

The return of the Gullwing



The Mercedes-Benz 300 SL "Gullwing" was, and still, remains one of the world's handsomest cars. This classic model not only looks as if it could fly, because of its gullwing doors – it actually did "fly" away from its competitors at the time, winning numerous major motor races. Standox recently lent a hand with the restoration of a rare 1955 model.

A mere 1400 Mercedes-Benz 300 SLs were built between 1954 and 1957. With a power output of 175 hp and a top speed of 250 km/hour, it was the fastest sports car in the world at the time. Engineers developed the design based closely on a successful racing model. When the 300 SL was introduced in America – where 80 per cent of all models were sold – Americans dubbed it the "Gullwing". And in fact: its upward-swinging doors do indeed make the car look like a seagull spreading its wings to take flight.

Unprofessional restoration

And it was just such a model, specifically a Mercedes-Benz 300 SL made in 1955, that was recently set to undergo restoration at the Mercedes-Benz Classic Center in Fellbach near Stuttgart. The new owner, a German collector, had purchased it and brought it to the classic car experts in Fellbach. They quickly recognised that the car had been improperly restored years earlier and that it had also been repainted. The factory records documented that what was now a silver car had originally been metallic light blue. "According to our records, only seven Mercedes-Benz 300 SLs were painted this colour," says Michael Plag, project manager at the Mercedes-Benz Classic Center in Fellbach.



With its doors that open upwards, the Mercedes-Benz SL 300 "Gullwing" looks like a seagull spreading its wings to take flight.

"In recreating the rare colour, the Mercedes-Benz Classic Center in Fellbach drew on the colour expertise provided by Standox."

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In consultation with the new owner, this classic model is scheduled to have its original colour restored. But because the metallic light blue was used only on seven vehicles, the research proved rather complicated. In recreating the rare colour, the experts in Fellbach drew on more than their own know-how. "We asked Standox to develop an appropriate mixing formula for us," said Plag. And the professionals in the colouration lab in Wuppertal were able to quickly provide what was needed: they were able to work out the right colour using archival material from the Classic Center and prepare a new mixing formula. The result was quite impressive!



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