RAISING THE BAR: DISCOVER THE NEW BMW 5 SERIES SEDAN
Horses for courses

Photos: Kai-Uwe Gundlach
Words: Hendrik Lakeberg
Surging ahead: the coupe-like silhouette of the new 5 Series Sedan and its uncompromising sporting commitment define the car’s character.

The Belgian coast is home to one of Europe’s most state-of-the-art stud farms. This is a place that brings together DYNAMISM and the highest standards with a unique lightness of touch.

We took the new BMW 5 Series to visit some other leaders in their field.
In the hinterland around the Belgian holiday resort of Knokke-Heist lies an epicentre of international horse breeding. This is a self-contained microcosm, a world moved by dynamics and touched by elegance. And it provides the perfect stage for the BMW 5 Series to showcase its talents.

“A GOOD DESIGN IS ALWAYS THERE FOR ITS USERS. IT HAS TO BE COMMITTED TO THEM.”

Vincent van Duysen, architect
THE BUILDINGS are barn-like in form – low and functional. They reveal a new, minimalist definition of style, their lines merging harmoniously into this 12-hectare estate. The façades of the constructions are made from larch. This is a tree that grows slowly in a Continental climate, making its wood particularly high in quality. The architecture here embraces movement rather than standing still. Over time, the colour of the façades will change, from a cool matt black to a rather fine silvery grey. Their timeless sense of elegance, however, will remain unaltered.
The epitome of the sporty business sedan: the roofline of the new BMW 5 Series promises undiluted elegance, while the sporty, compact rear end emphasises the model’s power and presence.

If you’re looking for dynamism and PRESENCE, you’ll like what you see.

The gate opens without a sound, the car rolls up slowly – past rambling pastures and plentiful apple trees – to the yard of the stud farm owned by Peter and Melissa Taffeiren. The feeling is one of gliding smoothly into another world. From the yard, your eye wanders over the main dwelling to the garage, the long swimming pool and the generously sized stables. It’s not only inside the car that the sense of absolute peace prevails; the visitor’s mind is likewise consumed by calm. That was certainly what architect Vincent van Duysen had in mind when he set about designing the modernist stud farm just a few miles from the holiday resort of Knokke-Heist on the Belgian coast. “This effect is a key element of my architecture,” says the 54-year-old Belgian. “As soon as the people who live here step through the door, they should feel protected and at ease.” Van Duysen is one of his country’s most prominent architects, and the impressive success of the Knokke project is evident not only in the relaxed demeanour...
The husband’s laid-back hospitality is therefore entirely in keeping with the overall vibe, and he duly explains the clever architecture behind the house. A long hallway creates a line of sight from one end of the building to the other. It leads from the kitchen through the living room to the bedroom, from which you can gaze directly over pastureland. “Our dream was to wake up and be able to look out over the paddock and the apple trees,” says Peter Taffeiren. Also designed by Vincent van Duysen, the house’s furnishings – from the kitchen chairs to the large, low living room table – have a pleasantly lived-in look about them. The Taffeirens’ house is no design showpiece where you’re scared to touch anything. Its living spaces share the feeling of understatement that permeates the farm as a whole.

The buildings are low and barn-like in form, ensuring they fit as harmoniously as possible into the 12-hectare farm. The façades are clad with wood – larch grown in a Continental climate. The larch tree grows more slowly there, making its wood extremely sturdy and high in quality. Over time its colour will fade somewhat, giving way to a natural, silvery grey patina. Inside, van Duysen used mostly German oak. The outer walls and interior spaces are dominated by the same relative proportions. All the wooden slats on the façade are exactly four centimetres wide and each leave a gap of six centimetres. The long wall units in the house also follow the four/six centimetre pattern. The house is designed from the inside out, the interior initially setting the pattern for the exterior, and the exterior later returning the favour. Nowhere is there a single millimetre too much or too little to be found.

The stud farm owners believe the true value of an object is only really revealed when just the right forms are employed and its design is brought to life.

“IT’S NOT PRIMARILY ABOUT SUCCESS FOR US; GETTING THE QUALITY RIGHT IS WHAT MATTERS.”
Melissa Taffeiren, riding coach

An interview and video with architect Vincent van Duysen are available now at www.bmwmagazine.com
If the final wooden bar had ended up three point five centimetres broad instead of four centimetres, van Duysen would not have done his job properly.

It is exactly this sort of precision that makes the farm’s environs a natural habitat for the new BMW 5 Series. Framed by the shimmering meadows, the design of the new 5 Series is lent a visual sharpness as if a camera lens has just been brought into sharp focus. The body’s neat side graphic accentuates its coupe-like silhouette. The impression of lightness and sporting prowess continues into the interior, with its large display, sparingly arranged controls and uncluttered surfaces. The dark-blue Fineline Ridge wood of the Luxury Line trim option creates a homely feel as a counterpoint to some of the sporting driver focus.

Finding the sweet spot between emotional richness and functional appeal – and seamlessly merging the digital and analogue worlds – was the aim of the BMW designers. In short, everything possible was done to ensure drivers will feel at home inside their car.

Vincent van Duysen is hunting for a similar win-win situation. His work could be described as a continuation of the visions conjured by straight-line modernism – enriched and brought up to date with authentic, natural materials. Van Duysen actually views himself as a child of postmodernism, a now unloved style which prevailed in the 1980s with its experimental forms and loud colours. But in the early 1990s he developed a new and more purist style. Journalist Ilse Crawford, who ran US magazine Elle Decoration at the time, billed his early work as “sensual home” – a combination of sensuousness and precision, stylistic consistency and dynamism. It remains a sound description of his style. “What’s important to me is that the people who live in my houses have the feeling of leaving the stresses of everyday life behind them the moment they step inside the door,” says van Duysen. It’s the same principle by which business sedans are becoming refuges in which to withdraw from the gruelling schedule of daily life.

Just take a seat in the BMW 530d xDrive, tell the new voice control system your destination – “Knokke-Heist town centre” – and the iDrive system’s navigation function will find the correct route without further ado. On country roads, the car accelerates with a gentle rigour. The lightness of the new-generation 5 Series (it cuts the weight of its predecessor by 100 kilograms) is clear not only in its design, but also in its dynamic responses. The intuitive gesture control system is carried over from the BMW 7 Series, while the new structure of the headliner swallows up irritating driving noise.

The route into Knokke-Heist takes you past rows of strikingly plush villas. By comparison, the stud farm is an exercise in understated presence and modernity. As van Duysen himself puts it, his architecture is intended primarily to “devote itself to the people inside” rather than make a statement to the outside. The intelligent assistance systems on board the new BMW 5 Series make enjoying the scenery outside rather easier for drivers, as they can now spend far more time with their hands off the wheel. At up to 80 km/h the car can trundled for 30 seconds without any intervention on the part of the driver. It is as if the stylish design features of its interior and exterior are following the maxim laid down by van Duysen and seeking to fulfil one primary aim: to serve the driver and passengers.

### New BMW 5 Series

| Displacement | 3.0 l V6 | 2993/16 |
| Output kW (hp) | 195 (265) |
| Torque Nm | 620 |
| Max. speed km/h | 250 |
| Fuel economy urban l/100 km | 6.2–5.8 |
| Extra-urban l/100 km | 4.3–4.6 |
| Combined l/100 km | 5.4–5.0 |
| CO₂ emissions g/km | 142–132 |

*with 8-speed Steptronic transmission. **Fuel economy is determined according to the ECE combined cycle 0901268 ECE in which one third of the distance covered is in urban traffic and two thirds extra-urban. In addition to fuel economy, CO₂ emissions are measured. Fuel consumption figures are based on cars with standard equipment. Optional extras may affect consumption. Figures may vary depending on wheel and tyre format.