



Media Information

MINI STRIP: Sustainable design with a twist, by Paul Smith.

MINI celebrates the world premiere of the MINI STRIP, a custom-made, one-off model co-created by Paul Smith and MINI, shining the spotlight on the issue of sustainability in automotive design and manufacturing.

Guided by the overarching theme of ‘Simplicity, Transparency, Sustainability’, the car showcases inspirational ideas for a more sustainable method of automotive design. As the name suggests, the process began by completely stripping down the MINI Electric and reducing it to its structural essence. Only then were the elements that the designer viewed as absolutely necessary defined and implemented – with sustainability taking a front seat.

Oliver Heilmer, Head of MINI Design explains: “For me, the MINI STRIP shows in an impressive way that MINI and Paul Smith share the same bold way of thinking about the future in terms of innovation and design - and together we create more. Paul asked essential questions right at the start of the design process with his non-automotive and therefore fresh perspective. We are proud to have developed such a strong character statement together.”

An outside perspective is an important source of inspiration.

MINI has always been receptive to views from beyond its universe; they help the brand to sharpen its view of itself and how it approaches challenges. As a designer with a passion for bicycles, books and much more, Paul Smith asked questions that provided fresh energy to explore beyond the obvious.

He said: “I’m incredibly grateful for the opportunity to rethink the iconic MINI. I know and love the existing car, but by respecting the past and looking to the future we have created something very special. I feel very privileged that the MINI team have given me the confidence and freedom to think laterally about the approach to the design of the car. Together, I think we have created something truly unique, by going back to basics, reducing things down and stripping the car.”

The design – the perfect imperfection.

The joint design process applied the principles of maximum reduction, to produce a minimalist, high-class design with a fresh and unconventional appeal. Raw

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materials are a very deliberate part of the exterior design - the body was left in its unfinished state with no coloured paint applied, but instead just a thin film of transparent paint to protect against corrosion. Grinding marks from the factory have been consciously left intact on the galvanised steel panels to clearly identify the car as a functional object: this intentionally rough-hewn effect was dubbed “the perfect imperfection” by Paul Smith.

The unaffected expressiveness of the materials.

Parts of the MINI black band have been 3D-printed from recycled plastic and their basic material qualities have been left exposed - like the metal panels. Bicycle enthusiast Smith – who enjoys rolling up his sleeves occasionally and replacing or modifying individual parts of his road bikes himself – provided the inspiration for the visible screws in the add-on parts, which show how simple dismantling would be and how easily the vehicle could be reincorporated into the raw-material cycle at the end of its service life. The functional and distinctive front and rear apron inserts were also manufactured via a 3D printing process, which produced their striking texture.

The blanked-off radiator grille of the MINI STRIP and its wheel covers help to reduce drag, thereby increasing its theoretical range. The grille trim and aerodynamic covers on the wheels are made from recycled Perspex, saving both weight and resources. Recycled Perspex was also used for the large panoramic roof that allows curious eyes to view the largely bare structure of the bodyshell inside.

A love of detail.

MINI calls it a ‘twinkle in the eye’, Paul Smith a ‘classic with a twist’ – both refer to unexpected details that are only revealed through the designers’ work at a second or third glance. Opening the doors reveals the signature Paul Smith stripes in a vivid composition of five colours, the charging flap adds a splash of neon green when opened, while the engraved drawing of an electric plug on the flap is Paul Smith’s own work.

Radical reduction in the interior.

The MINI STRIP holds true to the motto of ‘Simplicity and Transparency’ on the inside, too, courtesy of some radical stripping-back. All trim parts have been purposefully omitted (with the exception of the dashboard, topper pad and parcel shelf), turning the bodyshell into the dominant visual feature of the cabin. It has been coloured blue at the explicit request of Paul Smith, producing a particularly eye-catching effect. The exposed, basic material and intense blue tone give the interior an aesthetic appeal all of its own; it is bare yet feels “dressed” at the same time.

Instead of the usual multi-part design, the dashboard consists of one large, semi-transparent section with a smoked-glass finish. Taking its cue from MINI design’s traditional use of circular elements, the geometry has been simplified with a graphical interpretation. There is no classic centre instrument, leaving the driver’s smartphone to take centre stage instead. It is placed where the centre display would normally be, connects automatically to the car and becomes the media

control centre. The only physical controls in the interior are located lower in the centre stack, where the toggle switches for the power windows and the start/stop function can be found.

Innovative materials conserve resources.

Alongside the minimalist design inside the MINI STRIP, the use of recycled, environment-friendly materials also underpins the car's sustainability credentials. The interior is free of both leather and chrome, with the seats upholstered in a knitted fabric. The completely mono-material design for the seat coverings means they are fully recyclable - including the piping - allowing material circularity to be maintained. The floor mats are made from recycled rubber with their terrazzo-like pattern a by-product of the recycling and manufacturing process, positively showcasing the multi-coloured constituent elements enjoying a second life as part of this material.

The dashboard topper pad, door shoulders and parcel shelf are made from recycled cork which doesn't contain synthetic binding agents – ensuring it's fully recyclable. With its pleasing firmness combined with a soft feel, cork could provide a substitute for foamed plastics in future. Due to cork's recyclability and its status as a renewable raw material that actually "fixes" carbon dioxide during its production, there is potential here for reducing greenhouse gases. Another positive side effect of knitted fabric and cork is that they are both open-pore materials that enhance interior acoustics.

Minimalist and functional – the details.

The steering wheel, which is also a focal point of the interior, has been reduced to the most essential functions. Its rim has been wrapped in handlebar tape in true road bike style. Three aluminium spokes connect the rim to the steering wheel's impact absorber, whose mesh covering makes it possible to see the airbag behind.

As on the outside of the car, there are visible screws showing how easy it would be to dismantle the steering wheel at a later date and reuse the aluminium. A small, fabric Paul Smith label in the one o'clock position is one of the pointers to the collaboration that can be found in the interior.

The door panels are made from the same mesh material that covers the airbag, enabling the door structure to be clearly seen behind the mesh panels, which are held within a frame. The transparency of the knitted mesh changes according to the angle of view, adding a further dimension to the interior's appearance. The pull handles in the door shoulders are made from wound climbing rope and, together with the matching seat belts, liven up the interior with their bright orange finish.

Like the pull handles, the door openers in milled aluminium are housed in the cork door shoulders and provide a high-class finishing touch for the door area. As the eye wanders further up the door, it arrives at the exposed airbag unit in the roof pillar. This has the same effect as the visible cable routing in the interior - deliberately drawing attention to functions that are normally concealed during manufacture.

Sparking ideas for a more sustainable future.

Form follows function in the ingenious details incorporated into the MINI STRIP. Simplicity, transparency and sustainability formed the central themes of the design process and shine through in every aspect of the car. This has enabled the MINI STRIP to translate MINI's Creative Use of Space philosophy into a radical and fundamental redesign of a MINI – especially in the interior. As such, it can provide a catalyst for more sustainable use of resources in automotive design.

Ends

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.

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MINI STRIP.
SUSTAINABLE
DESIGN WITH A
TWIST, BY PAUL
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