

ROLLS-ROYCE

# The Cherry on Top

**Rolls-Royce redefines manual labor.  
A hand-painted trim line puts the finishing touch on the premium cars  
from Goodwood, England. The paint comes from Wörwag.**

By Michael Thiem; photos by Frederik Laux



100 milliliters of  
exclusivity: because  
every brushstroke  
counts, Rolls-Royce  
relies on quality  
from Wörwag.

There's one story that Andreas Bäuerle, head of the industrial liquid coatings department at Wörwag, loves to tell again and again. At a trade conference, attendees are having a spirited discussion about a new paint shop in England. The talk is of fourteen modern electrostatic high-speed rotating atomizers, more efficient processes, the perfect paint finish. A coating for luxury cars. For Rolls-Royce. The pinnacle of exclusivity on four wheels. "And then," reports one of the assembled with amazement, "someone comes and paints two trim lines. By hand!" The listeners are duly astounded. That's Bäuerle's cue. "And the paint is from us," he adds. Everyone is speechless.

Now we've come to Goodwood in southern England. In the finest car plant in the world, 800 specialists manufacture some 3,600 premium cars a year. The factory exudes an almost clinical cleanliness. Extravagance is the default mode here. And one that is appreciated by the Queen, the Sultan of Brunei, and of course the Beatles. The cars with the striking hood ornament known as Emily are legendary. And all but unaffordable. No Rolls costs less than 200,000 euros, and most cost at least double that. Not that anyone talks about the price. Extras are standard, the finest materials the rule. Each car is unique.

### Honoring craftsmanship

This kind of individuality could only be achieved in a workshop like this. Some 600 hours are planned for the manufacture of the Phantom model. By comparison, a small mass-produced car is finished in about 15 hours.

At Rolls-Royce, they still swear by that most complex of all tools: the human hand. It possesses the touch and dexterity enabled by roughly 100 touch cells per square centi-

meter. With our fingers, we humans can sense structures smaller than 200 micrometers. No machine handles materials with such delicacy—or can invest them with such personality.

Mark Court is the artist in the team. He appears on the scene when the car is almost finished. He neither tightens any screws, nor does he check or polish anything. He celebrates; sets the cherry on top of the cake. Only then is the masterpiece finished. He must feel like the drummer in the "Storm



Clouds Cantata" from the Hitchcock film *The Man Who Knew Too Much*. He patiently waits for his part before majestically clanging his cymbals together at the crucial moment. The final chord.

### Trim paint in tiny cans

Court's instrument is a tiny special brush from the art supply store. The bristles are made of the hair from a squirrel's tail. Court, in his early fifties and long since a living legend, uses the brush to give each Rolls its coachline (see small photo above). Upon request, the double line along each side gives the luxury car a special touch. With each line measuring 6 meters, Court applies 24 meters to each car. To do so, he needs about 50 milliliters of paint and four hours. And an extremely steady hand. "I draw the line freehand; it's a talent," he says. "I have to paint the line with equal pressure or it will be thicker in some places and thinner in others."

The artist is aided in his work by a paint that Wörwag produces especially for this use. It bears the type designation W240 L. The letter L stands for Linierfarbe, the German term for trim paint. The basic recipe was developed in 1999 for the trim line on BMW motorcycles. Word of its quality quickly got back to England. Since 2003, Wörwag has delivered around

200 kilograms of the paint to Goodwood—in carefully packed small packages with at least ten handy 100-milliliter cans. Art supplies from Zuffenhausen. "Having the opportunity to manage such a product is absolutely fascinating," says Bäuerle.

What makes the trim paint from Wörwag so special? It produces no bubbles, enables an exceptionally clean stroke, and Court can reapply the brush multiple times without it being noticeable later. "We have to create the paint with that in mind," explains Mike Mischkulnik, the man at Wörwag who fulfills Rolls-Royce's wishes in the customer lab. "The paint has to remain stable." That's particularly a challenge with metallic tones, because the developers have to ensure that the aluminum flakes are applied evenly. Leather or fabric patterns are often used as a template. The development of a new trim paint takes up to four months. Sometimes as many as 30 trials are necessary. "So far we've managed every color tone that was requested of us," says Mischkulnik. And there's no question: manufacturing it is an art as well. Court can count on the quality of the paint with every brushstroke. ■



ANDREAS BÄUERLE has been with Wörwag since 2001. As the head of the customer lab for industrial liquid paints, the trained paint lab technician is responsible for the trim paints for Rolls-Royce. "At present we have recipes for 30 color tones. But we also fulfill special requests. Every Rolls-Royce is a masterpiece and absolutely unique."