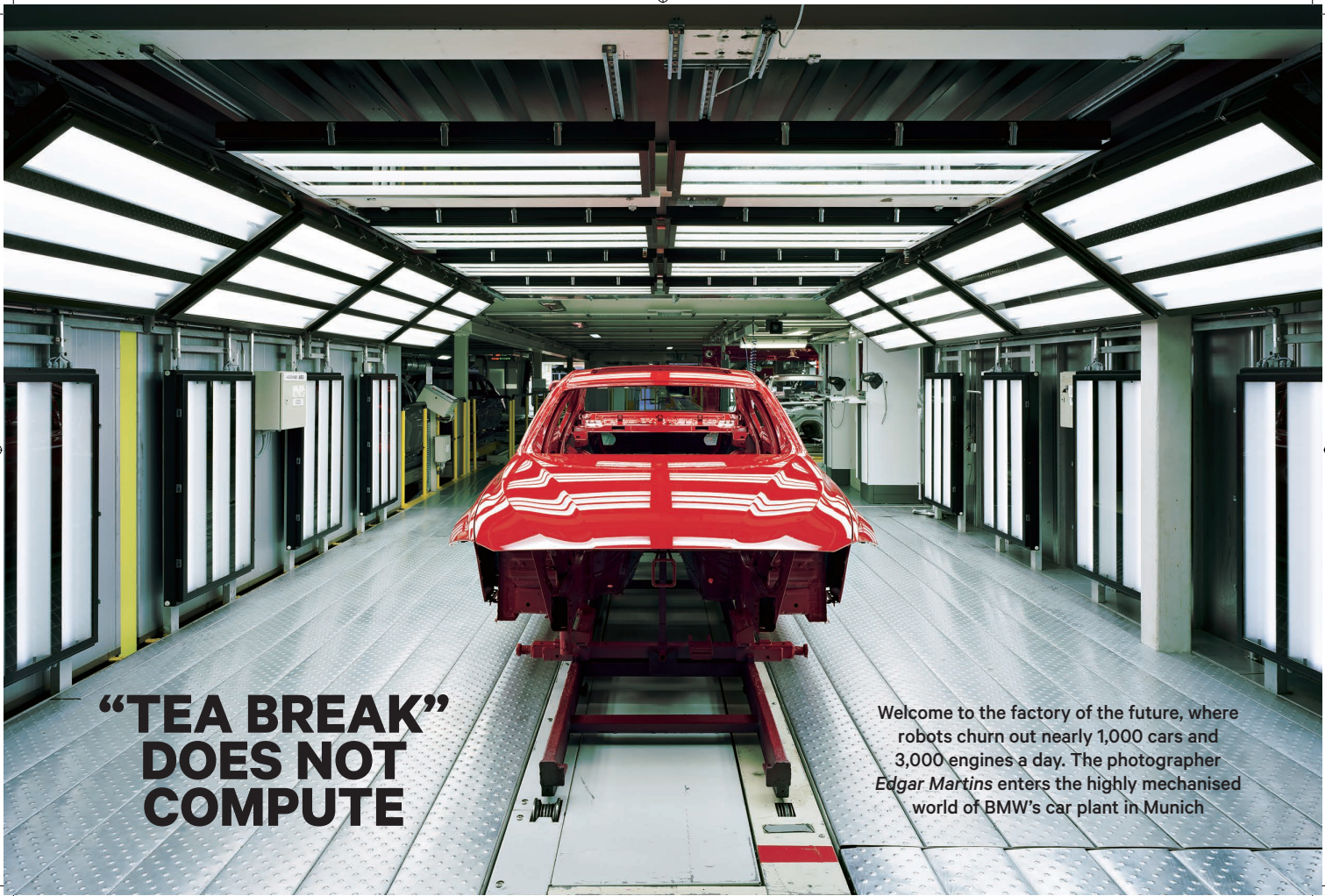




**“TEA BREAK”
DOES NOT
COMPUTE**

Welcome to the factory of the future, where robots churn out nearly 1,000 cars and 3,000 engines a day. The photographer *Edgar Martins* enters the highly mechanised world of BMW's car plant in Munich



The BMW car plant in Munich is one of the world's most highly mechanised and technologically sophisticated car plants in the world, producing 228,000 cars and 628,000 engines a year. Robots do practically all the assembly work these days — piecing together the cars around the clock.

BMW has developed sophisticated, lightweight robots that have the speed and dexterity of their living and breathing counterparts — but don't need tea breaks. The robots' work is overseen by humans — the factory, which was built in 1922, employs nearly 9,000 people.

On an average day, the plant churns out nearly 1,000 cars and 3,000 engines, built in 24 hours from scratch. In these pictures, however, all is quiet. The

celebrated Portuguese photographer Edgar Martins visited the plant over a period of 18 months, on the few days it was not actually producing cars.

His images capture an eerie, futuristic stillness. Test dummies idly await their next crash, while paint-guns hang in limbo waiting for the next body to spray. "The premise for this project was very simple," he says. "To present what is an otherwise highly populated, dynamic and fast-paced environment completely still and devoid of people."

While BMW has a history of working with artists — including Andy Warhol, David Hockney and most recently Jeff Koons, who each painted designs which were then applied to a promotional "art car" — this is the first time a photographer has been granted

such high-level access.

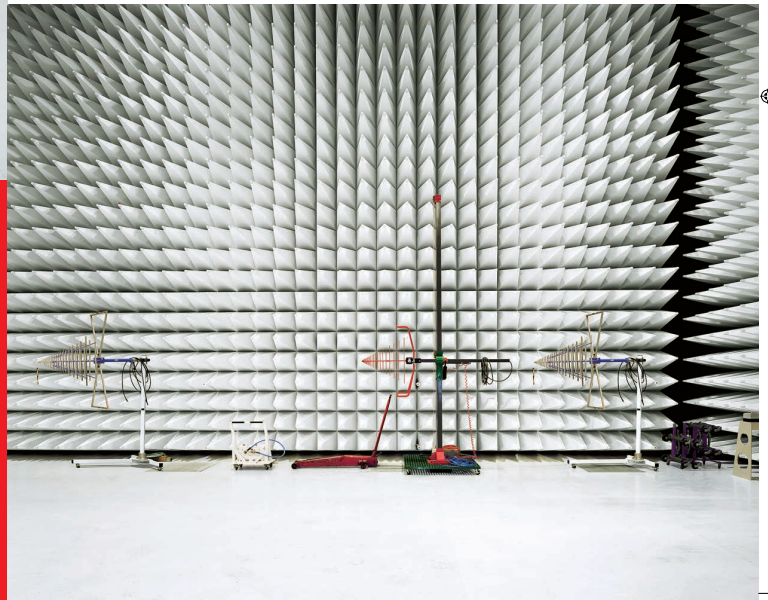
Martins, who used a large-format film camera and long exposures of up to 45 minutes, has a knack for shooting where no one else can. He has previously talked his way behind the scenes for shoots with the Metropolitan Police and the European Space Agency.

"I like to see this and other projects I have produced as a sort of point of resistance to the fast-paced, consumerist world we live in," he says. "In making use of long exposures, I am looking to slow down time."

These images feature in the book 00:00.00 by Edgar Martins, available now (The Moth House Exc.). To buy it for £27, inc p&p, call 0845 271 2135 or visit thesundaytimes.co.uk/bookshop. For more information, visit themothhouse.com and edgarmartins.com

I, ROBOT

BELOW
The electronic components of a vehicle are tested in the electromagnetic compatibility centre, to ensure that phones and other everyday devices don't interfere with their functionality



PREVIOUS PAGES
A newly painted car body awaits inspection in the plant's paint shop. Here, human technicians will check the layers of paint for tiny imperfections such as bubbles or scratches



ABOVE
Aschheim crash test centre, located north of Munich, specialises in "rollover testing", in which a vehicle is tipped over to find out how passengers might fare in an accident

LEFT
With time of the essence and expensive materials at stake, human apprentices are trained up in this separate facility, away from the frantic main production line

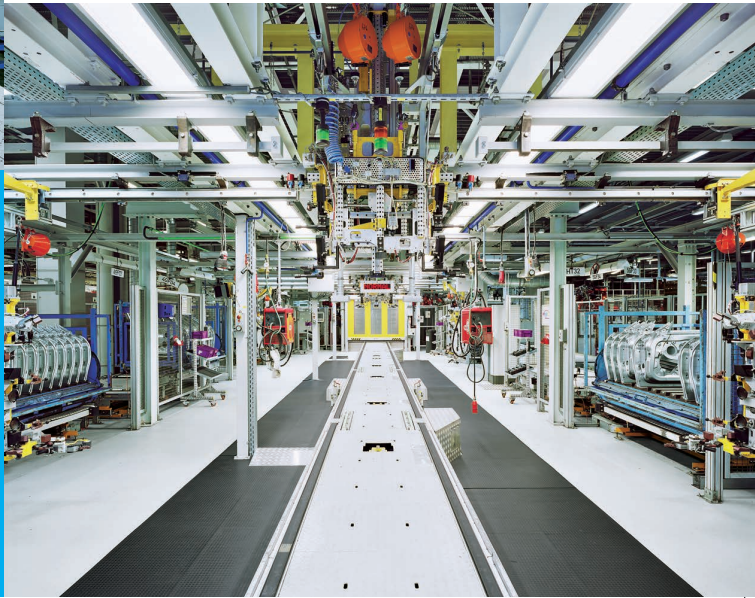


RIGHT
Freshly painted car bodies are stored on huge shelves awaiting inspection before they can move along the production line



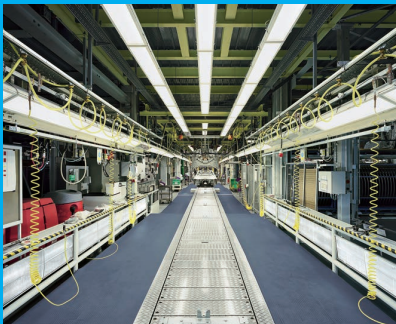
FEATURE NAME

BELOW
Doors are swiftly mounted onto each car body on this section of the conveyor belt



ABOVE
Front-end and tail-gate parts would typically be fitted onto the cars at this stage of the assembly line

BELOW
In the bodyshop, under specialist lighting, the surface of the completed chassis is checked for faults





These unsung heroes of car design are on hand to take their punishment. Each crash-test dummy is fitted with up to 120 sensors to measure the force of an impact