

A house full of color

Colors speak volumes – especially when it comes to cars. BASF Coatings has inaugurated a new Color Design Studio recognizing the special importance of color.

You can sit and ponder over nuances for hours,” says designer Mark Gutjahr. He and his associates Eva Höfli and Katja Pauli spend a lot of time with BASF Coatings automotive customers in the conference room of the Color Design Studio discussing key questions. What paint colors go best with which models? What feelings and associations do they provoke? What trend do they represent, or perhaps establish? “The quest for new paint colors is increasingly challenging,” says Höfli. The range of available nuances and effects is expanding, with pioneering pigments and techniques opening up new options that lead to more complex technical and design considerations.

Aside from clothing fashions, hardly any product is more closely linked with consumer self-image than the automobile. Having the right color alone can be decisive for buying behavior, which is why fin-



Planet Design:
The BASF Color Design Studio is breaking new ground for automotive OEM finishes.

ish is one of the principal battlefields in the cutthroat automotive market.

In a strategic move, BASF Coatings opened a new and expanded Color Design Studio with its own building, located near corporate headquarters in Münster. “Our growing team now enjoys ideal working conditions,” says Gutjahr, adding, “It is the biggest facility of its kind in the coatings industry. The additional space and bigger rooms allow us to present more effectively. And the atmosphere of the facility itself promotes open, productive communication.”

The modern building offers more than 300 square meters of space, about 180 of which are set aside for presentation. There is also a conference room, a library with comfortable seating and a lighting booth for simulating lighting variations and observing the optical effects on paint colors. “You could hardly ask for a better environment for presentations, and

for the subsequent creative process in working with the customer,” Pauli confirms. Especially the garden, just a step away through the wide sliding glass doors of the presentation room.

75 new colors

Each year the Design Team develops more than 20 trendsetting ‘key colors’ for the automobile industry. Around 75 new colors are being presented in addition to the key colors for the North America and Asia Pacific regions. The designers draw inspiration from architecture, product design, fashion, art, consumer preferences and many other sources and fields. They study trade journals and design magazines, attend trade shows and art galleries, and meet with trend consultants. “We love coming up with something new,” says Höfli, “Right now, one of the things we are working on is a ultra-chromatic finish to achieve a deep and luminous color effect.”



Inviting: Immediately upon entering, visitors are met with an array of colors.

Technical feasibility is a key issue. That is why we remain in constant dialog with BASF Coatings color labs. “It is always exciting to see advances and new potential being discovered for technologies that can turn ideas into reality,” says Gutjahr. The lab’s sophisticated equipment allows us to reliably predict at an early stage >



■ COLOR TREND PREDICTION

Europe’s colors

Environmental awareness in Europe is a mega-trend that influences car paints, and economic considerations are also playing a heightened role. BASF Coatings designers Eva Höfli, Mark Gutjahr, and Katja Pauli have incorporated these factors into this year’s color trend prediction. Both trends have to do with change within an existing framework. “The days are over when something had to be totally new and revolutionary to be seen as modern and desirable,” says Höfli.

Now it is about evolution instead of revolution. The most popular car colors by far are still silver, black, blue, red, and white, but the details and nuances are changing. New pigments can now enrich the usually cool silver color with a warm, almost organic note, and subtle color variations. This expanded range of expression is

part of a third main trend towards deliberate restraint and elegant understatement: “Class should only be revealed upon a second or third glance,” says Pauli. The popularity of soft white in Europe for premium vehicles continues, and blue and red tones are obtaining greater depth, intensity, and richness. Price-sensitive but individualistic buyers are another important segment according to Gutjahr: “The challenge here is to develop color effects that are easier to realize in production without being boring.”

The color black is undergoing an interesting development: “The black of tomorrow will no longer be the simple solution it is today,” predicts Gutjahr. “It will be able to communicate a never-before-seen spectrum of emotions.” Extremely clear, deep black nuances will soon exist along-side effervescently scintillating or accented black tones. “As odd as it may sound,” says Gutjahr, “it will be a luminous black – even in the dark.”



Presentation: Color tone is essential, having a major impact on the character of products. Designer Marc Gutjahr (left) presenting new trends.

Inspiration: Developing new color tones takes a lot of feeling, and a lot of research. From left: Richard Amberger (Marketing Europe BASF Coatings) and designer Katja Pauli; below: designer Eva Höfli.



whether a particular finish in development will be suitable for mass production later on. If a finish is considered feasible, it is called a 'perfect match'.

Trend tracking, color creation, and technical implementation – developing finish colors is a long and complicated process. It all starts and ends in the Color Design Studio – from initial research to presentation of the perfect match to the customer. ■

→ www.basf-coatings.de ("Design")

■ THE DESIGNERS

Mark Gutjahr (35) Mr. Gutjahr attended the Cologne International School of Design, completing a degree as Master of Design (FH). Formerly a freelance design consultant in Cologne, Mark is a member of the bibi*gutjahr design cooperative and a founding member of the design group kombinat. He joined BASF Coatings in 2005.

Eva Höfli (28) A trained gilder, Ms. Höfli studied communicational design at the Dortmund University of Applied Sciences, majoring in object and spatial design. She has worked for the Vitra Design Museum, the Center Georges Pompidou in France, and the agency Pichiglas in Barcelona. She joined BASF Coatings in 2008.

Katja Pauli (36) Trained in drafting and interior architecture, Ms. Pauli studied color design at the Hildesheim University of Applied Science and Art. After her studies she worked as a freelance designer for an architecture firm. She joined BASF Coatings in 2005.