

# BMW Group

## DesignworksUSA

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Questions to the design team of Collection “metro40” at BMW Group DesignworksUSA, Munich Studio

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There is the BMW Group, there is the BMW Group Design and since 1995 we hear a lot of BMW Group DesignworksUSA. How are you set up within this constellation.

**L. Schaffer:** At BMW Group the three brands BMW, MINI and Rolls Royce are united under one roof. There is a design studio for each individual brand combining a vast amount of design know how as well as comprehensive and specific knowledge about the individual brands. In 1995 the BMW Group additionally acquired the design studio DesignworksUSA, aiming at a constellation in which our studio with its three offices in California, Munich and Singapore would function as an external, global source of information and inspiration. Our work in other industries for completely different brands and products, which we kept up until today, enables us to come up to the high expectations of our mother company. To me our set up and anchorage as integral but self contained part of the BMW Group is one of the most fascinating constellations I can imagine.

**How does the knowledge transfer between the BMW Group, DesignworksUSA and external clients from other industries work in practice?**

**L. Schaffer:** For our external clients we primarily ensure that high design standards are applied, highest design excellence is reached in the final product and we provide inspiration and innovative thinking. We see our clients as partners as in every project we learn together and from each other. That's our philosophy of “cross fertilisation”. For the BMW Group we provide global impulses and ideas for new design directions. We inspire the design teams of the BMW Group and develop future oriented concepts and visions together with the design director Adrian van Hooydonk. So for decades we have been working in an industry involving the most complex design processes and where we gathered a vast amount of collective knowledge. Now we are now able to transfer it to other clients, products and industries. We know how to deal with demanding design projects, how to tackle, drive, lead and inspire them to reach efficient solutions, the highest design quality and innovation. Our external clients who

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profit from our expertise come from many different industries - industries that are driven by the most diverse mechanisms. Our partners who enter design collaborations with us profit in that we understand areas such as marketing und technical convergence as well as new tendencies for instance in the field of technology. Additionally our clients benefit from our ability to conceptualise design for product families as well as for international and regional markets. Our design principle of „cross fertilisation“ has positioned us well and noticeable in the market and we are proud to see that clients from all around the world appreciate our unique design approach and our work.

#### **How do you approach projects for clients outside the BWM Group?**

**L. Schaffer:** Being a subsidiary of the BMW Group, naturally we stand for highest design quality. We want to give impulses to our clients as to how they can strategically position their brand or specific activity by means of design. Our partnership with Landscape Forms for instance was designed to generate maximum mutual knowledge transfer in order to create a furniture collection that offers internationally appealing aesthetics, best possible functionality and new solutions for durable and sustainable products. In Landscape Forms we have found a partner that shares our discerning demand on premium design right up to the point when the best result in concept and development has ultimately been achieved.

#### **What were the steps on the way to the final collection as we now see it on the market?**

**S Schiefer:** There was a variety of initial criteria and challenges when we started the project in May 2007. We looked intensively into the overall requirements of the target market regarding technical expectations, product quality, customer and end customer expectation. One of the main challenges for design was to develop a product line for a global context. Public behaviour, cultures, climate conditions or architectural styles are very diverse in cities around the globe and we had to get a better feel for the possible environments and the requirements before starting sketching. Using all three DesignworksUSA studios we did initial research in those areas and used our findings as a basis for the subsequent creation phase. We looked at Asia, Europe and the North America with the goal of understanding the needs of global transportation and to develop the right character for the furniture collection. With such a vast variety of styles through the combination of architecture from different time periods the product line had to integrate well into past, present and future surroundings but also have it's own unique character. We came up with a character description showing the balance that we had to find in evolving the design. This set of criteria was used throughout the design process to determine the most suitable design concept. Based on the character description we developed a breadth

of possible design themes with a focus on gesture and suitability for a consistent and recognizable design language of which three concepts made it to the final round. A unifying design language and a shared design vocabulary had to be established in order to arrive at a cohesive family look while the seven individual products should still express their unique personality. During the design process usually one of the products functions as the core product since it communicates the design language most expressively. In this case this was the bench "REST". The design language was then applied to all the other elements of the collection to adequately assess the promise of the design. From the three initial concepts 'Möbius', now called "metro 40", was the one to move forward with. Landscape Forms chose it as its dynamic language is a match to the application surrounded by mobility and the aesthetic brings new aspects to exterior space. The concept also carries the right balance of criteria initially identified. During the whole process we continuously kept up a very close relationship with Landscape Forms in order to discuss ideas and detail solutions. We had three prototyping rounds with full scale objects – not many companies put so much effort into details. It has been a great personal and professional pleasure working together with the Landscape Forms team.

If you were given the task of deciding where to place the "metro40" collection, where would this be?

**L Schaffer:** The collection was designed with the intent to make it utilisable all around the globe. So it would be excellent to see the furniture internationally installed in all those cities with a high demand on urban quality. You can imagine that we can't wait to see it being set up in Munich – maybe on the way leading from the city centre to the BMW Welt.