

Leather, thread and dye: cars or books?

- **Bookbinding and car design, two creative processes united by attention to detail**
- **Craftspeople of both disciplines shape the same materials by hand**
- **One kilometre of thread for a car, one metre for a novel**

Martorell, 22/04/2019. At first glance, binding a book and designing a car have little in common. But when creating a car there are times when state of the art technology gives way to handiwork, scissors and sewing machines. And this is where the two processes overlap. Patience and the constant search for piecemeal perfection are the secrets shared by the artisan professions, even though the end result of one weighs over a tonne and the other just half a kilo. This is how these two apparently different skills resemble each other.

It all starts with a piece of paper: This is used to jot down ideas in the form of pictures or words. The design of a car arises from dozens of hand drawn sketches that feature natural volumes and even depict movement. Paper is also the starting point for bookbinder Geòrgia Olivé, from the Relligats Olivé artisan workshop. In her words, what she does **“is something magical; it's breathing life into a book”**. The first thing she does is make a series of sections with the help of a folding machine. When ready she leaves them sit under a weight for several hours.

Cowhide: Good quality leather is one of the most precious materials for upholstery. **“I prefer it because it's natural”**, says SEAT tailor Nick Allen. **“I only have to feel each piece to gauge its quality and know how it's going to behave under the needle of the sewing machine”** he adds. Geòrgia Olivé has 80 different bolts of fabric in her workshop to create book covers. She also agrees that leather is the best choice for making a quality product due to its smell, feel and embossing possibilities.

A stitch in time: The sheets that are folded into sections are sewn together by machine, but bookbinders also restore centuries-old volumes that are so delicate they can only be hand sewn. **“You have to be extra careful with these items so the paper does not tear”** explains Geòrgia. One metre of thread is needed for a book, while a car requires one kilometre. There are 100 different colours of thread on 250 spools in the SEAT workshop. Steering wheels require a curved needle and the seam features highly visible accent stitching.

A splash of colour: It is not easy to come up with the exact shade that defines the personality of a creation. It takes more than 1,000 litres of paint to reach the desired shade of a new car. **“100 variations of a single colour are made by mixing 50 different pigments and metallic particles to see which hue looks the best”**, explains Carol Gómez from SEAT's Color&Trim department. In order to get the right colour for a book cover you have to know what it is about. Maroon and gold embossed lettering is a safe bet for a work of classical literature, while bright colours are best suited to light reading. A palette of blues is ideal for marine-themed narratives, and greens go well for any text on nature.

Paint, glue and no stray particles: Dust is the common enemy of both crafts; tiny specks can ruin the entire creative process. Cars are painted at a temperature between 21 and 25 degrees. The spray booths are equipped with a ventilation system similar to the ones in an operating

room to prevent dust from settling on the seven coats that are applied. To restore a book, Geòrgia first spends several hours dusting it off with a brush with slow, gentle strokes on each page. Ventilation and drying are also key factors, especially after applying glue to the first and last blank pages and the muslin fabric that joins the pages to the covers. **“Humidity could affect the paper or damage the cardboard of the book covers, and there's no turning back”** says Geòrgia. The drying process can take up to 24 hours for each step, which is nothing when it comes to rescuing a book from oblivion.

Two disciplines, three common values

Patience: The different thickness, age or type of paper or fabric needs their own dedication time. **“You can't rush a book”** says Geòrgia. SEAT tailor Nick Allen's motto is **“take your time”**. It does not matter how long it takes to bind a book or design car upholstery; what is important is that the outcome is flawless.

Experience: Geòrgia Olivé grew up in her father's bookbinding workshop. She used to play among his tools and stacks of paper and fabrics, and her childhood entertainment turned into her profession. Nick Allen has 35 years' experience in the sector. **“I've been handcrafting car interiors since I was 16”**. And the experience they both have tells Geòrgia the exact temperature of the composing stick, the tool used to emboss the title, without a thermometer; or how fast Allen should operate his sewing machine depending on the upholstery he is working with.

Sensitivity: Running a finger over each stitch to check that the seam is perfect on a steering wheel or holding the pages of a book together. Smelling the leather or lignin, the characteristic smell of old books... That is how great craftspeople stand out from the rest. **“Have you ever fallen in love with a book?”** asks Geòrgia. She often does as she creates or repairs one, to the point that **“when I finish one and it leaves the workroom, I miss it because in the time we spent together we had established a special bond”**, she admits.

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 on all five continents. In 2018, SEAT sold 517,600 cars, the highest figure in the 68-year history of the brand, posted a profit after tax of 294 million euros and a record turnover of close to 10 billion euros.

The SEAT Group employs more than 15,000 professionals and has three production centres – Barcelona, El Prat de Llobregat and Martorell, where it manufactures the highly successful Ibiza, Arona and Leon. Additionally, the company produces the Ateca in the Czech Republic, the Tarraco in Germany, 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.

SEAT Communications



Gemma Solà
Content&Platforms Management
M/ +34 639 944 087
gemma.sola@seat.es

Vanessa Petit
Content Generation
M/ +34 680 153 938
vanessa.petit@seat.es



SEAT Mediacenter