

BMW of North America

U.S. Press Information



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BMW Group Celebrates 50 Years of American Ingenuity at Designworks.

- The establishment of BMW of North America in 1975 laid the foundation for the BMW Group's nationwide business footprint in the U.S.
- Today, the BMW Group's U.S. business includes nearly 30 locations in 12 states and contributes heavily to the company's global success.
- U.S. design studio in Santa Monica plays a critical role in shaping the future of BMW Group design, user interface, and user experience.
- The 50th anniversary of the BMW 3 Series is celebrated in the Petersen Automotive Museum's "The Ultimate Racing Machine. 50 Years of the BMW 3 Series in Motorsports" exhibit.

Santa Monica, CA – November 11, 2025... In celebration of a half-century of innovation in the U.S., the BMW Group today hosted an exclusive media program at its renowned Designworks studio in Santa Monica. The event, led by Head of BMW Group Design, Adrian van Hooydonk, offered a rare glimpse into the creative consultancy's future-shaping vision, rooted in American ingenuity and the dynamic spirit of Southern California.

"BMW Group Designworks has always been an essential creative hub for the BMW Group, our eyes and ears, but also a door that connects us to the outside world," said van Hooydonk. "Our studio in Santa Monica is deeply connected to the U.S. culture and the creative energy of California which has helped shape our vision and the designs of many of our vehicles. The BMW X5 and the idea of a 'Sports Activity Vehicle' for instance was penned in California. It introduced a revolutionary new segment that went on to become one of our most successful products globally."

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Through a series of interactive workshops and discussions, the program showcased Designworks' role in developing several iconic models and in-car experiences, highlighting how the studio is actively sculpting the future of mobility. The day culminated in an evening event at the Petersen Automotive Museum where van Hooydonk was joined by award-winning architect and UCLA professor, Neil Denari, and Academy Award nominated costumer designer, Arianne Phillips, to explore how culture, innovation, and emotion converge to transform design into enduring icons.

A Legacy of Icons and Innovation.

Founded independently in Malibu in 1972 before becoming a wholly owned BMW Group subsidiary three decades ago, Designworks has been instrumental in the creation of some of BMW's most defining vehicles. The studio is credited with the original, segment-defining E53 BMW X5 Sports Activity Vehicle – a concept entirely born from an American vision – the sculpted E85 BMW Z4 Roadster, the revolutionary BMW i3, and many others.

This influence endures today, notably with the Neue Klasse and the all-new BMW iX3. Designworks played an important role in developing the entirely new design language and in-car experience of the Neue Klasse, which debuted with the BMW iX3 and will be replicated across the entire BMW product line up in the coming years. The studio's research of sustainable materials and new production methods also contributed to the BMW iX3's significant use of secondary raw materials and "Design for Circularity" approach.

MINI Design and Digital Experiences.

The relaunch of MINI under BMW ownership in the early 2000s stands as one of the most successful brand revivals in modern automotive history. Designworks and van Hooydonk both played vital roles in shaping the creative vision and strategic positioning that made MINI both nostalgic and new.

Designworks has also been instrumental in defining MINI's digital identity, ensuring that the brand's User Experience (UX) and User Interface (UI) embody the same playful spirit and human-centered design as its physical form.

The current MINI round center display, for example, reimagines the brand's signature central instrument as a seamless OLED interface that unites information, entertainment, and control—transforming a classic design element into the emotional and digital heart of the modern MINI experience.

The 'Outside-In' Approach: A Crucial 'Think Tank.'

Designworks' unique perspective extends far beyond the BMW Group through extensive work with diverse external client partners across various industries, from aviation to consumer electronics. This broad disciplinary reach enables its signature 'outside-in' approach to automotive product design. Functioning as a crucial 'think tank' and the BMW Group's innovation hub, the Santa Monica team translates insights from these varied fields to inspire and push the boundaries of automotive aesthetics and functionality.

The company adopts a human-centered approach focused on creating meaningful, humanized experiences that prioritize comfort, connectivity, and wellbeing, with a focus on intelligent reduction to reveal essential elements and instill designs with "soul" and emotional connection.

"Designworks is an innovation driver—for the BMW Group and other clients," said Designworks CEO, Julia de Bono. "Our role is to challenge the status quo and explore questions around the future of mobility that our parent company may not yet be actively addressing. We draw on cross-industry inspiration to help gather insight and trends which effectively enriches our design process and future BMW Group products with a visionary, global perspective not available to other car manufacturers."

Shaping the Future from Silicon Beach.

Strategically located in 'Silicon Beach,' the Santa Monica studio serves as a vital testbed for innovative and sustainable mobility solutions that influence the entire BMW Group ecosystem. Designworks' ongoing role in shaping transformative projects like the introduction of the Neue Klasse vehicles ensures it remains at the forefront of the industry's fundamental shift toward electrification, digitalization, and sustainability.

BMW at the Petersen Automotive Museum.

In a year of several important anniversaries, BMW of North America in partnership with the Petersen Automotive Museum have been honoring the legacy of the BMW 3 Series in an exhibit called: "The Ultimate Racing Machine. 50 Years of the BMW 3 Series in Motorsports". The exhibit is located in the Phil Hill Legends Room of the museum's recently reimagined James H. Frank Family Vault.

"For 50 years, the 3 Series has embodied the spirit of competition and innovation that drives the automotive world forward. This exhibit offers visitors a rare look at how BMW's motorsport DNA has evolved—both on the track and on the street." Said Terry L. Karges, Executive Director, Petersen Automotive Museum.

The exhibit traces the evolution of the iconic BMW model line through all seven generations, showcasing its impact on motorsport and the marque's heritage. The core group of race cars – one for each generation, has been combined with three wonderfully preserved street examples of the 3 Series including one of the three remaining V8 powered M3 GTR Straßenversion (homologation street version).

In addition to the 3 Series exhibit, BMW is represented in the Wedge exhibit with the Paul Bracq designed BMW Turbo Concept from 1972 and in the Totally Awesome exhibit with a 1980 BMW M1 Group 4 painted by Frank Stella and a pristine example of the first generation 1988 BMW M5.

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BMW Group in the United States.

BMW of North America, LLC was established 50 years ago to support the sales, marketing and distribution of BMW automobiles in the U.S. BMW Motorrad was brought into the fold in 1980. In 1993 BMW Group Financial Services NA, LLC was founded, and one year later BMW Manufacturing Co., LLC began assembling vehicles in South Carolina. In 2002 and 2003, BMW Group established MINI USA, and Rolls-Royce Motor Cars NA, LLC relaunching two iconic brands and rounding out its product portfolio.

Today, the BMW Group has a nationwide corporate footprint in the U.S. which consists of nearly 30 locations in 12 different states. Beyond the National Sales Company and Financial Services headquarters in Woodcliff Lake, NJ, its manufacturing plant in Spartanburg, South Carolina, and numerous other operational facilities, BMW Group in the U.S. also includes Designworks, a strategic design consultancy in Santa Monica, CA, BMW Group Technology Office USA, a technology research and development center in Silicon Valley, and BMW i Ventures, a venture capital fund, also in Silicon Valley.

BMW Group Plant Spartanburg is the largest single BMW production facility in the world, and the global center of competence for BMW Sports Activity Vehicles including the X3, X4, X5, X6, X7, and XM. The plant assembles more than 1,500 vehicles each day, and up to 450,000 annually. Since 1994, Plant Spartanburg has assembled more than 7 million BMW vehicles in the U.S.

The BMW Group sales organization in the U.S. is represented through a network of 351 BMW retailers, 143 BMW motorcycle retailers, 105 MINI passenger car dealers, and 38 Rolls-Royce Motor Car dealers. The company's activities provide and support over 120,000 jobs across the U.S. and contribute more than 43.3 billion to the U.S. economy annually.

Journalist note: Information about BMW Group and its products in the USA is available to journalists on-line at www.bmwusaneews.com www.miniusaneews.com and www.press.bmwna.com

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