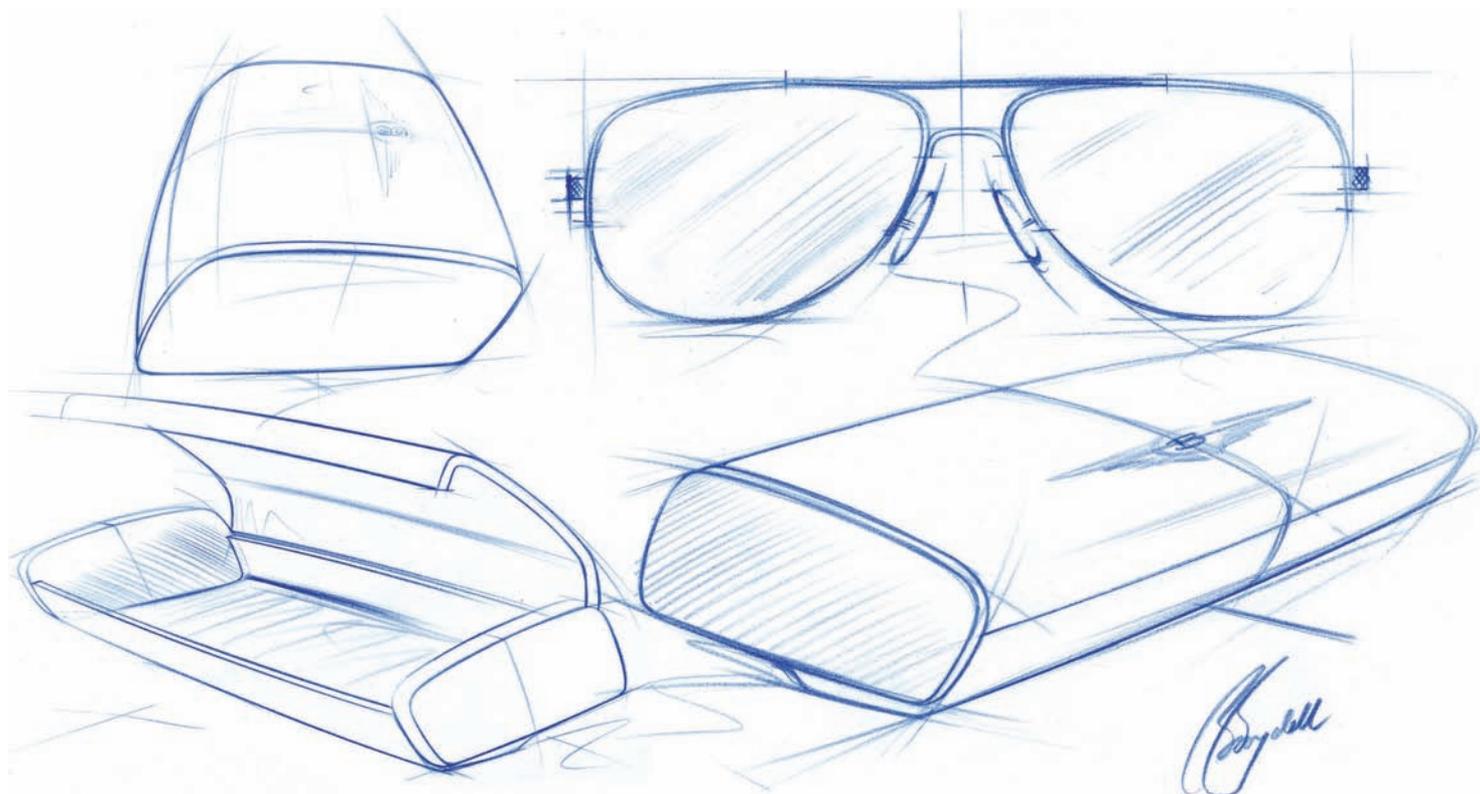


BENTLEY

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BENTLEY



Parallel lines

AS JONATHAN BELL DISCOVERS, BENTLEY CHOOSES ITS LUXURY PARTNERS WITH CARE – AND WORKS CLOSELY WITH THEM TO ENSURE COMPLETE CONTINUITY OF ETHOS IN CRAFT AND DESIGN >

The history of Bentley is not just a story of motor racing, grand tours, engineering and industrial innovation, but also a history of strong partnerships with the finest manufacturers in every field of luxury. These fertile associations date back to the coach-building era, when the carmaker was a gateway to a world of craft and artisanship. The 8 Litre, the last Bentley to be designed by W.O. Bentley himself, and perhaps the technical and stylistic pinnacle of the marque before the modern period, exemplified this collaboration between manufacturer and specialist designer.

The 8 Litre was conceived by W.O. as a very personal project, a machine that fulfilled his exacting requirements. Of the 100 cars built, all were unique, with a variety of body styles undertaken by some of the leading coachbuilders of the era, operating out of small workshops and factories on the fringes of cities like London and Paris. Bentley 8 Litres were designed by Vanden Plas in Brent, Thrupp and Maberly of Cricklewood, Arthur Mulliner of Northampton, J. Gurney Nutting in Croydon, Park Ward, and Freestone & Webb in Willesden, as well as French coachbuilders Kellner, Henri Binder and Letourneur & Marchand, and Frank Hershey of Murphy Coachworks in Pasadena – a wide range of designs and body types underpinned by the Bentley's mighty engineering.

Such partnerships were integral to the high-end car market of the day, creating cars of unrivalled elegance and sophistication. Today, Bentley's design department, led by Dirk van Braeckel, together with the company's renowned Mulliner division, continues this proud coachbuilding tradition. But the company has gone further, extending the importance of drawing inspiration from and working with a broad spectrum of luxury brands. For 2011, Bentley finds itself in an unmatched position, with a new flagship, the Mulsanne, and an all-new Continental GT beginning production.

Parallel lines *continued*

The company's design collaborations are also burgeoning and we spoke to five companies who have worked closely with Bentley to create definitive products for the discerning customer.

Zai Skis are one of Switzerland's most prestigious young companies, founded in 2004 by former Salomon designer Simon Jacomet, who now works in collaboration with entrepreneurs Benedikt Germanier and Patrick Markus Aisher. As Simon Jacomet explains, the Disentis-based company was delighted to work closely with Bentley. "Although I knew a little about the racing background of Bentley's early days, I have always considered its design to be outstanding and powerful and not too trendy, ever since the emergence of the Continental GT."

The collaboration was kick-started by Bentley's chairman Dr Franz-Josef Paefgen, a keen skier. "Dr Paefgen visited our factory, as he wanted to see how his own zai skis had been manufactured," says Jacomet. "I was impressed by his interest in all kinds of different materials and in the processes."

The end result was an invitation to Crewe, a meeting with Bentley designer Brett Boydell and the creation of the 'zai for Bentley' ski, a sporting, functional design that aligns explicitly with the Continental Supersports. "I was working in close collaboration with designer Daniele Ceccomori, and from the beginning we agreed to work strictly with typical Bentley design elements, like the diamond design, which was ideal to influence the torsion parts of the ski. The design of the tip and the end form of the ski are as well the implementations of 'Bentley lines,'" says Jacomet.

The finished product includes a newly developed carbon-fibre compound in order to create a very light and strong ski, finished off with a discrete application of the famous 'B' logo. "It was important for me to get the Bentley driving feeling in order to implement it into the 'ski-ing character' of the ski," says Jacomet, "so at the first test in Crewe I drove the Supersports and enjoyed its enormous power, as well as the huge feeling of safety. After that, I knew what I was looking for."

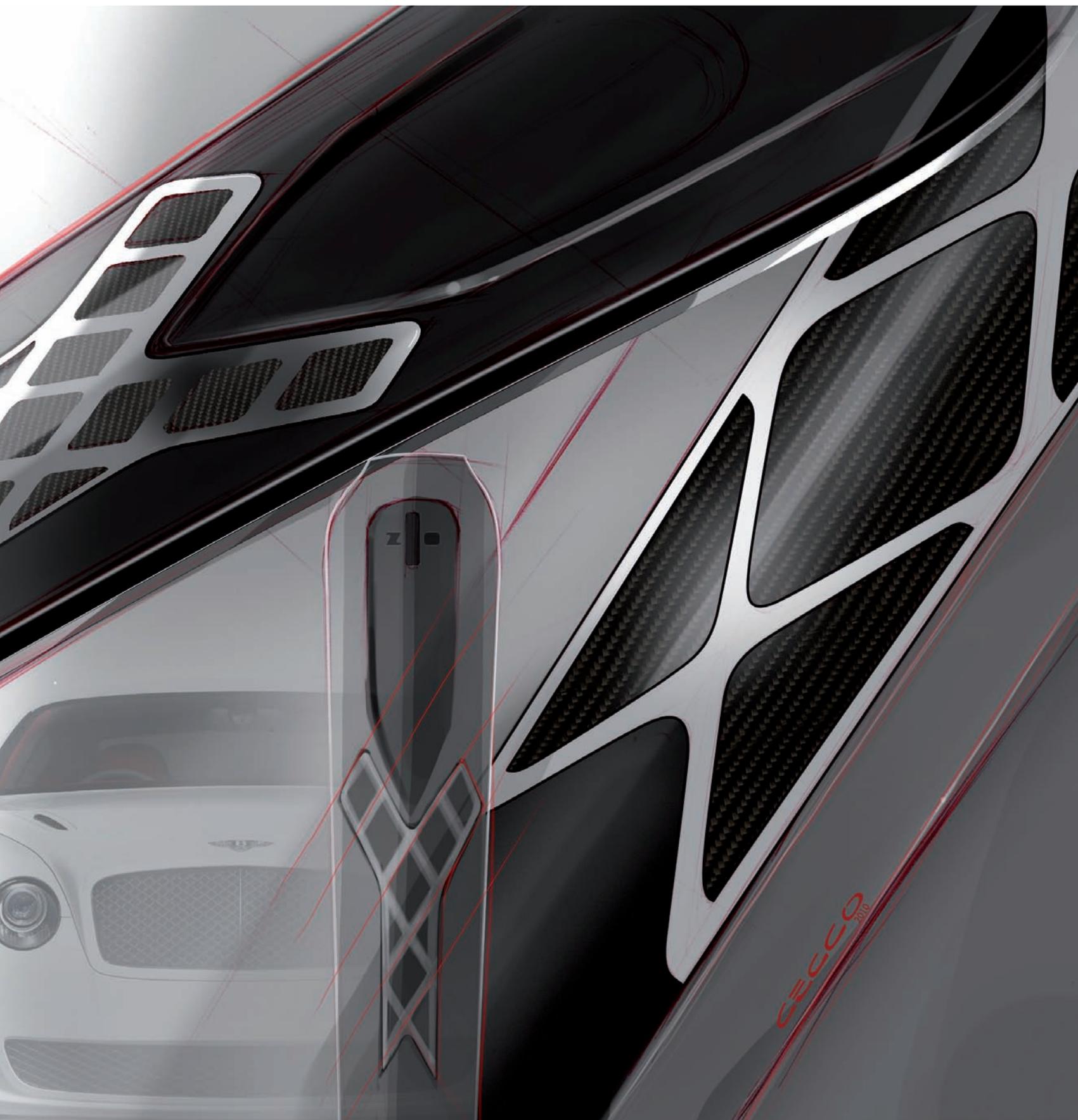
The Supersport skis reference the 'stripped down' nature of the car itself, with excess weight and extraneous detail pared back to make the ultimate sporting ski. Limited to just 250 pairs, the skis, which come with custom titanium and carbon-fibre poles with leather grips and a ski bag, use the newly patented material, Zaiira®, in the top layer, combined with a centre of natural rubber and a mix of uni-directional and woven carbon fabric.

Jacomet has built a business that fulfils all the demands of the modern luxury manufacturer: small scale, highly attentive and aware of the need to form a close bond between customer and manufacturer. With just a dozen staff, zai has evolved to the point where it is a technological leader, pushing the boundaries of ski-making and operating on a very different scale and time-frame to mass-market products. Just like the hundreds of man-hours that go into creating a Bentley interior, each zai for Bentley ski is subjected to hours of grinding and waxing in order to create a pure, blemish-free surface.

For Giuseppe Aquila, CEO of Tibaldi, the Bentley project fulfilled a long-held family connection to the firm. "The partnership with Bentley came about from my father's great passion for the British marque," Aquila explains.



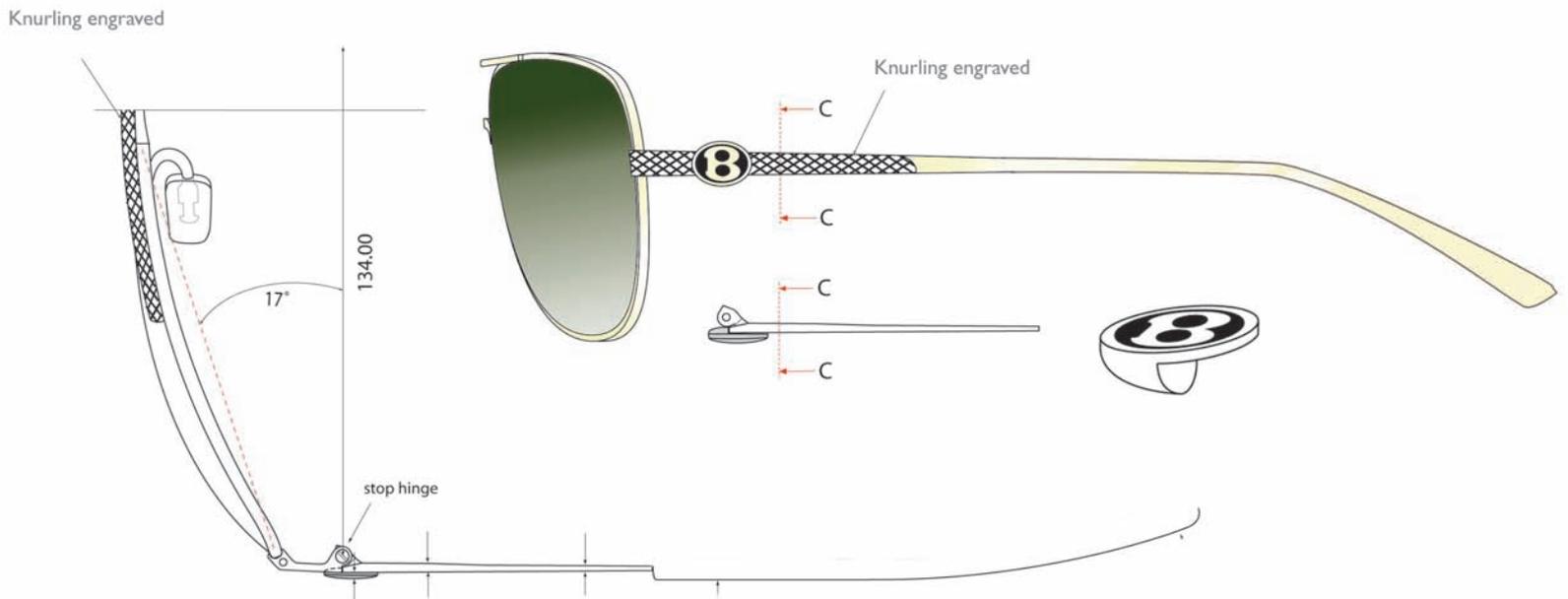
Above Functionality, extreme performance and an understated elegance are the characteristics of the 'zai for Bentley' ski, closely modelled on the design of the Continental Supersports.



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Opposite Bentley's partnerships with Tibaldi and Estede reflect its desire to create luxury products that faithfully reflect the marque's design traditions.

Right Bentley designer Brett Boydell worked closely with the zai team to create the 'zai for Bentley' ski.



Parallel lines *continued*

"He has owned more than 10 Bentley cars and had always dreamed to team up with them in some way. I therefore approached Bentley, initially to produce the Bentley Crewe 60 Years limited edition pen, which was subsequently followed by six more collections, Brooklands, Continental, Azure, Mulsanne and now the Continental Slimline and Supersports."

The Vicenza-based pen maker has nearly a century of history to its name and is acutely aware of the role of heritage and design in all its products. "Tibaldi and Bentley share the same brand values: tradition, technological innovation and creativity," says Aquila. "Most importantly, we both share the passion that drives our respective teams."

Tibaldi has collaborated closely with Bentley since 2007. As their names suggest, the new additions to the 'Tibaldi for Bentley' range, the Slimline and the Supersports, take their design characteristics from the lithe, powerful Bentley Supersports. Both pens are lighter and slimmer than their counterparts, designed for smaller hands and pockets. The Continental Slimline uses the design cues of the original Continental pen and reduces the overall dimensions. Just 999 examples of each style – fountain pen, roller ball, ball point and pencil – are being manufactured, with five colours to choose from, each referencing a popular Continental paint colour: Beluga, Silverlake Blue, White, St James Red and Magenta.

The Tibaldi for Bentley Supersports collection goes further. Tibaldi worked closely with Bentley's Robin Page, Head of Interior Design, and Jonathan Punter, to ensure a consistency of material and form. Key Bentley characteristics, such as the knurled surface of Bentley's handmade switchgear, are referenced in the bands across the pen barrel and cap. Most importantly of all, the Supersports pen utilises carbon fibre and aluminium, making the pen feel light yet strong, all the while retaining the feel and perfectly defined proportions that are a characteristic of all Tibaldi pens. Just 630 examples of the Supersports fountain pen and roller ball will be made, a number that reflects the power output of the specially modified W12 engine at the heart of the actual car.

Bentley's ongoing collaboration with Breitling is well documented. For the past decade, Breitling for Bentley watches have represented the synthesis of two performance and craft-focused brands. The latest result of this hugely successful partnership is the Bentley Supersports special series, a limited edition of 1,000 steel-cased chronometers. Breitling has used the raised bezel to reference the knurled metal finish of Bentley's secondary control switches while at its heart, the Bentley Supersports special series is a self-winding chronometer with precise markings and graduations. The watch's functions include a variable tachometer with circular slide rule, red arrow-tipped hand and rubber strap, making it a tough, high-performance timepiece that sits proudly alongside the Supersports itself.

As Eddie Schoepfer, Head of Breitling Design, explains, "Working with Bentley is not just the state-of-the-art factory facility and the breathtaking cars, the brand has a fascinating story and a very distinctive design which inspires us..."

"Built on its racing heritage, the Bentley story is passionate and eventful: 24-hour Le Mans and the Bentley Boys, an authentic design for the Continental GT and Mulsanne, the world's most respected 6.75-litre engine, the handcrafted luxury, the tailor-made customisation at Mulliner."

More recently, the Austrian eyewear manufacturer Estede has worked closely with Bentley's Brett Boydell to develop a range of sunglasses and frames. The 'Estede for Bentley' collection uses precious metals and new surface treatments. Together with silver palladium and 18 carat gold, the Estede pieces also feature platinum – the first time a manufacturer has used this rare precious metal in eyewear. Each pair comes as individually numbered frames in a special presentation box, with the option for each owner to engrave their name and car details on the frame.

Christoph Rosenauer at Estede believes the success of the product is down to the respect and enthusiasm each company has for the other's work. "I think it was important for both sides to understand the interests and the qualities of the other side, before starting such a type of partnership. For me, it was important that it would not be a 'regular' licence deal, but rather something outstanding at least for eyewear," he explains. "I think what Bentley has done in the last years is a masterpiece, both on the technological side, but also in terms of design. To find this equivalent in eyewear was really our key focus."

Finally, as the world's leading manufacturer of luxury grand tourers, it feels appropriate for Bentley to team up with Robert Ettinger of London, one of the capital's finest purveyors of leather goods. Ettinger's Bentley Collection references classic Bentley paint colours, with a Limited Edition range of travel items, including luggage tags, key fobs, passport holders and coin purses, all handmade in England from the finest leather.

Contemporary luxury manufacturing is a vibrant and innovative sector. Bentley, with its long association with innovation and collaborative design, is proud to help bring new products to the market, helping to improve design and manufacturing technology, while sharing skills and craft knowledge with some of the world's most respected names in luxury design **3**

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Jonathan Bell writes about architecture and automotive design for Wallpaper magazine.