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Inside the futuristic-looking German factory where BMWs are made

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JAN.

There's something fairly subversive about photographing a car plant at a complete standstill. That's presently why Edgar Martins wanted to try it.

In his book, OOOO.001, which Mark Hosse will publish in November, actively appears to have been shot inside a locked at BMW's usually bustling plant in Munich, Germany.

"The project was conceived around the simple premise of 'nothing to see.' In this framework, the project is not just a mere survey of the fabrication, tooling, and assembly of the modern day car but it also underlines an examination and articulation of the world of flux and flow that we live in, a world defined and haunted by mobility and transience," Martins said via email.

Paint shop, BMW Group Plant Munich.

Press shop, BMW Group Plant Munich.

Wind tunnel test center, BMW Group Research & Innovation Centre.

Aschheim crash test center. This is one of two crash test centers belonging to the BMW Group, located in Aschheim, north of Munich.

Paint shop, BMW Group Plant Munich.

Martins shot during production breaks using a small hand-held flash gun and available lighting, making exposures between 10 and 45 minutes long.

Absent of people, the plant looks like "a sort of proscenium awaiting some kind of event."

"In my work there is a general fascination and reverence for the machine and the industrial process, but I'd like to think that these images also look beyond the mere subject," he said.

At the plant, Martins saw the press shop where around 130 tons of steel are turned into iron-over parts every day. He saw the lifting suspension belt, where technicians can apply the finishing touches to the parts of the car's underbody. He saw the shop where doors are mounted on car bodies.

"For a complex site like this to function at the level of precision it does, there has to be a perfect convergence and symbiosis of man and machine, industrial and labor forces and processes. And watching these in operation is quite remarkable," he said.

Crash test center, BMW Group Research & Innovation Centre (FIZ).

Assembly Line, BMW Group Plant Munich.

Paint shop, BMW Group Plant Munich.

Paint shop, BMW Group Plant Munich.

Martins proposed the project to BMW by writing to a generic email address he found on the company's website.

When he flew to Munich to discuss the details, he found out the company had never before granted an artist extensive access to its Munich plant.

This is not, however, the first rarely accessed highly technological facility Martins has photographed.

Previously, he's documented some of Portugal's oldest power stations, Europe's most powerful telescope, and the Mediterranean Sea's largest offshore wind farm. Last year, Behold featured Martins' photographs of European Space Agency facilities.

"At the ESA I witnessed 'space-time' in motion: In other words the small incremental steps that are taken every day, sometimes over periods of decades, to complete a mission or a piece of technology. At a car plant the industrial processes are, by comparison, on steroids."

Crash test centre, BMW Group Research & Innovation Centre (FIZ).

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