

EVENTS/CAUSES

BMW Group furthers social discussion with limited-edition graphic design book

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By KAYLA HUTZLER

German automaker BMW Group is celebrating its 40 years of global cultural engagement efforts with the launch of a limited-edition branded book called “Culture.”

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The book was a joint project between the automaker and graphic designer Stefan Sagmeister that uses photos to present the history of BMW’s corporate cultural and sponsorship efforts from the last four decades. The back of the book contains a small remote-control car motor that lets readers “drive” the book on a hard, flat surface.

“The challenge was to come up with something that was not a vanity publication, in which companies position themselves in terms of what they do as good corporate activities,” said Thomas Girst, corporate and intergovernmental affairs and head of cultural engagement at **BMW Group**, Munich, Germany.

“We wanted to come up with something that people would not throw away but that they would hold onto, cherish, feel happy about and not part with,” he said. “So it made sense for us to team with up the most sought-after graphic designer to develop an idea that would create a publication in which these challenges were solved.

“Our goal was to create something that was priceless and I think we have achieved it.”

The book was presented to industry insiders and members of the press at the **Guggenheim Museum** in New York this week.

Culture shock

BMW will only be producing and distributing 1,488 copies of Culture.

The Culture book comprises approximately 100 pages and is divided in four sections that represent the various cultural groups that BMW aims to influence: contemporary art, classical music and jazz, architecture and design, and culture.

Culture begins with a short introduction of the book itself, and another page explaining how culture is a driving force, and how BMW itself is a driving force in the auto industry.

Each book is signed by Mr. Sagmeister, the Grammy-award winning, New-York based graphic artist who designed the book and laid out the pages.

Every copy is also numbered, emphasizing the rarity and exclusivity of the BMW book.

The images in the book include photos of the BMW Art Cars collection in various museums around the world, the BMW-sponsored male choir group in Munich and other programs that BMW helps fund such as the young Asian artisans group in Singapore.

Overall, Culture contains more than 50 color photos of BMW-sponsored programs around the world.

Each book is also a remote-controlled car. Half of the book does not contain pages, but an actual model car motor and wheels.

Culture comes with a special remote control that lets the book be driven around the room like a child's remote-controlled car toy.

The inspiration was that “culture really moves,” according to Mr. Sagmeister.



Driving change

The cover and spine of the book are black-and-white with abstract shapes or lines on the top and the word Culture along the side.

When all 1,488 copies are brought together they form a picture of the BMW Munich headquarters built in 1972.

The idea was to make each book a part of BMW while also having each one be a unique fragment, according to the company.



This book comes on the heels of BMW Group's Guggenheim Lab world tour, which started in New York this summer.

The BMW Guggenheim Lab, a joint project with the New York Guggenheim museum, is an interactive, educational event space that will travel to nine cities worldwide over the next six years to promote urban sustainability.

The lab aims to raise awareness of important issues, generate ideas specific to each urban situation and engage with innovative and sustainable designs to benefit the cities ([see story](#)).

People who cannot visit the BMW Guggenheim Lab can also play the game and enter new questions for in-person contests online at <http://www.bmwguggenheimlab.org>.

BMW hopes that the book will further explain and display the brand's commitment to society, per Mr. Girst.

"BMW is regarded as a very cultured brand," Mr. Girst said. "The way that brands are being looked at from the outside has changed in the past 10 years in a way that is beyond the ups-and-downs of the stock market. Consumers want to see if the company's commitment to society is real.

"This publication is celebrating the 40-year anniversary of BMW Group's worldwide cultural engagement and it was important for us to celebrate that and do something that has not been done before because innovation is what we're all about," he said.

Final Take

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