The Connoisseur's Yearbook 2012

The story of world-class luxury

ISBN 978-87-91325-21-2

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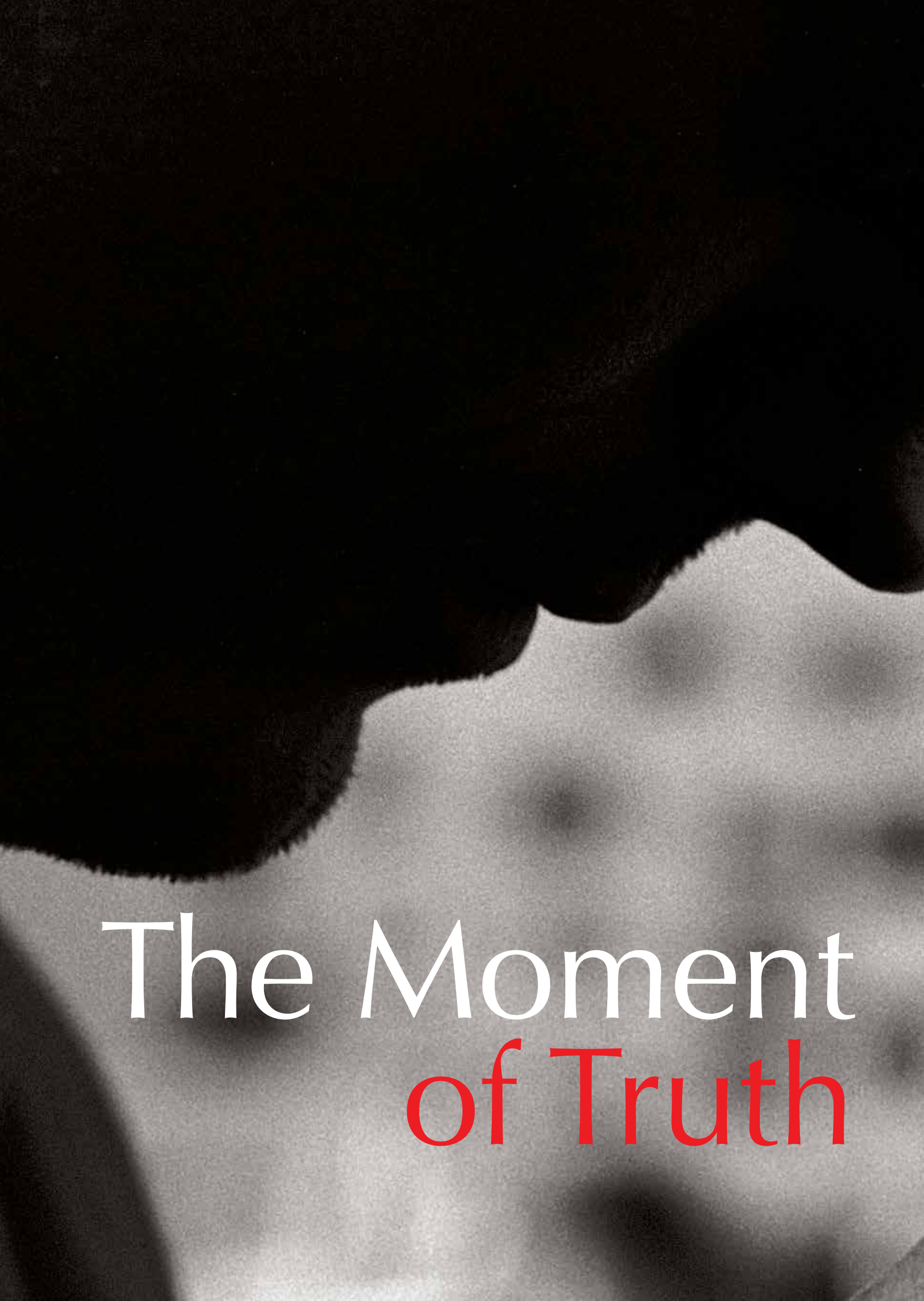
The Moment
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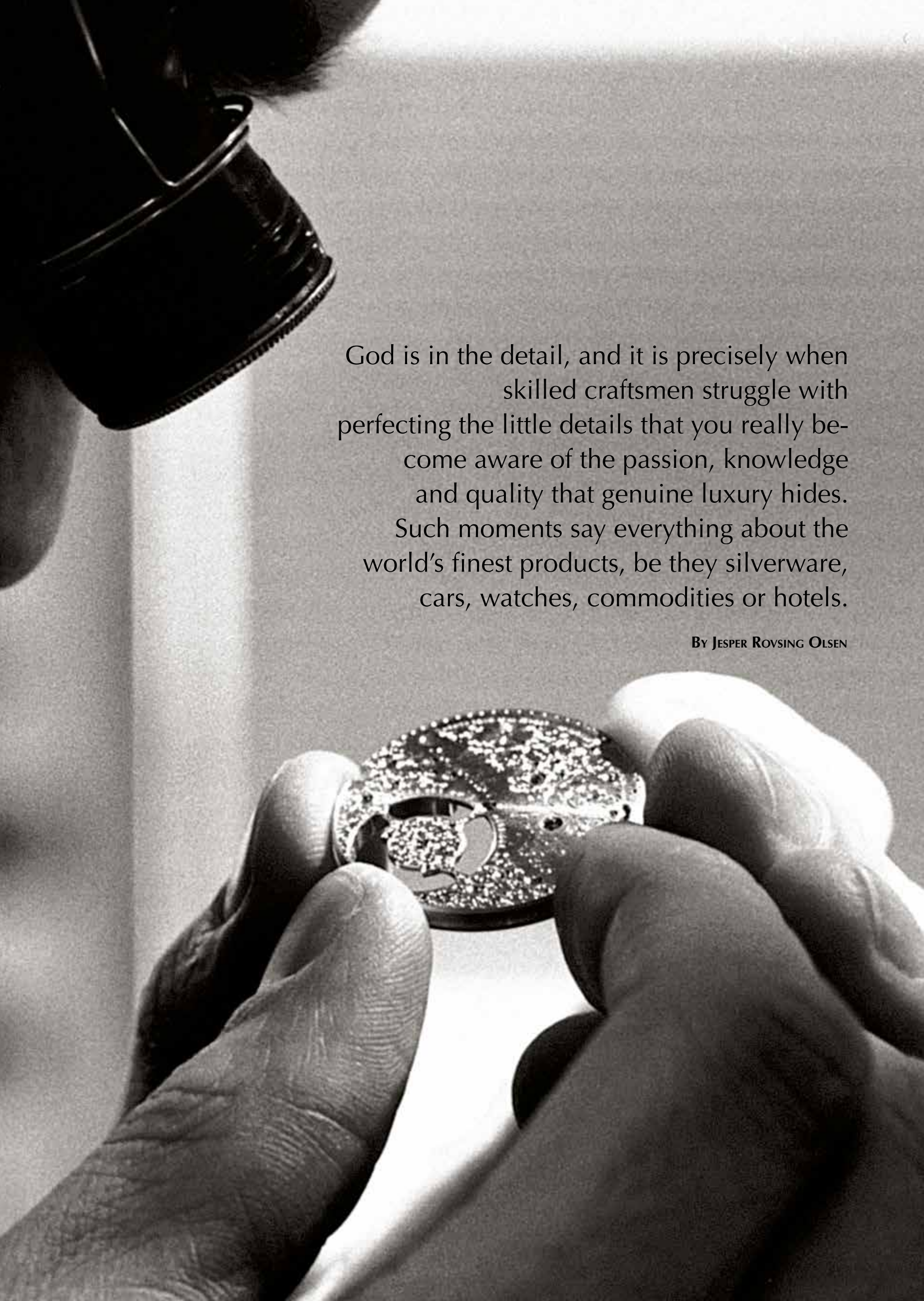

God is in the detail, and it is precisely when skilled craftsmen struggle with perfecting the little details that you really become aware of the passion, knowledge and quality that genuine luxury hides. Such moments say everything about the world's finest products, be they silverware, cars, watches, commodities or hotels.

By Jesper Rovsing Olsen

Where:
Breguets watch factory in Switzerland

Who:
A watchmaker with a strong magnifying glass

What:
Inspect hands for a watch

A watchmaker is currently a critical check of the hands of a Breguet watch. Even with a magnifying glass with 20 times magnification he may not be able to spot the slightest scratch or inaccuracy in the small hands that are ready to be placed on the dial of perhaps the world's finest timepiece.

The hands of a Breguet watch can be traced back to the illustrious company that started for more than 200 years ago. The slightly offset moons ballads outer part is a typical Breguet detail, and it requires an experienced watchmaker to create them.

This applies equally to the ballads material typically in blue steel. The watchmaker heats the metal in a flame until his eye and experience tell him that it's got exactly the right color tone.

The actual mechanics of clocks' components and their operation is basically the same today as it was then 200 years ago, when Abraham-Louis Breguet first produced his wonderful watches. And although the production of a Breguet watch is now done using much more sophisticated tools and machines, many artisanal details carry all the way back to the founder.

This applies to the beautifully patterned silver discs, which are in a class by themselves. The Ciseléring of the patterns is a rare and very time consuming technique and only a work of real professionals.

Where:
A forest in Provence, France

Who:
A truffle hunter

What:
A few grams of the rare Périgord truffle

A trufficulteur viewer gently shows the catch of the night, so the delicate truffle does not lose any of its volatile aroma. Hours of treasure hunting in the company of a vigilant pig or specially trained dog have resulted in a few kilos of the French black Périgord truffle.

Truffle season is long - from autumn to spring - but the yield is meager. A hundred years ago, French truffle hunters found up to 1,000 tons of black truffles, but now it is down to just 20 tons per year.

With so valuable a commodity (can cost 4,000 Euro per kilo of truffles in a delicacy shop), it is crucial that it does not get eaten by a ferocious pig once it is found, as the female pigs, unfortunately, tend to.

Truffles have a pungent smell reminiscent of a male pig, which is why the female pigs have a natural talent for finding them, even if they are buried in the forest floor. But when the treasure is found, the stick has to get ready quickly, so the female pig can be forced away from the deli. For the same reason more truffle hunters still prefer training dogs for the purpose.

Truffle hunters do not have time to enjoy the night's catch for too long as the truffles have to be transported to gourmet restaurants as quickly as possible. The distinctive truffle aroma is so volatile that much of it is often lost by the time they reach the customers.

In Italy, a truffle hunter practices his craft equipped with a special license. Without this he may very well risk being arrested.

Where:
Georg Jensen's hollowware forge in Frederiksberg

Who:
Two of the most experienced silversmiths

What:
Work with the lid to a eel dish

Two silversmiths at Georg Jensen's body forge are currently facing the biggest challenge a blacksmith could possibly be exposed to. It is the hardest detail in the most impossible of all pieces of silverware.

The joint between the two lids of Henning Koppel half a century old - but still wildly futuristic - eel dish needs to be so perfect that the transition cannot not be felt when you let your palm slide from the top of the lid down the sides to the bottom of the dish. The lid must end close enough to the dish that to a bystander the artwork looks like a solid, continuous piece of silver.

Only this detail requires several weeks of playing and fighting with the silver where the silversmith, with great finesse and patience must hammer and shape the material.

When he has finally finished the whole dish, there will be many hundreds of hours behind him, and it is always only one silversmith who is responsible for shaping the work from the first to the last blow with the hammer. It is only created by his hands and from an old cardboard template and yellowed paper drawings, which probably come from the great designer's own in the 1950s.

When the first silversmiths presented the same drawings, the immediate judgment was that the dish was impossible to produce. Since then, the smiths realized that it is just possible, there are unlimited amounts of time, money provided and talent available. ■

Supercar
Danish designed

The Zenvo is the new boy in an exclusive family of extreme cars–extremely gorgeous, extremely fast, and extremely expensive. And it's Danish.

By Ole Høy Hansen

The story of Danish automotive industry is like a Norwegian cookbook: very short and not very exciting. While neighbors in Sweden and Germany have consistently been in the forefront ever since the automobile was invented, the Danes have only made small and sporadic contributions throughout automotive history, and not all equally inspirering.

As in the early 80s, where the ultra modern electric car Hope Whisper rolled into a railing with his sleeping driver at the wheel, while the international automotive press remained dumbstruck as to when the big presentation would be mad at Forum in Copenhagen.

Over the past 10-15 years, the automotive design thrower Henrik Fisker, however, put Denmark a little more clearly on the world map, first as a celebrated designer at BMW and Aston Martin and now based in California as a manufacturer of Fisker Karma, an electric luxury sports car with exceptionally high performance.

In addition, the tuning company Kleemann has become internationally known and respected for its modifications of Mercedes cars, but then it's also only about that.

In any case until recently.

Extreme power and beauty

A few years ago a brand new supercar, namely the Zenvo ST1, sped onto the stage and introduced some of the fastest and most exclusive features, one can imagine in the whole caruniverse.

It was not only a new sports car brand, but a car with an unusually complete, beautiful and distinctive design–and with almost insane 1,100 horsepower. In itself, breaking news, but what made the entire automobile world so completely lose its lower jaw, was that the car did not come from Germany, England or Italy, but from Denmark.

Breitling has created the chronograph **par excellence**

A perfect fuselage, an exceptional engine: Breitling has launched a highly exclusive instrument set to establish itself as the benchmark among mechanical chronographs. A strong, unique and quintessential design. A fine blend of power and elegance. Built to provide maximum sturdiness and functionality, the Chronomat B01 is designed for devotees of great accomplishments. This top-notch sports model is equipped with Caliber B01, entirely developed and produced by Breitling: a reliable and ultra-precise motor with an original and innovative architecture. By uniting refined aesthetics and raw performance in the Chronomat B01, Breitling has redefined the mechanical chronograph.

Breitling proprietary Caliber B01. *Chronograph movement with column wheel and vertical clutch. Chronometer-certified (COSC). Selfwinding mechanism guaranteeing over 70 hours of power reserve. Patented zero-reset system. Instant calendar adjustable at any time. 47 jewels.*

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Funded, designed, developed and manufactured in a small South Sealand city, it had a former IT contractor and a tuning expert as backers.

The name–Zenvo ST1–is a contraction of the two found'ers surnames, S stands for supercharged, T for turbo and 1 for the factory first model.

And it is quite literally a supercar, i.e. a sports car in the absolute toprange and in class with Koenigsegg, McLaren and Bugatti. A unique handcrafted gem that caters to a very limited group of wealthy car enthusiasts who just pay the bill if they like the car. Even though the price tag reads at approx. 750,000 euros, Zenvo costs in the standard version - net of tax.

IT million behind the story

The project started in 2004. IT contractor and car-lover Jesper Jensen had sold his successful business at just the right time, and with the internationally renowned motor and tuning specialist Troels Vollertsen he decided to try to make their shared dream of developing a supercar into reality.

Vollertsen had already demonstrated his talents by getting a lot more horsepower out of Jesper Jensen's Mercedes, and Jensen was determined that the next thing he should do for IT adventure had to be done with the heart and not the brain.

"And it really did, because in the seven years we've been going, I'm practically every morning jumped out of bed and have not been able to wait to get started," he says.

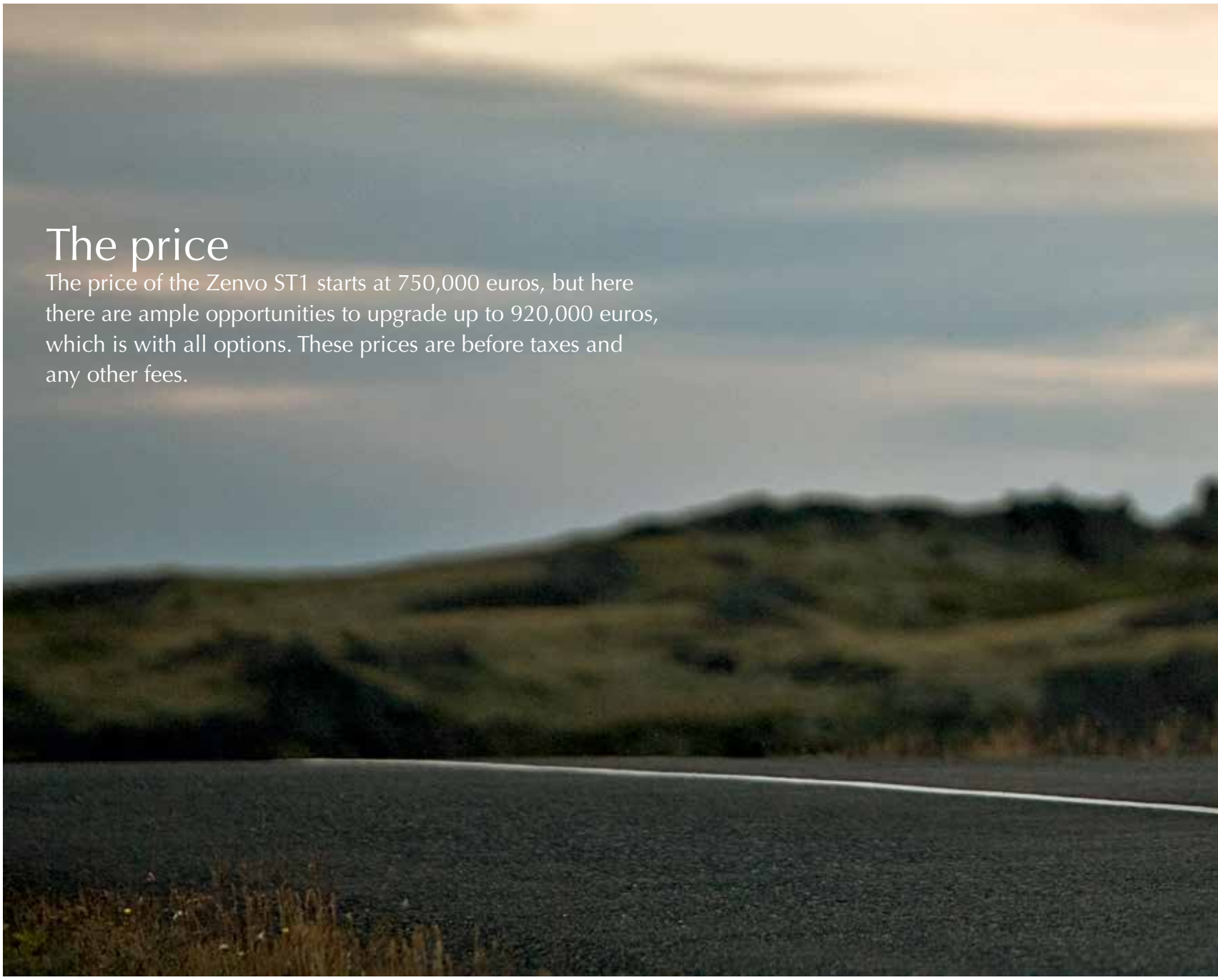
They have shot a lot of money into the project, even more than had been expected from the start. "Times have not exactly been with us in recent years, including came the financial crisis, so a Muhammed-cartoon crisis, and so a financial crisis more," says Jesper Jensen," but now ve're running what we produce, and we get orders, but it has since been difficult along the way."

The two founders agreed on two foundations for the project: First, it should be a car with a design in mind. And second, it should not just be fast, it should usually run at a more leisurely pace.

But the fact is that if you give a car its own distinctive design, there is one place you should stay away from: a wind tunnel.

This is because virtually all cars look alike today. The most aerodynamic design is the same, whether you are called Citroën or Toyota, and when you're talking supercars and lightning-fast speeds, aerodynamics is even more important–both in efforts to reach high speeds and in the car's stability and therefore safety when the speedometer shows 300-400 km/h.

The Zenvo's speed is therefore limited electronically–to 375 km/h–and with this limitation, as most people probably still do not encounter in practice, there is room for its own unique design, which may well be low and streamlined, but yet it is well away from the more predictable wind tunnel ideal.



In contrast to majority

Zenvo also went its own way in a different manner: While the big car manufacturers begin to design the car first, and only then ask the technicians to make the car that goes under the shell, Zenvo did otherwise.

They started putting the frame together and provided it with wheels, engine and everything else that is strictly necessary. Then they tested this giant go-kart and adjusted and changed, until it all seemed like they wanted it to. Only then did they ask automotive design transferee Christian Brandt to draw the car around it.

Sometimes it simply wasn't possible to get the design to fit together, and so the engineers had to move some things around. The base is a steel frame and the body is made of carbon fiber–69 parts manufactured in Germany.

The result is not just a beautiful and dramatic sports car, but also a supercar that is all its own. Of course, there are aerodynamics, but also a combination of drama, elegance and fine details that are unique to Zenvo, which distinguishes it from most of its competitors where the wind tunnel has had a much bigger word to say.

The sleek roofline, the half-integrated rear spoiler, distinctive air intakes to cool the disc brakes, the hexagonal grille–a design element that is repeated in many other places in the car. And slender lines and sleek design detail seems like a good point for a Danish super sports car, especially in countries where Danish design is already a very big star.

Not all car parts are designed and developed

by Zenvo. Like any other car maker Zenvo buys bits such as lamps or mirrors and modifies them to their own design. To develop all the parts yourself from scratch is extremely time consuming and costly. Not so much because of the development itself, but when it comes to car parts, the approval procedure is so extensive that it costs, for example, 250,000 euros to get a mirror approved and 400,000 euros for a headlight. Only Bugatti Veyron builds from scratch.

In the supercar to the bakery

The second goal the two Zenvo backers set out to achieve–a supercar you can drive every day–was particularly satisfied by the supercar's brand new engine design, namely the combination of compressor and turbo, which gives the car a constant force curve of incredible strength despite making it an easy to drive car.

But it certainly does not mean boring. The engines of modern cars are controlled by computers, so for example it is hardly possible to do a wheel spin. Zenvo developers would like to go a little piece of the way back to the days when one had to think about when you drove. To a time when a supercar was something that was a little dangerous.

Or as Jesper Jensen says: "One must have the ability to get the heart up in my throat. You have to be the one who dispenses forces properly and not just unconsciously press pedal to the metal. One should feel as an active driver. You have to feel that you live!"

That was why Zenvo firstly should have a lot of strength, and the simple solution to this would be to take a huge engine and provide it with a turbo. The problem is that it becomes a car that is hard to run because of the infamous turbo hesitation when the turbo first strikes by a certain number of revolutions, there is a sudden kick, which can be difficult to harness.

The way to eliminate this problem is to build both a turbo and a compressor of the engine. The compressor provides a lot of energy at the low revolutions, but when the revs reach a certain point, it fades out, and this is where the turbo enters. The design gives the rider the feeling of having the same forces available–and that's a lot! - through the rev range.

It's called experimentation with many adjustments and replacement of other components before force curve was completely leveled out, which involved, among other things, that the designers actually took some of the forces of the engine, which from the start developed about 1,500 hp.

"Contrary to what many others do, we detuned, the car until we reached the perfect level where it still had an insane amount of force, but it did not take power completely from the driver," explains Jesper Jensen.

The engine was designed and developed by Zenvo and produced by the engine manufacturer. In the beginning it was a seven-liter engine, but later it was downgraded to 6.8 liters because you wanted a bit more thickness of the cylinder walls, and now the current aluminum engine block is measured to withstand 2,500 hp. On the whole, many things are much more oversized in the car, brackets , etc., so that it can withstand all the rigors and then some, and according to the designers could have weighed 100 kg less.

The car has three power levels, so that with a

button inside the car can the driver choose between “wet“ with 650 hp, “sport” with 850 hp and “race” with all 1,104 hp available.

Formula 1 gearbox

Zenvo ST1 had a manual gearbox at first, but it has just been replaced with a sequential gearbox with rocker arms on the steering wheel for changing gear. At Zenvo they had to be fairly quick to face the fact that 80 percent of the potential customers for the car in the Middle East or the United States could not run it because they had never driven a manual transmission, so there was nothing else to do but rethink, and in the meantime there had been developed a sequential gearbox that can withstand so much force.

It’s actually a manual transmission that changes in just 40 milliseconds using fast hydraulics. It has taken a lot of programming and adjustment to get it to work perfectly, but it was necessary, because if it does not match, it would smash either the engine or the gearbox or both. And the Zenvo purchase for just a gearbox is 500,000 excluding tax.

That is an extremely fast, yet easy to drive car. And on top of that it actually has a super car’s high level of comfort with features such as two-zone climate control, electrically controlled racing seats and head up display, where data is displayed on the windshield, so you can get the most important information about revs, speed, etc., without removing your eyes from the road.

Also on the luggage front is the fact that the Zenvo ST1 is humane: 130 liters, enough for a couple of suitcases or a few boxes of red wine. Not even the sound level is crazy high, and you can easily talk to each other as in an ordinary car, if you drive at normal Danish road or highway speeds. But release the thousands of horsepower behind the backrest, and it is of course another matter.

And with 1,104 hp, a torque of 1,430 Nm and weighing almost 1,400 kg it has the basis for some dramatic benefits: 3.0 seconds to 100 km/h and 8.9 to 200 km/h.

Zenvo is produced 100 percent in Præstø, which depending on intake and development projects has between 10 and 25 employees.

www.zenvoautomotive.com. ■

Where:
The Rolls-Royce factory in Goodwood, England

Who:
A seamstress in the 130-strong leather department

What:
Sowing one of the 450 pieces of leather used in a Phantom

A seamstress is working with one of the 450 separate pieces of leather that adorn the cabin of a Rolls-Royce Phantom. It takes the seamstress and the other 130 craftspeople in the Goodwood factory's leather department 17 days to make and process 50 square meters of leather for each car.

The seamstresses often spend even more time on a car when a customer requests specially tailored personal details. Recently, for example, a customer wanted an eagle's head embroidered into the leather on each of the four headrests, which required an additional 32 hours' work.

Today, this kind of request is more the rule than the exception. Three out of four Royces (the correct term–never "Rolls") are sold to customers who require some form of personal customization. A team of 50 designers and technicians are employed specifically to turn these wishes into reality.

The designer's approved sketches for items like eagle's heads or–more ordinarily–specially designed suitcases and bags or just seams with contrasting colors of thread end up with the seamstress or other workers in the leather department. Other requests are sent to cabinetmakers or metalworkers so they can manufacture special orders for items like opulent customized picnic sets for the new car.

The seamstress is part of a 30-strong sewing team in the leather department. Ten years ago there were only four. All the workers come from very different professional backgrounds. There are saddlers, upholsterers, sailmakers and even lingerie makers. It's this collective experience that ensures there is an expert on hand to meet every customer's exact wishes.

Where:
Amandari Hotel, Bali

Who:
One of the hotel's 163 employees to 30 rooms

What:
Sprinkle flower petals over a bath

A maid is about to sprinkle flower petals over a temperate outdoor bath to a room in Amandari Hotel in Bali. It is a traditional way to greet guests at the small hotel, and on special occasions like honeymoons, staff can cover the entire surface of the room's private pool.

A number of the maid's duties are the same from guest to guest–like when she puts small offerings like rice, flowers and incense on banana leaves in front of each room's own little Balinese temple. But her essential task is to know what all the guests want and need, without even having to draw attention to it.

Like all of her 162 colleagues–almost three employees for every guest at Amandari–she has beforehand been carefully briefed on all the details the hotel has on her guests. Guests at Amandari and other Aman Resorts are not for nothing called Aman Junkies and have probably stayed here before. If so other waitresses and waiters will already have be enshrined detailed handwritten notes about their preferences. Otherwise staff can contact the Director, a guest's colleague at another hotel in the chain, if guests have stayed there. And in an emergency they google a guest to get an idea of his/her personality.

It is considered a matter of course that all the guests are known by name. And when serving room service or in the restaurant, there would never be any bill signing. All the guests are known, and to demand a receipt for him any payment other than check-out would be accept its purchase, considered by Aman Resorts an unthinkable sign of mistrust. ■

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