



Press release
June 2012

Design Talk held at the international Media Launch of the new BMW 6 Series Gran Coupe with Olga Polizzi, Deputy Chairman and Director of Design at Rocco Forte Hotels, and Adrian van Hooydonk, Senior Vice President BMW Group Design.

5th May 2012, Hotel La Verdura, Sicily.

Host: I guess we could start by addressing the evolutionary process in design. You're constantly involved in design. Where is your starting point?

Olga Polizzi: It's always quite difficult when you're starting a new hotel. We've got hotels from Manchester to Abu Dhabi. Our philosophy of hotels is that every hotel has to feel right in its place. So if you're in Munich, you should wake up and feel as if you're in Munich; if you're in Sicily, wake up and feel as if you're in Sicily. None of our hotels are the same. Each one is really thought through. For us, to do a hotel in Berlin, we'll go and have a look; we will read things up. We'd look at a lot. I'll wander around the city trying to understand what is Berlin. Well, the most important thing is also what sort of building are we in? Is it an old building? So we respect the building as well as the place. Here in Sicily, it's a very harsh environment, very, very strong sun, strong winds; when it rains, it rains very hard. The waves are strong. You can't do something pretty-pretty. It has to be harsh in itself. So we've got concrete floors. Very simple decoration. But the first thing, obviously, is to look at the contours of the land, which way you want to face. People always think of design as sort of pretty curtains and pretty carpets, but it's a lot more than that.

Adrian van Hooydonk: Wow – strong winds and waves! Those can be a source of inspiration for us as well, but there are other things that come into play in car design. And that gives us inspiration. There's the history of our company, of course. The cars that this company has made have always had a special character, a sporty character. They were always made for people who enjoy driving, and still find that a pleasant activity. Those are things we want to express in the design. So we don't just want to create a beautiful object to

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look at. We want to have people begin to imagine what it would be like driving this car or using it. At the beginning of each project, we actually sit together among designers and some other experts and we talk about the character of the vehicle. We try to describe it in terms of a human being. Because we see our line of cars as a product family. So there has to be a family resemblance that also has something to do with our history and our heritage. But then each product, each car has a character of its own. Like in a real-life family, there are different characters. Those are then based on what people can experience when they use these products.

Host: Could you expand on that, Adrian? The new model, what kind of character is it?

Adrian van Hooydonk: Of course, the BMW 6 Series Gran Coupe is one of the top models in the range. And it is meant for travel. You could travel fast or you could travel far, and then arrive in style, I would say. You can use it as a business tool but also enjoy some very nice holiday trips to places like this.

Host: Let's have a look at the premium aspect. What role does it play in upholding the luxury statement, both in your hotels and in designing a new BMW?

Olga Polizzi: It's difficult. Luxury sort of changes. Ten years ago, a 30-square-metre room was quite luxurious with a decent-sized bathroom. Now, we're all more and more spoiled. We go to more and more places, luxury now means a 45-square-metre room, separate showers as well as baths. You have separate dressing areas. It's continually evolving. You have to keep moving just to keep slightly ahead of the game. I thought quite a lot about what is similar about hotel design and car design. It's actually amazing how much there is in common. Design – it's like business. There are so many strands that are very much like each other. A luxury car has to feel luxurious. When you slam the door, it has to have that clunk that you know it's strong and that it's expensive. Obviously a lot of hotel luxury has to do with service, because you can have the most beautiful hotel in the world and you walk in – Wow! It looks marvellous, everyone is happy – and then you have rotten service and you don't want to go back again. It's the same with the car. It can



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look absolutely amazing, and if it stops in the middle of a lane, miles away from anywhere, you really don't want that car. Someone can take it as far as you're concerned. So we do have that in common.

Adrian van Hooydonk: I also believe luxury is changing. It's actually diverging. There are very different expressions or experiences of luxury, I think, around the world now. So as such, it may be harder to do or to design. In some ways luxury, I think, can be very minimalist. But it then really comes down to the details, to the materials. And then in other ways it's more about personal space. A car, of course, is not as big as the hotel rooms that you mentioned, but for car design, luxury can also happen in a small space. MINI, for example, offers that. But it is very much about personal space. It is, in a way, for many people that lead busy lives, a case of when they get in their car, this is their personal cocoon. It can also be quite relaxing, and at the same time, if you like driving, you can really get involved in that. So more and more, it's about every little detail. It goes deeper and deeper. If we look at the headlamp today, it consists of 60 pieces, all of them designed. That's a design object in and of itself. As I said, I think colour and material are playing a bigger role now.

Host: What materials or maybe what favourite thing – an object, a special item – has to be in the car, in the hotel room, that kind of changes the atmosphere?

Olga Polizzi: In a hotel, I think there always has to be something unexpected. It's always rather nice to come in and think there's something that you haven't seen somewhere else. Something that makes you smile. Something either very luxurious or unusual.

Adrian van Hooydonk: I'd agree with that. Because when you enter a hotel room with your luggage, first of all you want to find the main things, how to operate these things. Where is the light switch? Where is the bathroom? In car design, we like to create a design that people can understand, let's say, from a distance. But we like to do design that draws people in, involves them. Because owning a car, when everything goes well, should happen over a period of time, over years. And then, in our design, we also like to add some



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elements that people will only discover later. Second read or third read. And on the BMW 6 Series Gran Coupe there are some lines on the roof or on the C-pillar that I think you won't notice right away. The main design theme on the exterior of the car is only two lines. So it's not overly complicated. What happens between the lines is very complicated but you only realise this over time when you live with the car, or sometimes when you park the car, you walk away, you press the key, you look over your shoulder, a certain light falls on the car, you then probably see some things that you haven't seen before. The idea is that you make the customer fall in love all over again with this object. And that, I think, then creates modern luxury or something that holds its value for a longer period of time.

Host: How important is quality these days, now that we've experienced so much that we feel, well, we know something about it? Is quality even more important today than in the past?

Adrian van Hooydonk: Functionality is, let's say, the entry ticket these days into the world of luxury. And then, also design. Design is a word that maybe 15-20 years ago not many people used. Today it's used a lot. So nowadays, I think when you're a designer doing these types of projects, you have to make sure that you fill the word 'design' with meaning. And in our view, it's about detail. Because it's down to every little detail. Because it can fall apart if the big picture looks good and then you look at the detail and it doesn't work. Then, I think, customers are all-too aware that it's not a good design. Okay, obviously in the car that we've presented here, we tried to look into every little corner. We even have stitching in the interior in a contrast colour and you can only do that, you can only highlight that if you're pretty sure about how the lines run. And then you can actually add this detail because it focuses the customer's eye. So I think quality is extremely important, but it's much more than functionality these days.

Olga Polizzi: Yes, I think in hotels the main thing is comfort. You've got to have a very comfortable bed, you've got to have comfortable chairs, you've got to have good lighting. I think luxury has a lot to do with that. That everything works well and is really comfortable and is in the right place. And there's that in many other aspects of design. I mean, every chair is checked:



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Does it work with each table that one uses? Is it the right height? The air conditioning, where are the outlets and how are they working? So it's a myriad of details.

Host: So it's a certain feeling you convey in your rooms and in your cars. What makes driving nowadays an exclusive experience?

Adrian van Hooydonk: We sell cars all over the world and very few countries have autobahns. Most countries have speed limits and many countries have urban areas with a lot of traffic. And still we sell cars there. So I can say that already today, a BMW is more than just a car that you can drive fast. It is, actually, a very complex object that you can control or operate really, really well. Everything functions extremely precisely, whether it's the switches on the dashboard or how you open and close a door. So already today our products are about more than just the driving. But I've lived in the US as well and there's a speed limit there that I tried to adhere to, and sometimes you only need an off-ramp on a highway to experience why our car is different from others. So it's not only about top speed. You can have this driving fun in many different situations. But today, it's already about more than just that. It's also about attention to detail and about precision in every detail.

Host: What makes a hotel room something special? A very special experience, or is it about the entire surroundings?

Olga Polizzi: We always use a lot of local materials or products. Let's take this hotel. The stone is local to here, and we've used it a lot. Then we had some old Sicilian tiles and, again, they were a lot made from hundreds of years ago to recently. We had an 18th-century tile and we took that as our main point of reference. And we've used it in lampshades, on walls, actually as tiles, as pitches. So it has that feel that goes all the way through the hotel, gives it a sort of unity. The nice thing is if somebody actually writes to you and asks, 'Where did you get this?' or 'Where did you get the other?'. In the old days, the last thing anyone wanted was for their house to look like a hotel. Nowadays, a lot of people copy their houses from hotels. So we have changed, we've moved on. And perhaps it's us copying homes. We like



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having books in the rooms. It's the little things that people notice, amazingly. It's not sometimes the larger picture.

Host: Adrian, when you enter a hotel room, what do you look for first?

Adrian van Hooydonk: First, I look for a place to put my bag down and for the switches. The basics. Because that can be daunting. I'm typically in a hurry or late for something. So I like to find out how the room works before the next morning. Then, of course, I like to look around, the view and so on. Certainly here, this was fantastic already coming into the room last night with the view over the sea. That was really great! Great views are something you can never get enough of. Also this morning, it was beautiful. And then, yes, I'm a designer, so I look at every little detail. I look at a lot of interesting objects. I try to figure out who makes this chair, what is this lamp? So I like travelling these days because I think hotels have changed, as Olga said, a lot. A business hotel is also very different today. If travelling is a big part of your life, then a hotel becomes more and more important, even as a business hotel.

Host: Olga, what do you look for and what do you expect of an ideal car and what makes driving interesting to you?

Olga Polizzi: I'm not really a car person, which is a bad thing to say here. But obviously, I like the look of a car. And then I really just want a car that keeps going. So for me it's really functionality and the look. I don't really go into the great details and I never read the manual. I just sort of turn the key and hope it's all going to work.

Host: Adrian, there are many items you took up in the new BMW 6 Series Gran Coupe, but could you explain how you did it?

Adrian van Hooydonk: We're going to make things even more easy. In our cars, you don't have to turn the key. You push the button and it works. So yes, we are aware that the car absolutely has to work. And then when you drive it for longer, it can involve you a lot more. We know that not all of our



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customers are driving at the limit all the time. Today, with modern technology, we can cater to all of that. You have the Driving Experience button where you can go from comfort to sport. So according to your mood, even, you can make the car do different things. That's something that's very easy to operate. We know that for a lot of customers, when they're thinking about something else, they leave the gears in automatic. There are eight speeds. The car will select them for you. Where does it go from here? I think this technology has now really allowed us to make the cars cater even better to the needs of the individual customer. You can drive the BMW 6 Series Gran Coupe in a really sporty way or in a very comfortable way. It happens really easily at the push of one button. So now, finally, we are reaching a point where the technology actually makes life easier and more enjoyable, not necessarily more complex. And the same is true for the internet connection. All our cars have this. It means that, while you're travelling, you can book hotels from the car or find out information about places you don't know yet. So it can actually bring something to you without you ever having to read a book, read a manual or study the place you're going to.

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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 seven years.

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