

Paintwork

Painter Choose your painter carefully. A painter used to spraying large areas of flat or near flat surfaces, such as a car, may not be so clever with frame tubes or fenders which have small radius curves. Find out if they are used to painting bikes and to what quality. Do they have a picture file of previous work and names of previous customers who you can talk to? All of these confidence-building processes are necessary before you hand them your bike to paint. You have already spent many thousands of hard-earned cash on your custom. At one fell swoop it can all be ruined by poor paintwork. Choose carefully. Some painters have a reputation from painting well known (expensive customs) bikes and as a result command a higher price for their paintwork. You will have to decide whether that higher price fits within your budget and whether their extra skills are needed or their high price is warranted. The question whether having a painter/airbrush expert with a known reputation may enhance the re-sale value of your bike is something to think about. I am a little doubtful if such a reputation is worth any extra cost. A paint scheme is special to you and not necessarily to anyone else. It's your custom and choose everything, including paint/airbrush work only because you like it.

One Colour Choosing a single colour will make the choice of painter easier and cheaper. The choice of painter is still very important, as quality is paramount. Once the painter choice is made, you can be more generous with types of paint. Simple graphics may be possible with these painters. Explore the possibilities with the painter. Some of the best-finished custom bikes have only a single colour. Remember a famous design principle 'Less is more' this is not a universal design principle applicable in every instance, but well worth remembering.

Graphics Painters doing graphics and good paintwork are not always easy to find. Imaginative designs are the province of an artist allied to the qualifications of a craftsman. The painter should receive from you clear and detailed requirements. If you leave it to him to decide what to apply you may well be very disappointed by the result, thereby killing off your new custom which you have to ride for many years along with a constant reminder. Make some drawings, get some designs from any source or get some inspiration from customs you have seen in magazines. Tell the painter what you want to see on fenders, frame, and tank, oil tank etc. Be in control at every step and you won't be disappointed. However if after listening to you the painter comes up with a design that blows your mind away, go with it!

Preparation I am presuming that the paintwork is something you will outsource. The painter will take care of

Metalwork preparation

Applying filler to welded parts

Undercoats and top coats.

Frames are normally either tig or mig welded. A competent welder will try to ensure the cleanest and neatest welds. However of all the frames available there is a wide variety of weld finishes and some frames will require much filler to be applied to the welds to cover them up and improve the appearance to a level that will be unnoticeable after painting. Mig welds require the higher degree of filler preparation. If a tig-welded frame has been welded to a high standard, you may make a judgement not to have any filler applied at all and just leave the welds to be seen. Look at the silver bike and the close up of a swingarm weld shown below. There has been no filler applied to this neat high quality weld. This is my bike and I wanted any potential buyer to be able to see the weld quality. I looked on the weld quality as a selling feature. Leaving a quality weld to be seen can give confidence to a potential purchaser. Occasionally a thickly filled weld can crack and you know you have complete confidence that a weld cannot crack.



House of Kolor and Airbrush magazines

There are some websites on the internet from some of the major paint suppliers that can be very helpful for your paintwork homework. They can also list books which can assist you to gain further information. Not having read most of these books, I can't attest to their usefulness. Most seem rather expensive, so only buy one. However they are worth considering.

There are some airbrush magazines which are a cheaper alternative to buying a book on the subject. Some are combined with Tattooing so unless that is also your interest go for the first variety. One title to look for is 'Art Scene International' these magazines are normally published in Europe, USA and Japan. Airbrush equipment will be found advertised here too.