

Media Information

May 21, 2024

Julie Mehretu's BMW Art Car Celebrates its World Premiere at the Centre Pompidou in Paris.

+++ The internationally renowned artist's project transforms the BMW M Hybrid V8 race car into a performative work of art +++ Mehretu's BMW Art Car will compete in the 24 Hours of Le Mans endurance race next month +++ Pan-African workshops to extend the cooperation between BMW and the artist through 2026 +++

Paris/Munich. The 20th BMW Art Car is being presented to the public for the first time today at the Centre Pompidou in Paris. Designed by renowned New York-based contemporary artist Julie Mehretu, the project transforms the BMW M Hybrid V8 race car into a performative work of art, continuing a longstanding tradition of BMW Art Cars and competitive racing. Just a few weeks after its World Premiere in the French capital, the newest edition in the storied BMW Art Car collection will compete in the 24 Hours of Le Mans.

"The whole BMW Art Car project is about invention, about imagination, about pushing limits of what can be possible. I don't think of this car as something you would exhibit. I am thinking of it as something that will race in Le Mans. It's a performative painting. My BMW Art Car was created in close collaboration with motorsport and engineering teams," says Julie Mehretu. "The BMW Art Car is only completed once the race is over."

The collaboration between BMW and Julie Mehretu also includes a joint commitment to a series of PanAfrican Translocal Media Workshops for filmmakers, which will tour various African cities in 2025 and 2026, and will culminate in a major exhibition at the Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa in Cape Town.

"The BMW Art Cars are an essential part of our global cultural commitment. For almost 50 years, we have been cooperating with artists who are just as fascinated by mobility and design as they are by technology and motorsports. Julie Mehretu's vision for a racing car is an extraordinarily strong contribution to our BMW Art Cars series," said Oliver Zipse, Chairman of the Board of Management of BMW AG. "Julie Mehretu has created more than an amazing Art Car. Her ideas provided the impetus for us to expand the cultural commitment of our Art Cars to promote the creativity of young artists in Africa."

A Performative Painting is Created.

Space, movement and energy have always been central motifs in Julie Mehretu's work. For the design of the 20th BMW Art Car, she transformed a two-dimensional image into a three-dimensional representation for the first time, with which she succeeded in bringing dynamism into form. Julie Mehretu used the colour and form vocabulary of her monumental painting "Everywhen" (2021 - 2023) as a starting point for her design. The work is currently on view at "Ensemble", the artist's exhibition at the Pinault Collection - Palazzo Grassi in Venice and will subsequently become part of the permanent collection of the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York, to which it has been gifted.

Its abstract visual form results from digitally altered photographs, which are superimposed in several layers of dot grids, neon-coloured veils and the black markings characteristic of Mehretu's work. "In the studio where I had the model of the BMW M Hybrid V8 I was just sitting in front of the painting and I thought: What would happen if this car seemed to go through that painting and becomes affected by it," Julie Mehretu says. "The idea was to make a remix, a mash-up of the painting. I kept seeing that painting kind of dripping into the car. Even the kidneys of the car inhaled the painting."

BMW Art Cars with Le Mans history come together at the Concorso d'Eleganza.

The fusion of image and vehicle was realised with the help of 3D mapping, with which the motif was transferred to the contours of the vehicle. The elaborate foiling allows for the fully designed BMW M Hybrid V8 to compete at the 24 Hours of Le Mans. BMW Motorsport drivers Sheldon van der Linde (RSA), Robin Frijns (NED) and René Rast (GER) will enter the 20th BMW Art Car with starting number 20 at the Circuit de la Sarthe on 15 June. Like them, Julie Mehretu is also eagerly awaiting the race: "I went to see the BMW M Hybrid V8 race in Daytona, and this experience was overwhelming. Designers, engineers, aerodynamicists and so many other creative minds are working on taking this vehicle to its extreme. When it goes out on the racetrack now, so many dreams will be fulfilled."

Leading up to race day, Julie Mehretu's BMW Art Car will make an appearance at the Concorso d'Eleganza at Villa d'Este in Lake Como on its way to Le Mans. As part of the exhibition for historic vehicles organised by the BMW Group and the Grand Hotel Villa d'Este, Julie Mehretu herself will present the 20th edition of the BMW Art Car Collection. It will be featured on the grounds of the Villa Erba together with the BMW Art Cars by Alexander Calder (1975), Frank Stella (1976), Roy Lichtenstein (1977), Andy Warhol

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(1979), Jenny Holzer (1999) and Jeff Koons (2010), which also made their race debut at Le Mans. Julie Mehretu will discuss the creation of the 20th BMW Art Car in an artist talk with Adrian van Hooydonk, Head of BMW Group Design, on Sunday, 26 May 2024.

Inspiration for Young Artists: PanAfrican Translocal Media Workshops.

The collaboration between BMW and Julie Mehretu was conceived from the beginning beyond the automobile. It will culminate after the 24 Hours of Le Mans in a project for emerging artists on the African continent: The PanAfrican Translocal Media Workshops. Together, the partners are focussing on the creative potential across the African continent, where the BMW Group has been making a contribution to social responsibility with educational projects for over 50 years.

Julie Mehretu and Mehret Mandefro, Emmy-nominated producer, writer and co-founder of the Realness Institute, which works to strengthen the media ecosystem in Africa, will organise workshops in various African cities and regions throughout 2025. The goal of the project is to provide a space for artists and filmmakers to collaborate and exchange ideas. These meetings will offer a forum for artists to develop new pathways towards a just civic future in their respective communities.

The PanAfrican Translocal Workshop series will visit the cities of Dakar (Senegal), Marrakech (Morocco), Kigali (Rwanda), Lagos (Nigeria) and Cape Town (South Africa). The results of the workshops will be presented together with the 20th BMW Art Car at the Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa in Cape Town in the first half of 2026.

The BMW Group is thus consistently continuing its decades-long support for film and creative talent: from the short film series 'The Hire' and the partnership with the Cannes International Film Festival to the acquisition of works by students from art academies in the neighbourhoods of the company's plants worldwide.

The Artist.

Julie Mehretu is a world-renowned American painter. She was born in Addis Ababa, capital of Ethiopia, in 1970. Together with her family she moved to the U.S. at the age of seven. She lives and works in New York City and Berlin.

Mehretu's practice in painting, drawing and printmaking engage the viewer in a dynamic visual articulation of contemporary experience, a depiction of social behavior

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and the psychogeography of space by exploring palimpsests of history, from geological time to a modern-day phenomenology of the social.

Mehretu received her Bachelor's Degree from the Kalamazoo College in Michigan, spent a year abroad at Cheikh Anta Diop University in Dakar, Senegal, and completed her Master's degree of Fine Art with honors from The Rhode Island School of Design in 1997. Mehretu has received numerous awards, including the The MacArthur Award (2005), The Berlin Prize: Guna S. Mundheim Fellowship at The American Academy in Berlin (2007) and the U.S. Department of State Medal of Arts Award (2015). A mid-career survey of Mehretu's work recently toured at LACMA (Los Angeles), High Museum (Atlanta) The Whitney Museum of American Art (New York) and The Walker Museum of Art (Minneapolis) from 2019 to 2023. Her largest European solo exhibition to date entitled "Ensemble" opened March 17, 2024 at Palazzo Grassi in Venice.

Mehretu is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and The National Academy of Design. Her global representative is Marian Goodman Gallery. She also exhibits with White Cube, London, and Carlier Gebauer, Berlin.

Statement from the Jury for the 20th BMW Art Car.

Julie Mehretu was unanimously selected in 2018 by a jury of high-ranking representatives of the international art world to design the 20th BMW Art Car. The panel includes renowned curators and museum directors from various countries, including Koyo Kouoh, Executive Director and Chief Curator, Zeitz MOCAA, Cape Town; Hans-Ulrich Obrist, Artistic Director of the Serpentine Galleries, London; and Cecilia Alemani, Donald R. Mullen, Jr. Director and Chief Curator, High Line Art, New York.

On the occasion of the World Premiere of the BMW Art Car designed by Julie Mehretu in Paris, the jury members published the following statement: "We are thrilled with Julie's BMW Art Car! Okwui Enwezor had already coined the phrase 'Dynamism in Form' during our jury session and nothing applies better to her BMW M Hybrid V8 race car. Julie's first three-dimensional work combines her aesthetics and formal language with the idea of the glitch and the blur, turning speed into a visceral experience. This energetic space is as fierce and competitive in racing as it is ambitious as a creative playground of the imagination. It not only pays homage to the art cars of Jenny Holzer and Frank Stella, but also spins a visual web from Mad Max to graffiti and street art that is unique within the series of BMW Art Cars."

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The BMW M Hybrid V8.

The canvas for the 20th BMW Art Car is the BMW M Hybrid V8. The new race car from BMW M GmbH features a hybrid electric drivetrain system with approximately 640 hp, powered by a 4.0-litre V8 engine supported by an electric motor (top speed: up to 345 km/h or 215 mph, depending on the race track layout).

During this year's official FIA World Endurance Championship races, the BMW M Hybrid V8 will take on high-calibre competition in the Hypercars category. The car will also compete in the 24 Hours of Le Mans – the first BMW M Motorsport prototype to do so since the BMW V12 LMR, which won the classic race in 1999.

The BMW Art Car Collection.

Renowned artists from all over the world have participated in the BMW Art Car program since 1975. The initiative came from the French racing driver and art lover Hervé Poulain, who, together with the then BMW Head of Motorsport Jochen Neerpasch, asked his artist friend Alexander Calder to paint a car. The result was a BMW 3.0 CSL, which competed in the 24 Hours of Le Mans in 1975 and became a crowd favourite.

This was the birth of the BMW Art Car Collection. In the years that followed, renowned artists such as Frank Stella, Roy Lichtenstein, Andy Warhol, Robert Rauschenberg, Esther Mahlangu, David Hockney, Jenny Holzer, Ólafur Elíasson and Jeff Koons enriched the collection with further BMW Art Cars, each in their own individual style. Most recently, the Chinese multimedia artist Cao Fei and American conceptual artist John Baldessari each presented a BMW Art Car based on the BMW M6 GT3 and GTLM respectively in 2016 and 2017. The BMW Art Cars are not only shown at their home, the BMW Museum in Munich, but are also on tour around the world as part of international exhibitions.

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BMW Group Cultural Engagement

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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 2023, the BMW Group sold over 2.55 million passenger vehicles and more than 209,000 motorcycles worldwide. The profit before tax in the financial year 2023 was € 17.1 billion on revenues amounting to € 155.5 billion. As of 31 December 2023, the BMW Group had a workforce of 154,950 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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