

BMW Group

Corporate and Governmental Affairs

Media Information
May, 18th 2009

BMW becomes Global Partner of Independent Collectors.

Art collectors' community plans "Art Expeditions" and the first online exhibition worldwide.

Munich. The cliché of the art collector as a withdrawn lone warrior needs redrawing. Since June 2008, the online platform Independent Collectors has been successfully connecting collectors of contemporary art. More than 1,500 collectors from 66 nations have already registered with the Internet community. With some 450 private exhibitions, most of them publicly accessible, it provides a unique look behind the scenes of a lot of collections. They make the website a worthwhile visit for all those passionate about contemporary art, and from now on, BMW is supporting Independent Collectors exclusively as the first "Global Partner".

BMW recognizes in the members of Independent Collectors a new breed of art collectors who network with likeminded people, who are more interested in cooperation than in competition. The carmaker will support the online platform in the development of attractive content and its input starts as early as July 2009, with the launch of the short film series "Art Expeditions". These movies, optimized for an online audience, feature the meetings of collectors and artists, who will present to each other their favourite art spots. The first shooting is currently being arranged and portrays the art scene of Berlin, hometown of Independent Collectors. And in the third quarter of 2009, the collectors' initiative is planning a "Curated Show", the first online exhibition worldwide to be assembled from the collections of dedicated collectors.

Both partners feel that this focus on content sets a new standard, a point emphasised by Thomas Girst, responsible for BMW's cultural communications. "Intelligent benefits are more valuable these days than a simple, if clever logo placement. We are dealing with very discerning opinion leaders, a dialogue we at BMW are excited to enter."

"The brand BMW is the ideal partner for Independent Collectors," says Christian Schwarm (37), one of the founders of the new community and himself a passionate collector. He refers to the fact that the carmaker has been dedicated to the art world for decades and has in fact initiated some of the milestones of art history, for example with the spectacular "BMW Art Cars", which started in 1975. It features various BMW models, treated by art icons like Andy Warhol, Robert Rauschenberg, Roy Lichtenstein and just recently by the Danish artist Olafur Eliasson, who transformed the hydrogen-powered BMW prototype H₂R into an ice sculpture. The enthusiasm of the company extends beyond contemporary art to music, design and architecture, which leads to support of over hundred cultural formats around the world. In terms of collecting, the manufacturer was smart enough to commission a young Gerhard Richter with the creation of three major pieces for the company lobby as early as 1972.

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Page 2

“Every collector is aware of these outstanding projects and therefore knows that art is not a fashion-issue for BMW,” explains Schwarm. Until recently, the online platform has been fuelled by the dedication of the founders. Now it needs the support of partners like BMW, who commit themselves to help exciting even more people about contemporary art. Schwarm is convinced: “Compared to other hobbies and passions like music, film or literature, contemporary art has still has a lot of ground to gain.”

The BMW Group and contemporary art.

BMW's dedication to contemporary art started in the beginning of the Seventies with the commissioning of the young Gerhard Richter and has continued internationally in a variety of ways every since. Alongside the total of sixteen “Art Cars” (featuring artists like Calder, Warhol, Lichtenstein, Stella and Rauschenberg) there has been cultural sponsorship with over 100,000 employees worldwide; the support of the Nationalgalerie Berlin prize; the “Prix BMW” at Paris Foto; presence at the most important art fairs across the world over; and cooperation with significant contemporary artists like Joshua Davis, Rankin or Robin Rhode, all of which represents just a small selection of its ongoing activities. BMW has no interest in presenting modernity and the present as being alike, but consciously focuses on each location, hence facilitating the presentation of young art well away from a market environment.

About Independent Collectors.

Independent Collectors was launched in June 2008 as the first online platform for collectors of contemporary art. Today, more than 1.500 members from 66 nations are using the service. Every application for membership is checked individually. After all, the collectors want an environment free of commercial offers. The free membership includes the possibility to network with other collectors and to create a private online exhibition. Two thirds of the users are present under their own name; one third uses the possibility to act anonymously. Women collectors account for 40 per cent of the membership base.

For further information please visit www.independent-collectors.com

See www.bmwgroup.com/culture for detailed information on the BMW Group's international cultural commitment.

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Page 2

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