

Paintwork

Choose your painter carefully, there are a lot of painters out there most good but some just OK. A painter used to spraying large areas of flat or near flat surfaces like on 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. Have they got a portfolio and pictures 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 foul swoop it can all be ruined by poor paintwork. Choose carefully. Some painters have a reputation for 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 as to 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 unless it is truly a one-off. It's your custom and choose everything, including paint/airbrush work only because you like it.

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.

Painters that can do 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!

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 judgment not to have any filler applied at all and just leave the welds to be seen. Leaving a quality weld to be seen can give confidence to a potential purchaser; a thickly filled weld can crack and leave you a problem with the paint.

There are many websites 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.