in constantly changing compositions.

The animations are also accompanied by an equally extraordinary sound, specially composed by Renzo Vitale, the BMW Group's Creative Director, Sound, for the BMW i5 Flow NOSTOKANA. To combine the soundscape of the BMW brand with that of the South African Ndebele culture, Vitale used sequences from Mahlangu's voice, as well as the sound of the feather brushes she used for painting. These were combined with sounds produced by the colour pencils employed in the BMW design studio and the acoustic signal heard as feedback when operating the BMW i5's touch display. This created a sound mix that starts off softly at the beginning of each colour change and increases in intensity as the animation progresses.

To accurately recreate every detail of the complex ornamentation, the BMW i5 Flow NOSTOKANA has been fitted with 1,349 sections of film, each of which can be individually controlled. The laser cutting process used to trim the film and the electronic control design were developed in partnership with E Ink. The adaptation of the technology for curved surfaces, as well as the programmed animations, are all BMW Group in-house developments.

Overall, colour-change technology is developing rapidly. The BMW iX Flow featuring E Ink presented in 2022 had the ability to switch from white to black at the push of a button. This was followed just one year later by the first multi coloured implementation. The 240 sections of film applied to BMW i Vision Dee were able to display up to 32 colours. This latest phase of development now enables even more colours and patterns. At the same time, the sections of the film are more robust – which could make potential future series production easier. However, for the time being, the BMW i5 Flow NOSTOKANA will remain one of a kind.

### **Tribute to a pioneering artist and her work.**

As a globally respected artist, Esther Mahlangu is known for her Ndebele paintings, whose ornamentation originally symbolised major events or festive occasions. Mahlangu separated the designs from their original meaning and transferred them for the first time to canvas, carpets and everyday objects, thus preserving them for the future. The BMW i5 Flow NOSTOKANA is now reinterpreting this artistic language.

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In presenting this designer car at Frieze Los Angeles, BMW continues its long standing cooperation with the renowned art fair. At the same time, the BMW Art Car that formed the basis for this tribute will also be on display in South Africa for the first time in over 30 years as part of the exhibition hosted by the Iziko Museums of South Africa and the BMW Group in Cape Town "Then I Knew I Was Good at Painting": Esther Mahlangu. A Retrospective. The exhibition, which runs until 11 August 2024, honours the life's work of one of South Africa's most influential artists and cultural ambassadors.

In Los Angeles, BMW will once again be presenting Frieze Music in collaboration with Frieze. Since 2019, the joint initiative between the two partners has brought together a large group of musicians at the intersection of music and art. The event's return to Los Angeles will be celebrated on 29 February with a live performance by Sudan Archives at the Hammer Museum.

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In 2022, the BMW Group sold nearly 2.4 million passenger vehicles and more than 202,000 motorcycles worldwide. The profit before tax in the financial year 2022 was € 23.5 billion on revenues amounting to € 142.6 billion. As of 31 December 2022, the BMW Group had a workforce of 149,475 employees.

The success of the BMW Group has always been based on long-term thinking and responsible action. The company set the course for the future at an early stage and consistently makes sustainability and efficient resource management central to its strategic direction, from the supply chain through production to the end of the use phase of all products.

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