

# Your Mobile Expectations: BMW H<sub>2</sub>R project

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Originally published as the foreword to *Your mobile expectations:  
BMW H2R project* (Baden, Switzerland, 2008), pp. 19–20.

*Your mobile expectations: BMW H2R project* and the research that lies behind it try to attune our attention to the ever-changing world and the consequences of our actions.

Traditional car design has defined the car as a desirable object – a fetish almost – and a commodity, depriving it of its relationship to its surroundings and to time. Car design has primarily focused on the most profitable way of facilitating and mediating physical movement. We have to challenge this, and I think the task is to reintroduce time as the key producer of our experiences. Reality then becomes *temporal reality*. This reintroduction will give us the possibility to perceive the car and the consequences of driving in relation to our own bodies. No longer merely a vehicle for transportation, the car will go beyond pragmatic reflections of advancing from A to B and of establishing the ‘right’ social image for the driver. I believe the car can do so much more – if only we can inscribe it into the world as a part of reality. Caught up in a causal relationship with its surroundings, it will render impossible the dream of traditional car design: to see it as an autonomous object of desire. Instead, the car becomes a collective concern.

We need to think with our bodies – to imagine the body as brain, where our actions, experiences, and knowledge all rely on our physical engagement. The feeling of presence is dependent on our bodies. The understanding of cause and effect does not take place solely in the mind; it is a bodily action as well. So we have to acquire physical know-how in order for our bodies and brains to co-perform, and, once experience is anchored in the body as brain, our socio-environmental sensitivity is strengthened.

By bringing together art, design, social, and environmental issues, I hope to contribute to a different way of thinking-feeling-experiencing cars and seeing them in relation to the time and space in which we live. Fundamentally speaking, I don’t believe that objects exist in isolation. They are always part of a complex set of physical and mental relationships; they change according to the context and depend on the user’s values and expectations. They embrace relativity and the passing of time. In order to transform the idea of the car as a timeless, iconic object, we have to consolidate a platform on which the car industry, on the one hand, and the need to exercise personal environmental responsibility, on the other, can come together. The platform will nourish the hope that the car industry will eventually find it necessary to take upon itself a socio-environmental sense of responsibility. This requires a reinvention of the language that we use to talk about cars.

In a different context, the art historian Barbara Maria Stafford has introduced the term ‘echo objects’. Objects enter into dialogues, which, in turn, colour them; they are subject to the vibrations emitted by their surroundings and swing in accordance – or in resistance – to them. An echo object reverberates with meanings. It is rich and dense – never pure form, never devoid of content. What I propose is that we look at the car as an echo object, as an unstable thing that always echoes other situations, other uses, our expectations, and our memories. This makes us capable of seeing-thinking-hearing the car as resonating with ideas that come from design, economy, and

the development of our society; from environmental movements, politics, and discussions of how to act responsibly; from our urban everyday situations. The echo-car is situated in the midst of all these networks of questions.

To drive a car has traditionally been considered an individual activity. You can go where you want with no restraints, independently of the fixed structures that define collective transportation. In Western culture, driving has been communicated as an act of liberation. But recently, environmental concerns have become a common point of reference: because of climate change and our anticipation of its potentially disastrous consequences, we find ourselves participating in a new kind of collectivity based on ecological awareness. This emergent collectivity is encouraging an understanding of the necessary relationship between the individual and society. The individual no longer comes first, but only exists as part of a plurality. We are individual-collective. Or, as the philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy would say, we are singular plural.

Today there are a number of pertinent questions we should ask ourselves: how do we give a tangible dimension to the fact that our engagement in the world has global consequences? How can we, as consumers and creators of reality, change the trajectory of transportation? Of moving? How can we put pressure on the car as an object?

Ultimately, the movement involved in *Your mobile expectations: BMW H2R project* is not so much that of the car as that of our bodies. Through the car's dynamic geometric principle, I hope to make explicit the fact that people's movement – being of time and space – actually creates the experience. Their actions and movements generate their perception of the car. When visitors or users start to freeze inside the special environment in which the car is sited, this draws attention to their own movement and the time they spend – or endure – with it. By freezing the car, I ask the users to economise their energy while they are in its vicinity. Our perception, bodily movements, and physical survival instincts are balanced, one in relation to the other. By making explicit our physical energy consumption, I want to shift the focus from the car as an object to us as consumers. Hopefully, the car industry will meet the present-day challenges, but ultimately it is the consumer's responsibility. It is not solely the car that pollutes; also the people driving it do.

We are not just *in* the world – we are *of* the world. By recognising this, we also acknowledge that our actions have consequences – for our families and friends, the society in which we live, and our local and global environment.