



Premiere on asphalt: The BMW Art Car by Alexander Calder at Le Mans 1975.

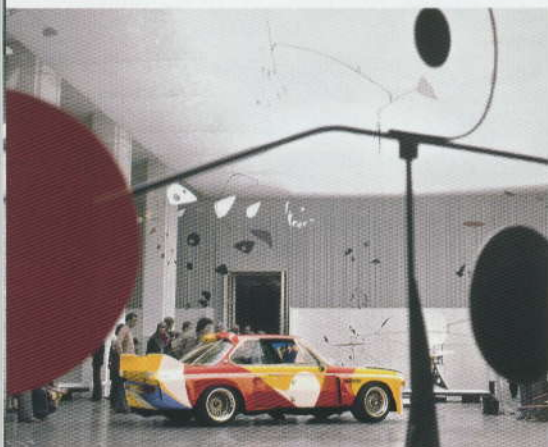
most sophisticated toy of people who want to be taken seriously. We thank Calder and we thank Hervé Poulain because they still know how to have fun and because they give us pleasure." A week later, people in

Munich got to see the extraordinary racing car – at art gallery Haus der Kunst. At the time, Horst Avenarius stressed the extraordinary moment guests were experiencing at the preview: "A BMW being exhibited at the Haus der Kunst, a few days after being displayed at the Louvre and shortly before a lively exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York: That isn't an everyday experience for BMW. We have Alexander Calder to thank for that."

A brand new racing design

Avenarius went on to highlight the link between BMW and Calder: "His sheer pleasure in colour is equivalent to our sheer driving pleasure. This pleasure in existence is something we share."

We are both motivated by the conviction that an object shouldn't simply be assessed on the basis of its usefulness and utilitarian value. Any object should also be judged by the zest for life it conveys, by the play (and sport) that it



Left: Calder's Car at the "Haus der Kunst" in Munich 1975.
Right: In front of the BMW Tower.



engenders." The play and sport were to come one week later.

The lure of forbidden fruits

The car arrived on time in north-west France. After facing the art critics, it was now ready to take on the supercharged opposition. In view of the maximum speeds of over 280 km/h expected at Le Mans, there was a lot at stake when the art car lined up on the grid. Although BMW had insured the car for 1,000,000 marks, people were more concerned about the ideal value than actual financial losses.

But this was precisely the attraction of the project, you might say the lure of forbidden fruits: breaking down the barriers of motor sport and art at the

same time – art at Le Mans and motor sport in the museum. Calder himself was a guest at Le Mans and one of the most photographed men during the weekend.

The CSL had achieved the best time in its class during the training session – but not without some nervous moments. Poulain recalled how a Porsche came hurtling back towards him in the Hunaudières. "You couldn't take evasive action at 290 km/h and I drove into a cloud of dust, burnt rubber and grit. Strangely enough, I didn't touch anything."

From that moment on, his biggest fear was not for himself: "My greatest fear was that Sam Posey, who was starting the race, would wreck the car

before we were due to change drivers for the first time."

Nothing untoward happened: at 10 p.m., after the race had been going for nine hours, Poulain raced through the twilight to come first in the touring car placings and take fifth place overall, when a loud crack sounded beneath his feet and brought the lap of honour to a standstill. The drive shaft had broken.

The most craziest idea

This was the end of the "most craziest (and most refreshing) idea of this troubled decade", as Ron Wakefield put it at the time in *Road&Track*. At the same time, it represented the start of a unique collection of contemporary art: the BMW Art Car Collection.

The artist and his work: Alexander Calder with Hervé Poulain (left rear) and Jochen Neerpasch (right) in front of the BMW 3.0 CSL and some of his mobiles.





The BMW V12 racing car, designed by American concept artist Jenny Holzer in 1999.

The BMW Art Car Collection

Two worlds meet in the BMW Art Car Collection: the world of the automobile and the world of art. It is an extraordinary collection that now numbers 15 vehicles, all designed by world-famous artists. They were exhibited at the BMW Project House in the north of Munich from 23rd May to 10th June 2005. Under the title "30 Years of BMW Art Car Collection", the exhibition provided information on the originators and gave a rare opportunity to see all the Art Cars gathered together at one venue. The concept for this exhibition was drawn up in collaboration with the IOS team.

By Gudrun Freier

In 1975, Alexander Calder had painted the BMW 3.0 CSL owned by his friend Hervé Poulain, auctioneer and racing driver at the Le Mans 24-hour race.

With powerful colours and flowing surfaces, Calder provided the link between art and motor sport – the idea of having a car designed by an artist was born. Artists have always been fascinated by cars. Artists working in all styles – from abstract

to representational – have depicted the car in critical or heroic terms over more than 100 years of automobile history. BMW Art Cars inaugurated the automobile itself as a work of art.

BMW has been the focus of attention across the world with this unusual collection of cars for the past 30 years. A new art form connecting art and engineering was created. It's been seen at the Guggenheim Museums in New York and



The Art Cars by Andy Warhol (left) who painted the car with his own hands, Robert Rauschenberg (centre) and David Hockney (right).

Bilbao, in the Paris Louvre and in Sydney's Powerhouse Museum.

Art Cars have been created by Pop Art artists such as Roy Lichtenstein and Andy Warhol, who was the first artist to paint the car himself when he painted the BMW M1 and found the car more successful than the work of art.

There have also been new styles and artists from other nationalities – Austrian Ernst Fuchs, Australians Michael Jagamara Nelson and Ken Done, and Japanese artist Matazo Kayama. Sports cars were no longer the only cars painted. Volume-production vehicles followed, such as the BMW 635 CSi by Robert Rauschenberg (1986) or

the BMW Z1, which A. R. Penck designed as the first German artist in 1991. His figures and signs show "Art on art, art on technology – particularly on an object of sculpture." Penck regarded the artistic design as a creative engagement, similar to the development of an automobile.

Like other artists before him, Penck was inspired by the creativity of the engineers and designers of the Z1 to give full rein to his imagination. The challenge for the observer is to engage with Penck's symbolic language and decode signs that are actually simple symbols. Jenny Holzer, American concept artist, squared the circle in 1999 – a return

to Le Mans, the place of origin for BMW Art Cars. She "describes" the 15th Art Car, a BMW V12 racing car for the BMW Art Car Collection. As a critical artist of the contemporary scene, Jenny Holzer uses her truisms at spectacular automobile races to provoke the world of motor sport with surprising messages like "MONOMANIA IS A PREREQUISITE OF SUCCESS".

Numerous employees at the BMW Group visited the BMW Art Car Collection presented exclusively for them to experience fascination and innovation. Art in the FIZ – art appreciated at first-hand.

Other cultural activities by the BMW Group: www.bmwgroup.com/kultur

Like all other Art Car artists, representative of Pop Art – Roy Lichtenstein – designed the BMW in his inimitable style.

