Fashion on wheels

**The *atelier* of cars**

* **Nick Allen designs patterns by hand for the upholstery of new models**
* **This ‘car tailor’ uses 30 km of thread every year on the stitching for seats, steering wheels and gearknobs**
* **Car interiors are also getting treated to the trend of colour customising**

**Martorell, 31/01/2017.**– While around the world the final stitches are being added to the fashion collections that will be showcased on catwalks in New York, London, Milan or Paris, at the SEAT Design Centre new proposals are being created to dress vehicles. Master tailor Nick Allen decides what kind of stitching, fabrics and colours will feature on the seats of the latest models for market launch. We visit him in his *atelier*, where he explains the ins and outs of his daily activity:

**-The background of a car tailor:** Nick Allen has 35 years of experience in the sector. **“I’ve been creating car interiors by hand since I was 16”**, he tells us. He designs patterns in his *atelier*, striving to come up with the best finishes for the seats, just as a high fashion designer would do.

**-“My hands are my eyes”:** Nick always examines the upholstery by running his hands over it to feel the texture, the grain and finish of each material. **“My hands are like my eyes. By touching each piece I can feel its quality and know how it’s going to work under the needle in the sewing machine.”** Every different texture requires Nick to adapt the pressure he exerts on the foot control, either slower for thick material or letting thinner material glide effortlessly under the needle. And which is his favourite material to work with? “**I prefer working with leather, because it’s natural”**, he admits.

**-30 kilometres of thread every year:**  30,000 metres is the length of thread that Nick uses every year for all his sewing needs. This skilled tailor sews all the steering wheels by hand with the help of a curved needle. He uses the German knot stitch, which leaves the most exposed thread. He chooses the thickness and colour from among 250 spools of up to 100 different colours.

**-Thirty styles for a seat:** ‘Style’, ‘Chic’, ‘FR’… Our car tailor created up to thirty different variations for each seat of the new SEAT Ibiza model, performing tests on the upholstery and materials two years before production of the vehicle began. During the testing stage, he is also in charge of shaping the cushion foam to ensure the seats are as comfortable as possible for the driver.

**-Colours to suit every taste: “Colours make a world of difference. Each car has its own personality and its own colour palette.”** Nick Allen says that many customers unconsciously also associate colours with vehicle types and characteristics. **“For example, many people link greens and light browns with crossovers, dark browns to more classic family cars, and black and red to speed”,** he explains.

**-A craftsman in Industry 4.0:** On his work table, computers and cutting edge technology give way to scissors, spools of thread and sewing machines. **“Mine is a traditional trade and that’s why it hasn’t changed much”**. But then again, Nick has been incorporating new trends, such as car customising which offers several finishes and colours.

-**Nick’s ‘recipe’:** Even though SEAT’s car tailor will never reveal his secrets, a few things he does share with us are the best ingredients for practicing his profession the best way possible: **“Have a good eye for detail, good hands...and above all, a lot of patience. The rest comes from experience”**.And his own catchphrase is **“Don’t rush it!”**

**SEAT** is the only company that designs, develops, manufactures and markets cars in Spain. A member of the Volkswagen Group, the multinational has its headquarters in Martorell (Barcelona), exporting 80% of its vehicles, and is present in over 80 countries through a network of 1,700 dealerships. In 2017, SEAT achieved worldwide sales of nearly 470,000 vehicles.

The SEAT Group employs close to 14,700 professionals at its three production centres – Barcelona, El Prat de Llobregat and Martorell, where it manufactures the highly successful Ibiza, Leon and Arona. Additionally, the company produces the Ateca and the Toledo in the Czech Republic, the Alhambra in Portugal and the Mii in Slovakia.

The multinational has a Technical Centre, which operates as a knowledge hub that brings together 1,000 engineers who are focussed on developing innovation for Spain’s largest industrial investor in R&D. SEAT already features the latest connectivity technology in its vehicle range and is currently engaged in the company’s global digitalisation process to promote the mobility of the future.

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