

AUTOMOTIVE

## Rolls-Royce gets carbon fiber makeover from design houses

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*Rolls-Royce at London's Hurlingham Club*

By FORREST CARDAMENIS

British automaker Rolls-Royce Motor Cars is getting an aesthetic overhaul from automotive designers to meet consumers' personalized wishes.

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European design house Bengala Automotive and U.S.-based design house Vitesse AuDessus have begun a line for bespoke carbon fiber modifications on current Rolls-Royce models. As consumers look for products that stand out and reflect their individuality, customizations have become popular and force automakers to emphasize their own bespoke offerings.

"We are not the first company to use compressed composites, or as we call it, Carbon Matrix technology, as either a structural component or exterior/interior finish option," said Stefany Sanchez, CEO of [Vitesse AuDessus](#).

"Lamborghini introduced Forged Carbon in their Sesto Elemento concept car and uses the material extensively in production and as a finish option.

"Where we have carved a niche is in the use of the material in the luxury category," she said.

### Carbon fiber

Rolls-Royce's complete range from 2003 to 2016 the Phantom, Phantom Coup, Phantom Drophead Coup, Wraith, Dawn and Ghost - can now all be outfitted with Bengala and Vitesse AuDessus' carbon fiber modifications. The compressed carbon matrix more closely resembles Lamborghini and Callaway's forged carbon fiber and is being marketed on aesthetic rather than performance incentives.

Among the available extensions are a carbon fiber hood retailing for \$7,250, a front grille surround for approximately \$4,000 (varying slightly depending on the model), door mirrors and mounts for \$3,125, windshield surrounds for a similar price and a roof for nearly \$10,000.



*Bengala's Rolls-Royce Wraith*

Carbon fiber wheels, touted as a first in the industry, will run consumers \$21,500 for a set. Each has been tested to meet or exceed manufacturing standards and includes a heat-protective coating.

"Carbon fibre wheels are the clearest and best performance choice as they dramatically lower unsprung weight," Ms. Sanchez said. "The only failing is in the complicated production process and long manufacturing lead-times. Forged carbon wheels solve this problem and open the doors to a wide range of future applications."

Lead-time is four to six weeks for the wheels and three to four weeks for all other products and are available worldwide.



*Rolls-Royce Black Badge Ghost 400*

Additionally, the range of products is available in the weave, tint and finish of the customer's choice. A five-year warranty against defect and yellowing is included, as is an OEM quality fit and finish.

#### Bespoke modifications

While automakers cannot prevent third party companies from making alternate parts for those looking for enhanced customization, the success of such alterations has led brands to debut new products or adjust strategy to curb the practice and absorb the revenue.

For example, earlier this year British automaker Rolls-Royce Motor Cars showed its dark side to attract risk takers and self-empowered, self-confident youth.

"Black Badge," a darker, more confident and more powerful Rolls-Royce, will take shape in a permanent Bespoke series targeting goal-oriented and self-made young affluents. The new series is a significant makeover for Rolls-Royce, but is being implemented in response to a changing consumer base and habits ([see story](#)).

With young Rolls-Royce owners looking to third-party sources to bring an edge to the vehicle, the brand offered its own take on the style.

Similarly, other automakers will find ways to highlight in-house bespoke divisions, encouraging consumers to let the brand handle bespoke customization.

For example, British automaker Bentley Motors is keeping affluent anglers in mind by accessorizing its Bentayga model specifically for fly fishing.

The Bentayga is Bentley's first foray into the SUV category, making this sports package align with an active and adventurous owner. Touted as the ultimate luxury car for fly fishing, the Bentley Bentayga Fly Fishing was designed by the automaker's in-house bespoke division, Mulliner ([see story](#)).

"Since our product still retains carbon fiber's structural and weight-saving properties it cannot be classified as a purely aesthetic offering," Ms. Sanchez said. "However, given that the application for this program is a vehicle with a curb weight that is some 2,000 pounds heavier than, say, a Ferrari 488, the utility of the material gives way to pure opulence.

"To be sure, there is something to be said about pragmatism in the automotive space, but for companies like Rolls-Royce, Bengala, and ourselves, we are guided by the desires of our discerning clientele," she said. "And that clientele demands impeccable craftsmanship, an extensive finish offering, high quality materials and exclusivity. This program offers just that."

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