

Media Information

July 22, 2022

Built to shape tomorrow: An international icon celebrates its 50th birthday.

Karl Schwanzer's BMW Headquarters as symbol for a new era. Spectacular performance by US vertical dancers BANDALOOP.

Munich. Between 1970 and 1972, a timeless icon with global appeal was created in Munich in just 26 months. 3.5 million working hours on the construction site. 500 builders and 200 architects, engineers, and draftsmen. Over 3,000 façade elements manufactured for the first time in Europe using the Japanese cast aluminium process. At the time, employees from twelve nations built the BMW landmark. Today, colleagues from over 104 countries work side by side there and in the neighboring plant.

The BMW Group celebrated its corporate headquarters as a world-famous architectural icon today with over 200 international guests in attendance, from business, culture, politics and society. The keynote speech by architect and Pritzker Prize winner Francis Kéré as well as the appearance by Nihal Saad, Chief of Cabinet of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, made the ceremony a special event. Especially for this occasion, illustrator Christoph Niemann created an impressive artwork inspired by the BMW tower as an edition. In addition to the performance by star tenor Jonas Kaufmann as well as a speech by Dr Markus Söder, Minister President of Bavaria, the festivities concluded with a special highlight: With twelve vertical dancers, the US dance project BANDALOOP spectacularly transformed the BMW Headquarters into a 100-meter-high stage in its German premiere. Based on the impressive choreography by Melecio Estrella, the ensemble created a weightless synthesis for an interplay of architecture and dance. Along with specially composed music by Ben Juodvalkis, the façade dancers around Thomas Cavanagh presented "Momentum Curve", an exclusive performance as a tribute to the unique architecture.

To this day, the BMW Group Headquarters, with its suspended construction, is one of the most innovative engineering buildings of the post-war period – because the four cylinders are suspended from a cruciform steel beam construction on the roof. In the process, the building did not grow from the bottom up, as was generally the case, but rather the upper floors were first manufactured time-effectively on the ground, then moved upwards hydraulically on the massive "tower shaft" made of reinforced concrete and completed in several segments. In August 1972,

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opposite the renowned Olympic site designed by Behnisch & Partner with Frei Otto, the BMW Group Headquarters was completed. Designed by Austrian architect Professor Karl Schwanzer, the administrative building has since become a timeless icon with global appeal for Munich and the company. With its impressive façade, visionary construction and spatial concept, the "suspended tower" uniquely combines visual conciseness with a constructive and functional logic. The innovative power of Schwanzer's design stands for the BMW Group then as now, making the company headquarters a beacon of sustainable mobility for tomorrow. Celebrated in the media as the "most impressive and coolest corporate headquarters in the world", it is not only a symbol of economic success but also stands for international exchange, peace and interculturalism. Today, the "built communication" implemented by Schwanzer points the way to a new era of electrification, digitalization, and circularity.

Francis Kéré, architect and Pritzker Prize winner:

"Architecture and the automotive industry have been and continue to be some of the most important catalysts for innovation, economic development and the prosperity of nations. Both industries are society-changing, forward-looking, and trigger global trends that have a complex impact on the economy and the environment. Today, people, nature and industry are under enormous pressure to find solutions that require an honest examination of our actions. As a result, actors from architecture to business need to pull together more than ever, recognizing our symbioses and responsibilities in order to adapt our respective creations to focus on a sustainable future."

Caroline Schwanzer, granddaughter of Professor Karl Schwanzer:

"When I was in Munich with my father for the first time, we visited the BMW building. He told me that Karl Schwanzer built the BMW Headquarters from the top down, meaning that the four cylinders hang from a structure on the roof. That fascinated me. I enjoyed it that my grandfather thought differently and that this 'thinking differently' was also appreciated. As a professor and teacher, he helped a generation of phenomenal architects come into being. He encouraged and challenged, but most of all, he inspired. That has always inspired me to reach for the stars!"

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Dr-Ing. Dr-Ing. E.h. Norbert Reithofer, Chairman of the Supervisory Board of BMW AG:

"The BMW tower has left its mark on the BMW Group. It is an icon of architecture that is brimming with a pioneering spirit. It represents BMW's awareness and self-confidence that progress comes through innovation. This building is so spectacular because it leaves no one untouched. Every generation at BMW is responsible for leading the company into the future. Karl Schwanzer's headquarters has provided the BMW Group with a sense of identification on its way to becoming a global player."

Oliver Zipse, Chairman of the Board of Management of BMW AG:

"Talking about visions also means thinking beyond the spirit of the times and developing a sense of what will endure in the future. The BMW Headquarters has thought this out far ahead and even today it is hard to beat in terms of modernity. This building is always an incentive to leap further ahead than one would normally expect. We strive to make the next hundred years as successful as the last hundred years."

Melecio Estrella, Artistic Director and Choreographer BANDALOO:

"We have been taking inspiration from the curvature of this building, recognizing that the human body expresses in curves and spirals. When we consider the acceleration that BMW well represents, we reflect on the momentum of the human heart, driving us toward a livable world for future generations."

Professor Karl Schwanzer (1918-1975):

"If you have decided to be an architect, you must have the courage to want to fulfill visions. Architecture is an art of communication, a means of communicating across centuries. Perseverance is creative. Accuracy, punctuality, continuity and modesty are the best of companions. Creating is not an agonizing drudgery but a means for joy. To work joyfully makes life meaningful."

"In the design, clearly readable forms were chosen that convey precision, technical perfection and beauty of form as an expression of and association with the image of an automobile factory."

Commissioning and film set

In 1968, BMW AG announced an architectural competition to design a new BMW administration building. To convince the BMW Board of Management, Supervisory Board and significant shareholders, Schwanzer

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had a 1:1 model of a complete cloverleaf-shaped floor built at the studios of Bavaria Film. In December of the same year, BMW's management awarded him the contract to build the new headquarters. Schwanzer's set and the pitch film shot also involved Rolf Zehetbauer, who won an Academy Award in 1973 for Art Direction of "Cabaret". Two years later, the Hollywood film "Rollerball" was released – with the BMW tower as the architectural protagonist. Whether "Suspiria" (1977), "Bloodline" (1979), "Zwei Nasen tanken Super" (1984) or "Vaterfreuden" (2014): the BMW headquarters celebrated its very own success on the big screen.

Described by artist Peter Blake as a "unique piece of realized pop architecture," its striking architecture remains a symbol of visionary corporate decisions for a successful future.

The large-format monochrome paintings "Red," "Yellow", and "Blue," commissioned from Gerhard Richter in 1972 and created especially for the foyer, are at the very beginning of BMW Group's half-century commitment to its cultural engagement with hundreds of initiatives worldwide. They will be restored as part of the anniversary celebrations and then re-presented as initially intended by the artist.

Architecture at BMW

The BMW Group can reflect on a decades-long tradition of working together with renowned architects. As early as Karl Schwanzer's construction of the headquarters, the company consciously opted for a dynamic type of architecture which was later to continue with trend-setting buildings by Zaha Hadid with her BMW Group Plant Leipzig (2005), BMW Welt in Munich by Coop Himmelb(l)au (2007) and Sir Nicholas Grimshaw's Rolls-Royce plant in Goodwood (2003). In 2022, Rem Koolhaas' Rotterdam-based OMA office and the Danish architects of 3XN were commissioned by BMW to transform its Munich main plant and jointly shape urban production for the future. ([Press release](#)).

A new film about Karl Schwanzer

"He Flew Ahead" is the title of a feature film about Karl Schwanzer with actor Nicholas Ofczarek in the role of the architect. Director Max Gruber created the movie on behalf of Martin Schwanzer, the late son of Karl Schwanzer and his granddaughter Caroline. As the subtitle "An Architectural Poem" suggests, it is an unconventional approach to an extraordinary personality who understood architecture as materialized

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poetry. In addition to Karl Schwanzer himself, important contemporary witnesses and companions also have their say in the film, which will celebrate its official premiere in the fall of 2023.

Special anniversary exhibition at the BMW Museum

The BMW Group Headquarters and the BMW Museum, popularly known as the "bowl," are two of Munich's most distinctive buildings and are cherished as icons of German post-war architecture. From the beginning, the BMW Museum was integral to Karl Schwanzer's vision for the company's headquarters. A special exhibition about the ensemble, which has been a listed building since 1999, conveys the history of the headquarters area in the museum's foyer and presents architectural models from the time of its construction. The [exhibition](#) will be on display until October 3, 2022. Admission is free.

In Munich, the Olympic year 1972 will be celebrated with the exhibitions "[The Olympic City of Munich. Retrospect and Outlook](#)" at the Architekturmuseum Munich, "[Visions and Reality. Art for the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich](#)" in the City Hall Gallery as well as "[The Olympic Games 72 in images – Photographs from the collections of the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek](#)".

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Background information on Karl Schwanzer Archive at WIEN MUSEUM digitally available at:
https://issuu.com/wienmuseum/docs/architekt_karl_schwanzer_leidenschaft_english?fr=sYzq4MDE4MzIzNw
https://issuu.com/wienmuseum/docs/architekt_karl_schwanzer_wk_1978-en?e=8579064/67190588

BANDALOO

BANDALOO celebrates the human spirit, nature, and communities through dance that uses climbing technology to expand and challenge what is possible. "We are very proud to perform a premier work, Momentum Curve, for BMW, a love letter to Munich as we bring BANDALOO to Germany for the first time, but not the last. It is thrilling to offer expansive public art, and the true nature of human flight on the Four Cylinder Tower in celebration of innovation and a concentration of ingenuity will shine spectacularly for all to see," says executive director Thomas Cavanagh. An innovator in vertical performance, BANDALOO is based in Oakland, California, and seamlessly weaves dynamic physicality, intricate choreography and climbing technology to turn the dance floor on its side. Founded by Amelia Rudolph and under the artistic direction of Melecio Estrella, BANDALOO re-imagines dance, activates public spaces, and inspires wonder and imagination in audiences around the world.

BMW Group Cultural Engagement

State Opera for all Gerhard Richter **CORPORATE CITIZENSHIP** Kochi-Muziris Biennale
BMW Art Cars Berlin Biennale Ólafur Eliásson Art Basel Max Hooper Schneider
BMW Art Journey **INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE** Art D'Égypte Cao Fei Esther Mahlangu
Zaha Hadid Les Rencontres d'Arles Jeff Koons Acute Art Tate Modern **LONGEVITY** Artsy
BMW Open Work by Frieze **PARTNERSHIP** Andy Warhol BMW Guggenheim Lab Lu Yang
Samson Young Bavarian State Opera BMW Welt Jazz Award **CREATIVE FREEDOM** Tefaf
INTERACTION State Academic Bolshoi Theatre of Russia Kyotographie Premio de Pintura
Garage Museum of Contemporary Art Paris Photo **SUSTAINABILITY** Leelee Chan Art Dubai
Teatro alla Scala BMW Classics Jenny Holzer BMW Art Guide by Independent Collectors

Why Culture? Why not! Culture is knowledge, a sanctuary of beauty and depth, of meaning and peace. An inspiring escape. Tranquil at best, even unsettling sometimes. As corporate citizen, the BMW Group takes social responsibility seriously, as part of which it has been involved in hundreds of cultural initiatives worldwide for over half a century, both in the arts, music & sound, architecture as well as in design. As a long-term partner, creative freedom is key – and as essential for groundbreaking works as it is for major innovations within a business enterprise like ours.

Further information: www.bmwgroup.com/culture and www.bmwgroup.com/overview

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The BMW Group

With its four brands BMW, MINI, Rolls-Royce and BMW Motorrad, the BMW Group is the world's leading premium manufacturer of automobiles and motorcycles and also provides premium financial and mobility services. The BMW Group production network comprises over 30 production sites worldwide; the company has a global sales network in more than 140 countries.

In 2021, the BMW Group sold over 2.5 million passenger vehicles and more than 194,000 motorcycles worldwide. The profit before tax in the financial year 2021 was € 16.1 billion on revenues amounting to € 111.2 billion. As of 31 December 2021, the BMW Group had a workforce of 118,909 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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