

Gold plating the dream

An interview with Thomas A Tanury, Chairman, Tanury Industries



Tanury Industries specialises in high-end metal finishings. If you happen to be lucky enough to travel in a BBJ with gold-plated taps and a golden basin, it is highly likely that you are admiring just a few of the thousands of items that Tanury Industries has produced for private jets.

Thomas Tanury, the current owner and Chairman of the company, took over the family jewellery electro-plating business in the early 1970s. The firm was started by his father and uncles almost 70 years ago. As a family firm the company had an excellent reputation in the jewellery trade but once Thomas had acquired sole control of the business, having bought out his uncles by the start of the 1980s, he looked for ways of taking the firm's electro-plating skills into new markets. This strategy has proved hugely successful and since 1999 Tanury Industries has had a thriving line of business focused on the major business jet completions centres and other business markets.

"We now provide electro-plating to about 20 different industries, with a particular focus on very high-end, high-quality precious metal finishing in gold, silver and platinum," he explains. Moving into the VVIP completions market brought a whole range of new challenges, not least in terms of the

different scale involved in some of the objects the company was asked to gold plate. Also, Tanury provides a much heavier hard gold plating than its competitors, at no additional charge.

"We were accustomed to finishing a wide range of products, from bathroom fittings to lighting fixtures, but when we became involved with business jets we found we were being asked to plate much larger items. For example, relatively recently we were asked to produce a 24-karat gold-plated stair rail for a 747. The rail itself was 14 feet long. So we have developed the facilities and techniques required to plate very large items and that has given the designers we work with a lot more scope to produce imaginative, luxurious and strikingly elegant interiors," he comments.

The process of electro-plating items for aircraft is not straightforward. The weight constraints on aircraft mean that the parts that have to be plated are very often made of aluminium rather than steel or brass. "We take the aluminium and we give it a very high polish. We then do a zinc coating that metalises the aluminium and prepares the part for electro-plating. Then, over the zinc coat we lay a copper plate coat and we repolish that. Then we repeat the process with another layer of copper and typically a layer of nickel after that. The nickel gives it a nice, bright, hard, shiny finish. And only after that do you go for the final coat, whatever that may be. It might be champagne gold, silver or something else, depending on the designer's wishes," Tanury explains.

At the end of the process the plated part is of the highest quality possible and ideal for installation in a VVIP completion. A gold part would generally be finished with a clear coat to give it scratch and wear resistance.

Ever since Tanury Industries entered the business aviation market, demand has been steady and has been helped by the fact that the company has been chosen as an OEM supplier to several major companies.

Some of the projects Tanury gets involved with are enormous in scope. "We have just

Thomas A Tanury

completed a Boeing 747-800 that involved over 6,000 pieces, a few of which were over 14 feet in length, including the gold-plated staircase rail."

"We are always working to very tight time frames and the pressure is enormous. We can handle the electroplating work for two big jet completions simultaneously, and projects tend to follow hard on each other's heels. You have to be on your best game 24 by 7," he comments.

In addition to VVIP completions on private jets, Tanury Industries is often asked to provide a range of electroplating finishings for other luxury assets, from royal palaces and mega-buildings to luxury yachts. "In each case we work with the designers and decorators to create a unique finish. Our R&D team are constantly working on new looks and new ideas. People quickly tire of the same old concepts. Gold plating is all very well, but designers are often looking for more – they want unique finishes," he adds.

Sometimes the design will call for elaborate etching of the metal as well as giving it a luxury coating. Tanury says his company has a great deal of experience at working with etching specialists. "We work with many companies that can help to create designs. We are well



Gold-plated sink basin

placed to give designers new ideas and access to new processes that they might not be aware of. Our message to designers is: come and talk to us, brainstorm with us. For example, I recently worked with some designers in Dubai and I was able to show them processes and ideas that they had never thought of and just did not know were available. They were very excited, and this is the kind of value add that we can bring to the design process, quite apart from providing an extremely high-quality finished product with an endless array of creative finishes as can be seen by reviewing the website at www.tanury.com," he notes.

One of Tanury Industries' specialities is the process of physical vapour deposition, or PVD. "With PVD we can create colour that you cannot get via electroplating, and it also gives you tremendous corrosion resistance. For certain appli-

cations it is really the best choice. This is where sitting down with us can really help to open a designer up to new ideas and pave the way for them to do something very creative and very different," he notes.

Tanury Industries is based out of Lincoln, Rhode Island in the US, where it has a 75,000 sq ft facility and some 200 employees. "For a metal finishings company we like to think that we are very much on the cutting edge and are very sophisticated in our methodologies, which works out extremely well for our VVIP clients," he comments.

Looking back on the journey that the company has been on since its beginnings in the jewellery trade, Tanury says the company has changed beyond all recognition. "When I took over the company the staff were all technicians and tradesmen. Today I have PhDs, engineers and chemists on the staff, along with lawyers. We are considered to be one of the premier electroplating companies in the world, based on our technology and our people," he concludes. Thomas Tanury can be reached via e-mail at thomas@tanury.com ■



The Tanury Industries executive team