

Press release  
March 2016

**Feel the emotion.**  
**A portrait of Kerstin Schmeding.**



Kerstin Schmeding has been head of Colour and Trim Design at BMW i since early 2011. Her approach to the job is a holistic one: she focuses not on individual materials or colours, but on the interplay of all components throughout the interior. To guarantee a high-quality, all-encompassing aesthetic, the materials should be faithfully assimilated into the space and chime in with the technology.

**Career: seeking out challenges.**

Kerstin Schmeding has a predilection for surface structures. Very much a “hands-on” person, she likes to touch and – metaphorically – grasp every material she comes across. Getting a “feel” for it sparks her inquisitive side: she wants to get to the bottom of how it has been made because the production and function of materials are a crucial aspect of her aesthetics. This analytical approach to everyday products is something the Hamelin-born designer already exhibited as a child. In her early years

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she would use simple materials to build miniature furniture that could be folded up and dismantled. With a creative career in mind, Schmeding took a degree in communication design at the University of Applied Sciences and Arts in Lower Saxony in the early 1990s. Moving into the automotive sector seemed a logical step, especially as her parents' BMW 3 Series – sporting a shade close to neon yellow – had inspired in her a fascination for cars early on. The technical side is another exciting challenge that Schmeding enthusiastically takes on as someone who loves finding solutions to complex issues.

As a student Schmeding was already working on a project with BMW, going on to join their Colour and Trim Design department in 1997. For her it was thrilling to discover the degree of freedom and creative scope allowed for the design and production of new things. Her particular interest lay in the creative opportunities generated by fresh combinations or fusions of different materials. It was this spirit of curiosity that took her to BMW Group Designworks USA in California at the turn of the millennium, followed by research trips for BMW all over the Middle East.

During her ongoing career with BMW she was responsible, among other things, for the new colour and trim design for the BMW 3 Series and BMW 5 Series. Then in 2008 she joined "Project i", where she became involved in the early development stage of the BMW i models. In 2011 Schmeding was placed in charge of colour and trim at BMW i, a task she embraces with enthusiasm and the necessary courage to implement sustainable changes.

## **Philosophy: making materials approachable and sustainable.**

For Schmeding, materials are highly communicative. Wool, for example, reflects the warmth of one's own body and thus protects against the cold in a natural way. This interaction between human and material creates a relationship, and it is precisely this relationship that Schmeding aims to cultivate in authentic fashion through her choice of materials. That is why, for her, it is the character, not the decorative aspect, of a material that always takes precedence – always bearing in mind the material cycle as well as new materials. After all, closing the material loop and contributing to the protection of natural resources is deeply engrained in the philosophy of both BMW i and Schmeding herself.





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## **Inspiration: exploring life.**

Schmeding finds life itself an inspiration. On her travels and in her home city alike, she enjoys observing people and tuning in to moods, trends and changes. At trade fairs she values talking to young creative types and is always keen to seek out new materials and design solutions for future requirements. Examining different material attributes triggers her questing mind and the question of their inherent potential. She is particularly fascinated by the work of the husband-and-wife design duo Charles and Ray Eames, by their minimalist formal language and their ability to clearly highlight the emotionality of the materials they use. Architecture is another key source of inspiration. Here Schmeding analyses how surfaces, materials, structures and light can generate different spatial ambiances. This explains her interest in architects Herzog & de Meuron: her approach is not to view what she does as a self-contained discipline, but to use deliberate contrasts to bring the characteristics of the materials to life for the customer. Schmeding also follows the work of architect Achim Menges with great interest. Menges uses computer-based design methods and innovative production techniques to explore new interactions between form, material, structure and environment, and in so doing generate new aesthetics. For the interior, she draws inspiration from the creative methods of London-based industrial designer Benjamin Hubert, who likewise prioritises the close relationship between materials and processes, engendering a clear and comprehensible design language.

## **On a personal note.**

Kerstin Schmeding likes to work with her hands, whether it's sewing, woodwork, painting or other DIY jobs around the house. It is the productive process that gives her satisfaction: the feeling – literally – of creating something.

Her personal interior design is natural and open with select highlights. She favours a combination of decorative elements, which express experiences and tell their own stories, as well as furniture with a clear, authentic character. After all, furniture for her comprises honest, functional pieces that acquire a natural beauty through their materials, forms and quality of workmanship.

Schmeding lives in Munich with her partner and child.





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## **The BMW Group**

With its three brands BMW, MINI and Rolls-Royce, the BMW Group is the world's leading premium manufacturer of automobiles and motorcycles and also provides premium financial and mobility services. As a global company, the BMW Group operates 30 production and assembly facilities in 14 countries and has a global sales network in more than 140 countries.

In 2015, the BMW Group sold approximately 2.247 million cars and nearly 137,000 motorcycles worldwide. The profit before tax for the financial year 2014 was approximately € 8.71 billion on revenues amounting to € 80.40 billion. As of 31 December 2014, the BMW Group had a workforce of 116,324 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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