

AUTOMOTIVE

Lexus leans into craftsmanship tradition with artisan collaboration

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Lexus has tapped U.K. artisans to create works inspired by different vehicles. Image credit: Lexus

By SARAH RAMIREZ

Toyota Corp.'s Lexus is honoring the mastery of artisans in a craftsmanship campaign targeting drivers in the United Kingdom.

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The series "In Search of Takumi" draws parallels between the automaker's renowned Takumi team and skilled artisans in the U.K., tasking craftspeople to create bespoke pieces inspired by Lexus vehicles. Design, tradition and craftsmanship are often centerpieces of Lexus campaigns, as a way for the automaker to differentiate itself from competitors with longer histories.

"Lexus wants to show you the inspiration behind their vehicles, how they are more than just a car or transportation," said Lauren Fix, automotive expert at [The Car Coach](#), Lancaster, NY. "The campaign is unique and may cause others to take a look at the Lexus cars."

Handcrafted

Each episode of the series focuses on a different Lexus vehicle and a unique material or craft. Artisans narrate each short, explaining the processes used to create their Lexus-inspired works.

The most recent episode is "metal" and features Will Barker from Colchester, Essex. An entrepreneur, Mr. Barker has been a blacksmith for 15 years.

Blacksmith Will Barker was inspired by the front grille and Hadori door trim of the Lexus ES

Mr. Barker's metal sculpture, "Takumi," is inspired by the Lexus ES.

It primarily recalls two design features of the sedan: the front grille and the Hadori door trim. In a reflection of Lexus' Japanese heritage, the Hadori door trim is itself inspired by katana swords used by samurai.

Mr. Barker created the sculpture from a large piece of mild steel. He first shaped it using a blowtorch before polishing away the corrosion from the burning process.

He also uses pattern welding, the same process used to create katana swords. The blacksmith also used more

modern techniques to weld the two components of the sculpture the more organic base and the grill-inspired top together.

In the film, Mr. Barker talks about the challenges of metalworking and the skill and strength required to make steel malleable. He also delves into the creative process and how his approach to the sculpture changed.



Metalworker Will Barker took the lead from the traditions of the Takumi for his sculpture. Image credit: Lexus

"Takumi is when you take the set standard and then you strive for better, you strive for more," Mr. Barker says in his episode. "We live in such a multi-processed, quickly mass-produced world that we sometimes forget that working with our hands takes time."

Previous episodes featured leatherworker Otis Ingrams, who crafted a supple chair inspired by the Lexus LC, and glassmaker Peter Layton, who created a sculpture inspired by the Lexus LS.

Takumi touch

Lexus has previously featured its own master craftspeople, the Takumi, in extensive marketing campaigns.

In 2018, the automaker took consumers to the factory floor to share the step-by-step process of creating a Lexus from the perspective of its renowned Takumi team. The "Takumi Living" series includes short vignettes that illustrate how the craftspeople who have more than 60,000 hours of training use the sense of touch, sight and hearing ([see story](#)).

Lexus recently achieved a sales milestone in the European market.

Thirty years after launching in Europe, Lexus has sold more than one million vehicles in the market. In 2019, Lexus achieved 10 million global sales and earlier this year the automaker sold its 5 millionth sport utility vehicle ([see story](#)).