



Press release  
January 2012

## **Statements Benoit Jacob.** **Head of BMW i Design.**

### **Design in general.**

Q: What importance does our society attach to design today?

A: Design is a discipline that combines technology and emotion. Technical specifications alone no longer suffice as unique selling features. We have to design our vehicles in such a way that they meet specific aesthetic and functional requirements as well. Design is also a very holistic discipline. This is particularly true at BMW i, where we take as many aspects as possible into account. So it's all about bringing together different disciplines with the goal of creating a beautiful, emotionally charged and desirable product.

### **Automotive design.**

Q: How can automotive design play a role in shaping our society?

A: Our society is increasingly shaped by our virtual presence. In spite of this, we still have to manage a lot of real-world mobility. In other words, our spatial interaction will continue as before – and so will our need to move from one point to another. So mobility is set to remain a very fundamental requirement, one we must place within a much wider context. For us in the automotive industry that means constantly looking at ways to help improve mobility and ultimately make our surroundings more harmonious. The solutions we come up with can make a significant contribution to shaping society. As far as the future of mobility is concerned, I believe we are at the beginning of an entirely new era.

### **Design process.**

Q: How long does it take to design a new car from scratch? What are the different design phases exactly?

The normal design process takes approximately five years. This starts with the creation of a fundamental concept, which is followed by a sketching stage to

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establish the initial basic ideas. Once the proportions have been established, it then goes into the series development design phase. Typically this involves creative drawings on paper, which are then transferred to CAD and eventually take on real form as clay models. This phase takes the form of a competitive process at the BMW Group, with each designer pitting his ideas against those of other designers. At the end of the process we select a final prototype, which is then refined until we arrive at the model for series production.

For the first two BMW i concepts the phases were organised slightly differently. Since we had no predecessor on which to base our ideas, we had to develop the cars from scratch. The freedom this afforded was a great opportunity for those of us working in design. To begin with we generated ideas and decided on the line we wanted to take, from progressive to conservative. We adopted a very experimental approach to this phase. We didn't just rethink the drive system, we reviewed the entire production process. Of course, there were a few tried-and-tested ideas we could fall back on, including concept vehicles like the BMW Vision EfficientDynamics. Interestingly, development of the first two vehicles took only about six months longer than the normal design process.

### **Development.**

Q: What technical innovations will have a key influence on car design? To what extent is there cooperation between designers and developers? Who influences whom?

A: In principle, today's cars come as fully developed, highly complex and virtually perfect products. So as long as circumstances remain the same, design will continue to follow this 100-year-old line of development. But we at BMW i are constantly questioning existing solutions and have been able to develop an entirely new formal vocabulary thanks to innovations such as electric drives and lightweight construction. In other words, we have asked ourselves new questions in order to come up with new solutions for automotive design.

The automotive industry is driven by people who go about their work with enormous passion. I attach great importance to the harmonious coexistence and constructive exchanges that take place between designers and developers. Our



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task is to find workable solutions and in addition create a common spirit that opens up new horizons. As a designer it is absolutely vital that I comprehend each stage of the technological development in meticulous detail. Only then can we as the design team fully understand our development colleagues and marry the new technology to our formal vocabulary. In general the relationship between engineers and designers works really very well, which is one of the reasons we at BMW i have also been able to achieve such positive results.

### **Future of automotive design.**

Q: Where is this automotive design journey taking us? What do you think the future holds in store?

A: I believe one thing is certain: personal mobility – and therefore automotive design – will continue to play a significant role in future. I think we'll see a lot more innovations in the field of drive technology in the years ahead. These might be electric drives, hybrids, vehicles powered by hydrogen or even technologies we haven't discovered yet. And as these technologies find their expression in automotive design, they in turn will bring a new look to our roads.

### **Sustainability.**

Q: Sustainability is a key word at BMW i. Can you unpack the concept for us? Where do you see sustainability in your cars?

A: Sustainability is one of the core competences of the BMW Group – indeed we have been industry leaders in the Dow Jones Sustainability Index for seven years in succession. These values are even more marked at the BMW i sub-brand, where we take this aspect to the extreme, as it were. At BMW i sustainability exists throughout the cars' complete life cycle – from extraction of raw materials to recycling. Efficiency, lightness, aerodynamics, materiality and timelessly aesthetic clarity in design are the key concepts that enable us to showcase the sustainability of our products.



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### **Premium.**

Q: Premium means many things to different people. Definitions range from over-the-top to minimalist – today the spectrum is broader than ever. How do you define “premium” in automotive design?

A: BMW i symbolises “Next Premium”. This is the term we use to redefine the premium concept, widening it to embrace future requirements and the need for sustainability of BMW i vehicles.

For some time we have been observing a change in the way people are beginning to take individual responsibility for the environment. In future we will also see changes in what the consumer expects from products, in particular where sustainability is concerned. We have to acknowledge this development in the design process and continue the trend. That’s why we have to redefine premium. For us, premium is not only defined by quality excellence in materials, surfaces and details, but also to a great extent by the manufacture and selection of sustainable materials right along the value chain. “Next Premium” is therefore an entirely new combination of premium and sustainability and reflects not only our corporate philosophy but also a new way of thinking for society as a whole. To achieve this we analyse every step of every process, taking nothing as read and leaving no stone unturned in the search for sustainability potential. This new thinking has led to an entirely new design idiom, one which makes the sustainability concept tangible for every customer and every observer of BMW i products. The result is the purest form of “future mobility” in all its various facets.

### **Design philosophy.**

Q: Can you give us an insight into the central message of the BMW i design philosophy? How true can BMW i be to its design principles, given that the spectrum ranges from MCVs to sports cars?

A: BMW i represents visionary automobiles and a new understanding of premium mobility with a consistent focus on sustainability. At the same time our work is all about alternative drive systems, technical innovations, production



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processes and the use of sustainable materials. The entire design process at BMW i is geared to this. Our first two concept cars demonstrated the bandwidth of the new design idiom at BMW i. But between and beyond these two there's still plenty of room for manoeuvre. As for what we're working on for the future, you'll just have to wait and see.

### **Emotion.**

Q: What do you see as "emotional" in a car's design?

A: When I look at a new car, what concerns me first and foremost is how much substance is in it. I'm interested in the broader issue of how well the design aspect resolves various questions. Of course, the product ultimately has to look good, but the excitement for me is in seeing how its design addresses the main issues. In other words, the key is always how coherent and reasoned the overall concept is. After all, this establishes the platform for all subsequent steps and lays the foundation for the car's success.

### **Inspiration.**

Q: Where do you seek inspiration for your work? How do you get ideas flowing?

A: I take inspiration from the mindsets of other industries, other areas of life, such as aviation and music. Not that I'm a diehard fan of any particular group or musician. I'm interested in artists who break with the conventions of their industry and achieve something exceptional as a result. Kate Bush is a good example. She takes enormous risks with her projects, is always prepared to try something new and in the process has created her own timeless and distinctive style.

### **Personal.**

Q: What gets your pulse racing? What do you enjoy doing when you're not designing cars?



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A: I'm no great sportsman, but when I get the chance I enjoy diving – particularly when I'm in Corsica with my family. I also used to be a keen pilot but sadly allowed my licence to lapse. Basically I like anything to do with technology. But I'm also fascinated by cooking and like any Frenchman I love good food. All my friends know I can usually be won over with a good meal.

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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 25 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 2010 was euro 4.8 billion on revenues amounting to euro 60.5 billion. At 31 December 2010, the BMW Group had a workforce of approximately 95,500 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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