

NEW HEAD OF DEVELOPMENT AT BUGATTI — GREGOR GRIES TAKES OVER



Gregor Gries, an experienced engineer and Bugatti employee from the beginning, is stepping into a new role as Head of Technical Development at Bugatti.

Fine strokes, numbers and explanations. When Gregor Gries first held the sketch in his hand, he could not have known how it would change his life. The drawing marked the start of an unparalleled career as an engineer and the birth of the fastest, most powerful and most exclusive hyper sports car in the world. In 2001, Gregor Gries became one of the first employees

of Bugatti in its modern era. In 2004, he became Head of Powertrain Development at Bugatti, and he has now been appointed Head of Technical Development at Bugatti.

“With Gregor Gries, we have an experienced engineer as Head of Technical Development,” says Stephan Winkelmann, President of Bugatti. “There is no other employee in the company who has been so deeply involved in development as he has, or for so long. So I am delighted that he will now be responsible for and driving forward other projects at Bugatti.”

Veyron and Chiron, Centodieci, Divo, Bolide and Chiron Pur Sport¹, along with all of the prototypes — Gregor Gries is one of the people responsible for the extraordinary cars from Molsheim. And the thing that led to it all: the drawing mentioned above. While traveling on the “Shinkansen” express train in 1997, Ferdinand Karl Piëch drew a sketch of a new type of engine with 18 cylinders. Piëch, a gifted engineer and longstanding Chairman of the Executive Board and Supervisory Board of Volkswagen AG, became the driving force behind the development of the Bugatti Veyron 16.4. “For a moment I puzzled as to what kind of incredible car could even have such a powerful engine with central power takeoff and be capable of demonstrating the technical skill of powertrain development. What has now evolved from this could not have been foreseen with the W18 project,” remembers Gries.

Since 1990, Gregor Gries had been developing powertrains, engines, and associated components and worked on various prototype engines, engine tests and applications. In 1997, the engineer, together with a colleague, became the technical project managers for the W18 engine. For the subsequent Bugatti project, he designed the drive system over the course of nine months, and later the design studies EB 118 (1998), EB 218 (1999) and 18.3 “Chiron” (1999). By the time Bugatti was newly founded in 2001, the engineers had already modified the engine design and developed a W16 engine. The original assignment: “Build a car with 1,000 PS that accelerates from 0 to 100 in less than three seconds, has a top speed of more than 400 km/h, and that is suitable for a night out at the opera.”

UNFORGETTABLE: THE FIRST RUN OF THE W16

This was an exciting time for him. “I will never forget the first run of the engine on the test bench. To see the W16 running flawlessly and reach its full power was a terrific and extraordinary feeling, just like the first time driving over 400 km/h. It was proof that our ideas and calculations worked in practice,” he says. Since then, Gries has been responsible for developing the 8.0-liter W16 engine, including the components and control unit, the gearbox and powertrain, and the cooling and exhaust system.

From the beginning, the W16 engine did not create any major problems, but it did present numerous minor challenges. “For example, at that time there was no engine test bench suitable for this power output, so in the end we developed one ourselves,” recalls Gries. The engineers broke new ground in terms of cooling, package, power transmission, handling and aerodynamics. At that time, many critics believed it was impossible to design a production car capable of driving reliably and safely at speeds of over 400 km/h. Bugatti attempted it nevertheless, encouraging technical innovation and always striving to find new solutions — with the result that the company became a technology leader. The French manufacturer has been producing the world’s most powerful and exclusive cars in Molsheim ever since with meticulous care and precision.

For Gregor Gries, being a developer is not just a job — it is about pursuing a passion. In addition to the car's sheer power and top speed, the engineer is also impressed by its everyday usability. "Bugatti hyper sports cars are the most powerful, beautiful and luxurious vehicles in the world. But they are also perfect for everyday driving and make every kilometer of driving a pleasure," explains the chief engineer. He should know: over the past few decades, he has spent hundreds of thousands of kilometers in the elegant coupés. "I am so proud and happy to have been with Bugatti from the beginning and to have played a key role in the development of every model, from the Veyron, to world record cars, to the Chiron, right through to the extreme Bolide," he says.

Bugatti always aims for standards that have never been met before in terms of power, quality, luxury, design and handling, while constantly striving for perfection. With the Chiron, which was launched in 2016, the engineers far exceeded earlier development goals, and with the Bolide in 2020 they pushed the bounds of what was considered feasible even further. Company founder Ettore Bugatti's aim was to take his vehicles as close to perfection as possible: in their construction, technical beauty, ingenuity, quality and design. For Gregor Gries, this is a commitment that he has carried not just into the present. "We will continue to initiate more projects in the future, and to push the bounds of what is considered feasible even further. I look forward to this challenge," says Head of Development Gregor Gries.