

AUTOMOTIVE

## BMW Art Car explores globalization, digital world via augmented and VR

June 1, 2017



*A still from Cao Fei's accompanying short film. Image credits: BMW*

---

By DANNY PARISI

German automaker BMW has unveiled its latest vehicle in the Art Car series, which was designed by Chinese multimedia artist Cao Fei.

Subscribe to **Luxury Daily**  
Plus: Just released  
State of Luxury 2019 **Save \$246 ▶**

Ms. Fei is a young artist who works with virtual and augmented reality to address the future of mobility and digitized driving. BMW Art Car #18 was unveiled at the Minsheng Art Museum in Beijing on May 31.

"We were thrilled by the decision of an independent jury of international museum directors to have nominated Cao Fei," said Dr. Ian Robertson, member of the board of management of **BMW AG**, Munich.

"Considered as a lucky number in China, her vehicle is the official 18th rolling sculpture of the collection," he said. "For her project, Cao Fei chose an unprecedented and immersive approach, empowering the viewer to engage with the artwork through cutting-edge technology.

"This is truly a BMW Art Car for the 21st century."

Art for the future

BMW's Art Car series was created in 1975 by French driver and auctioneer Herv Poulain, who wanted to give artists a chance to use the automaker's models as a canvas for their own expression.

Since then, there have been 17 BMW Art Cars produced with the most-recent being designed by artist Jeff Koons in 2010.

Now BMW is reintroducing the Art Car with a new design from Ms. Fei, inspired by the rapid changes, both technological and cultural, of her home country of China.



*The BMW Art Car through the accompanying mobile app. Image credits: BMW*

To emphasize the increasingly blurred distinction between the physical and the digital, Ms. Fei's work actually comprises three pieces: a video focusing on time travel, an augmented reality mobile application and the car itself, a BMW M6 GT3 in plain carbon black.

The app is used to project three-dimensional lighting effects on the car or on any other surface, allowing the vehicle to be customized digitally by the user.

In this way, Ms. Fei is exploring the ways that our physical experiences have become sleek and simplified and our digital experiences are where things can be customized and personalized to fit each individual.

The use of a plain black car, reminiscent of the reflective black of phone screens, with all of the color coming from each user's individual app, reflects the ways that digitization has allowed everyone to have granular unique interactions with physical things.

#### Digital world

BMW has been no stranger to the art world recently, commissioning its own art exhibit of watercolor paintings to celebrate its last 100 years.

The "Blue Coffee" exhibition, named for BMW's iconic color and the medium of which the art was made, has come to the United States. BMW's exhibit opened May 19 and features paintings that represent the past 100 years of the automaker's narrative ([see story](#)).

Another model recently released by BMW is the 8 Series coupe, which was teased earlier this month and debuted last week.



*The BMW Art Car through the accompanying mobile app. Image credits: BMW*

The teaser took the form of a stylish minimalist poster depicting the obscured silhouette of the car. The image was revealed at BMW's Annual General Meeting in anticipation of the car's debut on May 26 ([see story](#)).

With its new Art Car, BMW is once again using its vehicles as a canvas for artists to tell stories both personal and global about the ways the world is changing. The latest design from Ms. Fei is emblematic of the increasingly globalized and interconnected nature of the world.

"To me, light represents thoughts," Ms. Fei said. "As the speed of thoughts cannot be measured, the #18 Art Car questions the existence of the boundaries of the human mind.

"We are entering a new age, where the mind directly controls objects and where thoughts can be transferred, such as unmanned operations and artificial intelligence," she said. "Which attitudes and temperaments hold the key to opening the gateway to the new age?"

---

© 2020 Napean LLC. All rights reserved.

Luxury Daily is published each business day. Thank you for reading us. Your [feedback](#) is welcome.