

BMW Group Midrand Campus lends itself as a canvas for Wits School of Arts students.

The BMW Group celebrates 50 years of global cultural engagement.

Midrand, South Africa. BMW Group South Africa supports the Fine Arts through a unique collaboration with the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) School of Arts in Johannesburg. The BMW Group Midrand Campus lent itself as the perfect canvas for the art students, as a site that was recently completely upgraded and refurbished. The Art Project is part of the BMW Group Building Projects that have already benefited over 500 students from around the globe for more than three decades.

Chief Executive Officer of BMW South Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa Peter van Binsbergen expressed his enthusiasm over the Art Project and its results: “We are thrilled to have the Wits School of Arts and its talented students on our list of collaborators. The results of this successful partnership are thought-provoking works that enhance the interaction between guests and associates, alike, with the revamped campus.”

Wits School of Arts Associate Professor David Andrew acknowledged the value of the project saying: “This has been an extended learning opportunity for the students, developed within the longstanding practices established at the Wits School of Arts, while taking into account the context in which they have been required to work. All pieces are on permanent display and I am looking forward to seeing how the collection on the BMW Group Midrand Campus is further extended.”

Process led to six artworks installed on campus

The entire process started in 2019 when the well-respected South African university “Wits” was selected by the BMW Group Art Jury as the newest member of the worldwide network of BMW Group partnerships with art schools. Ten Wits students were challenged to create art pieces presented as maquettes. The students were inspired by the BMW Group’s ethos of luxury, sustainable mobility and green solutions, and the company’s history and corporate architecture. Six maquettes were chosen by the art experts and presented to the BMW Group Art Jury for commissioning their realisation. They were installed at six locations on the campus to be seen by visitors and associates in their workspace.

“The latest Art Project is a creative, innovative and unique expression of the BMW Group’s dedication to supporting local talent, sustainability and the values of the BMW Group”, said Nicole Haft-Zboril, Senior Vice President Real Estate Management. “We have a long history of including art as integral elements in our building projects and see it as a vital contribution to a modern workspace.”

The following artists and works are now on view at the Midrand Campus:

1. “Crumple” by Hedwig Barry

Hedwig Barry, a Wits Master of Arts in Fine Arts graduate, describes the “Crumple” as a poetic reminder of the fragility of life and an interpretation of strength to preserve life – using aluminium and automotive paint. It was designed to withstand exterior weather conditions and echoes engineered crumple zones as a safety feature built into vehicles. The choice of riotous colours act as a visual signal for hope and the need for repair during what is globally a deeply uncertain time. It can be seen in the garden area alongside the N1 highway.

2. “Love Letter for Lost Travellers” by Hedwig Barry

“Love Letter for Lost Travellers” is the second artwork from Master of Arts in Fine Arts graduate Hedwig Barry. It creates a flowing depiction of love and loss, creating a waterfall effect using polyurethane foam and automotive paint. The work is about the interface of the personal and the public, the emotional and the intellectual; and the bodies, grounds, materials, desires and gestures that give meaning to these relationships. It spans two stories of wall and floor originating on the wall of the Welcome Centre and then nestling alongside the work of Micaela Wentzel in a clearing of the Green Lung. It culminates at an entrance to the IT building.

3. “纸(ZHI)” by Tzung Hui Lauren Lee

Using paper recycled from the BMW offices and transforming them into framed works of art, the artist transfers the emotions and meaning of her subjects into her art, drawing from the vast ideas and efforts associates working within the IT building (where the artwork is situated) have created. Tzung Hui Lauren Lee takes her inspiration from her Chinese South African heritage and her experience of diaspora, and has recently completed a BA Fine Arts degree at the Wits School of Arts.

4. “Mangobe Gado Gusheshe” by Themba Mwanza

Themba Mwanza, a Fine Art graduate from Wits University, has created a mixed media art car located in the Midrand Campus’ Welcome Centre. He draws inspiration from his experiences on the Metrorail locomotive systems, making reference to the working class and the multi-layered community within these spaces, inspired by the many roles its individuals take on. Simultaneously, he celebrates the prolific BMW (E30) 325i, affectionately known locally as Gusheshe, by bringing these two spaces together to create this vehicular artwork.

5. “Constructed Space” by Shayna Rosendorff

Situated in the IT building, “Constructed Space” is a series of three photographs taken of sculptures built using materials found on site. Shayna Rosendorff, who recently completed her degree in Fine Arts, was inspired by the renovations of the Midrand Campus that considered sustainability and waste consciousness, and the preservation of original structures. The work examines how nature transforms

through industry, rethinking ideas of what is natural and what is manmade, and thinking through notions of representation, perception and access.

6. “The Hue Drawing” by Micaela Rose Wentzel

Micaela Rose Wentzel is a recent graduate in Fine Arts at Wits. She was visiting the Green Lung outside the IT building when she found the nature of the space, the sound and imagery to be lively and energetic which presents itself on different levels and taking on many forms. She set out to enhance the surrounding flora and light movements with her design, guiding viewers to notice and connect with the environment.

BMW Group South Africa’s Cultural Engagement.

Over five decades, the BMW Group has been engaged in partnerships with some of the most renowned cultural institutions worldwide, based on mutual respect and curiosity that makes its commitment a reliable actor in the cultural field.

BMW Group South Africa has supported local art collaborations with Dr. Esther Mahlangu, Nelson Makamo, Zeitz MOCAA, BMW Young Collectors Co. in partnership with FNB Art Joburg, and the Southern Guild that highlight the BMW Group’s investment in the South African art landscape.

This first of its kind in South Africa, the BMW Midrand Campus Art Project follows in the footsteps of similar international Art Projects in countries including the USA, Mexico, Germany, Belgium and China.

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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 half a century, both in the arts, music and 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.

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 31 production and assembly facilities in 15 countries; the company has a global sales network in more than 140 countries.

In 2020, the BMW Group sold over 2.3 million passenger vehicles and more than 169,000 motorcycles worldwide. The profit before tax in the financial year 2020 was € 5.222 billion on revenues amounting to € 98.990 billion. As of 31 December 2020, the BMW Group had a workforce of 120,726 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.