

SHAVING
CULTURE



1945 Otto Johannes Müller founds MÜHLE-BRUSHES. Today, the company "Hans-Jürgen Müller KG" is owner-managed in the third generation. 1965 From the fifties on, the steady growth of the company leads to continuous success – at home and abroad: people in more than thirty countries use MÜHLE-BRUSHES. Hans-Jürgen Müller follows his father as Managing Director. 1985 Despite difficult economic and political times predominanting conditions in the former German Democratic Republic, the company manages to maintain the production facilities and the plant. 2005 Modern production facilities, international cooperation and design-orientated editions provide the basis for further growth and a successful future.

Dear friends and partners,

Six decades may be just the blink of an eye in historical terms – but for us they mean a great deal. Since 1945 we have been custodians of the brand MÜHLE-BRUSHES, its culture and its continuous development, and our efforts have been rewarded with an international reputation. We and our staff successfully combine traditional craftsmanship with design-orientated, modern production techniques. In doing so, we feel a sense of commitment – not only to exceptional quality standards, but also to our home in Germany's Erzgebirge and its vivid history. Offering an excellent selection of wet shave products defines the focus of our work, now and in the future. Our goal: to transform the daily "chore" of shaving into an enjoyable ritual and a pleasure for the senses.



Hans-Jürgen Müller
Managing Director



Christian Müller
Managing Director

Evolution and Shaving



4000 B.C.

Egyptian noblemen remove unwanted facial and body hair using razor-like instruments made from copper.

Middle Bronze Age (16th century B.C.)

Hair and beard grooming in Europe is facilitated by the spread of one and two-blade razors and tweezers.

1 B.C.

In his "Ars amatoria" (The Art of Love), Ovid advises young men that, when courting, "Stubble on one's chin is common, so only show yourself clean shaven."

11th century

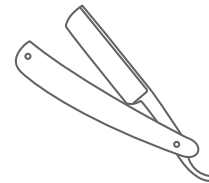
Petrus Venerabilis, Abbot of Cluny, sets the number of days on which monks must shave at 14 – per year.

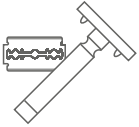
1705

Czar Peter the Great introduces a beard tax for his subjects.

18th century

Wet shaving becomes fashionable in the courts of England, France and Germany. At the same time, barbers' guilds and fraternities flourish.





1930s

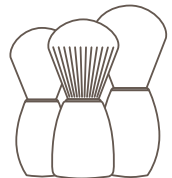
American companies revolutionise the shaving market with their easy-to-use, affordable disposable razors.

1945

Made in Germany: Otto Johannes Müller founds MÜHLE-PINSEL in Hundshübel, Erzgebirge, starting a company that today numbers among the few internationally renowned manufacturers of high-quality shaving brushes.

21st Century

The wet shaving ritual becomes a trend: In 2004, a poll by the German news magazine *Stern* reveals that 56 percent of German men (22 million) prefer to shave wet.





Dry or Wet – what a question!

The race is won – but for quite a while the outcome was uncertain. Opponents of the wet shaving method put forward audacious arguments to fight their battle for “progress”. In the middle of the 20th century, the short-lived myth of the electric razor was nursed by its “progressive” aura. In fact, even its advocates did not appear entirely convinced. For example, a manual for German barbers in 1958 praised the advantages of the new technology: “An electric razor lets one shave quickly and safely – without the need for warm water, soap, a brush or a mirror. Convenience is king, and one can read the newspaper or even lie in bed while getting the job done.” How enthusiastically might the woman next to him have welcomed this idea? A 1960 issue of “Scissors and Blade” magazine lists further advantages of dry shaving: no more worrying about water being too hot or cold, dry shaving helps you to “relax wonderfully – something unknown to the poor soul who continues to scrape away his beard using the ‘tried and tested’ method of the safety razor.” – These words are treacherous and contradictory – “tried and tested” and “scraping”: the concept was fallacious then, and the same applies today.

Even advocates of the electric razor seemed to have their doubts about the products they propagated – particular in terms of the results. They pleaded for “dry” by arguing: “Then in the afternoon, even when already dressed up, you can run the dry razor across your cheeks. No need for a bathroom, for a special place; no need to get undressed.” (Eisenwaren-Zeitung, 1956). To placate even the last sceptic – who might have feared suffering an electric shock at the hands of the latest gadget – the same publication offers more dubious advice: “Bathrooms with stone or concrete floors are particularly dangerous; therefore we recommend standing on a rubber mat.”

De mortuis nisi nil bene: in ancient Rome, nobody criticised what was gone forever. So let us leave the “electrics” and subsequent hybrid attempts with water-filled dry devices aside. Brushes, bowls and blades have also survived those particular phantoms.

Quotes from: Frank Gnegel, Bart ab – Zur Geschichte der Selbstrasur, 1995. DuMont, Cologne, Germany



Our silent star...

...is photogenic and more than beautiful. The special traits of this character actor: a shining silvery colour and a black band in the wave of his lustrous crown of hair – a spectacle known as the 'mirror' to shaving aficionados. Today, only a handful of specialists are true master craftsmen when it comes to manufacturing a silver-tipped badger hair shaving brush. First, the supremely soft, silver-tipped badger hair is weighed to the exact gram, combed out and then placed into a form to be given its dome shape. Once this is done, the hair is tied together and then glued at its base using a ring clamp. For the finale, the brush is then attached to one of our stylish brush handles. Handcrafted badger hair shaving brushes guarantee the ultimate wet shaving experience. They are perfectly absorbent, moisturising and massaging the face to an optimum, while coaxing stubble into an upright position, allowing your razor to do its job. And they produce the richest, creamiest lather.

The perfect wet shave? Proceed as follows:

You require hot water, a good shaving brush, shaving soap or cream and a sharp razor. Once the "shaving zone" has been moistened with hot water, a creamy lather is whipped up with the brush and applied to the beard, then left ideally for one to two minutes. The beard is now shaved with a sharp, clean razor – with mild pressure and a relaxed, steady hand. Then refresh your skin with clear water to close the pores. Additional soothing is provided by after shave, a gentle cream or balsam. Finally, the brush is rinsed with fresh water and placed in a holder with the hair pointing down.





From the Erzgebirge...

...out into the wide world

Hans-Jürgen Müller and his son Christian are the men behind Hans-Jürgen Müller KG. With the MÜHLE-PINSEL brand, the company has made a name for itself over the past 60 years as a producer of top-quality shaving brushes, sets and accessories. This success has been founded on expert craftsmanship and a deep commitment to the art of wet shaving.

Hans-Jürgen Müller My father Otto Johannes created this company in 1945 out of nothing. From the start he was committed to the Erzgebirge, refusing even to consider moving away. I can remember the first products bearing the MÜHLE-PINSEL name being brought to market by horse-drawn carriages, as cars were scarce in 1945. Today, in the age of global markets and the Internet, we produce about 1.5 million shaving brushes each year, 70% for German customers and 30% for our international clientele. Our line of shaving brushes runs from standard, industrially-produced bristle models to handcrafted badger hair brushes of superb quality.

Like his father and grandfather before him, Christian Müller studied the craft of brushmaking There are only a few people left in Germany who are masters of this art. We put a lot of love and attention into our handcrafted models, turning out only about 100 each day. And the same care goes into our industrially-produced lines, to make sure that these are worthy of the MÜHLE-PINSEL name. Another area of importance to us is our Internet mail order business, a part of our sales that has grown rapidly in recent years. Our goal is to cultivate the next generation of wet shavers. To this end, we are committed to creating stylish designs – some in special editions featuring unusual materials.

Hans-Jürgen Müller But we aren't trend chasers. Instead we make our decisions based on our observation of the market and our own studies, seeing ourselves as missionaries of the wet shaving experience. We realise that every face and every beard is unique, and have created a product line that reflects this insight. However, what we want to communicate is that wet shaving is not so much a duty as a pleasure, a counterpoint to the haste of our everyday lives – a means of deceleration.

Christian Müller How to achieve the perfect wet shave – an area in which we still see a need for enlightenment in the future: while the majority of men make their own purchasing decisions when it comes to skin care products, almost half simply adopt the shaving method used by their fathers. We also want to communicate the advantages of wet shaving to women: they appreciate a well-groomed man – and nicely designed accessories.

Men only? Women feel with you.

In my grandparents' bathroom – they lived in a small factory residence near the river Rhine – there stood a barber's chair, a fascinating piece of furniture to the eyes of a young child. Twice a week – more was perhaps beyond their means – the village barber paid a visit and shaved my grandpa, the man whom I enjoyed kissing most as a little girl. I remember sitting on a stool, watching the procedure with bated breath. The barber would first lay a steaming towel across grandpa's beloved face, then apply a thick coat of lather to it. Then, the barber's studied hand would guide the razor across grandpa's beard, slowly revealing his face beneath. When they were finished, I would hop up on to grandpa's knee and give him a big, fat kiss. My father at home – we lived in the industrial part of North Rhine-Westphalia – used an electric razor, its buzzing sounding uncanny to my ears. For a long time I thought that the gadget was eating his hair!

As a teenager, I had to wait a while until I got my first "real" kiss. It finally came on a playground when I was 14. My boyfriend at the time was lucky enough not to mar this long-awaited moment with any stubbly scratching – for lack of a real beard. Four years later – I had moved in with my first "real love" – things were different. Intimate encounters would turn my face flaming red as a radish (I have sensitive skin). Other boyfriends followed, each with a different approach to shaving. I recall giving one with particularly heavy growth an electric razor out of sheer desperation. As we saw each other only rarely, I foolishly thought the electric would allow him to shave quickly and leave more time for us. But while it was indeed fast, the electric model was never thorough enough to let me emerge from our meetings unscathed. In the meantime, I have found my true love, and in our bathroom there stand a lovely badger hair shaving brush and a fine porcelain bowl containing a round of wonderfully fragrant shaving soap. This arrangement suits us both well, and for good reason: a well-shaven, pleasantly fragrant man feels great – and is great to feel.





Shaving without a score?

Is shaving a task best enjoyed with musical accompaniment? Not every bathroom can accommodate a string quartet – and shaving purists will no doubt recoil at the very idea. For such individuals, the morning shave is a meditative ritual, best completed in absolute silence so as to appreciate the dance of brush and blade on the skin and the shaving soap's fine scent. This is a time during which the previous night's dreams are to be considered and even continued. No disturbances can be tolerated, the only exception perhaps being the song of a blackbird from a nearby grove – but not too nearby.

Other shavers, however, find that pairing their task with the appropriate score helps them to focus on the tasks of the day ahead. The soothing sounds of a Chinese flute find favour with the surgeon who will later require a steady hand. To mathematicians we recommend Johann Sebastian Bach's "Goldberg Variations", (ideally not performed by Glenn Gould, as the gifted pianist's tendency to hum along is a little distracting). The hedonist coming up for air finds that Edith Piaf's "Non, je ne regrette rien" does the trick, while the businessman preparing for the next corporate battle lets Bizet's "Carmen" provide him with the emotional uplift he'll need. "Third Stone from the Sun" by Jimi Hendrix inspires the astronaut who wants to land safely with a smooth touch-down. Wet shavers who long for gentle melodies in order to decelerate their take-off for the day might listen to Rod Stewart's "The First Cut Is The Deepest" – but for heaven's sake not take the lyrics too literally.




The wet shave as a work of art: An ensemble masterpiece

The painter feels helpless without a motif, a canvas and his palette – even with the best of all brushes in his hand. The artist in front of the mirror would share the same experience. He attaches little value to the idea of applying speedy chemistry rather than cultivated nature to his canvas – the skin. But which ingredients will produce the gentler foundation – cream or soap? What will provide him with the richer lather, the more pleasant scent? Adherents of different factions would now gird themselves for a battle of faith. We remain smooth – following the lessons of historic fine art schools: each has its own aesthetic merits and justification.

However, the most beautiful colours – from the striking blue of the lapis lazuli to the vibrant trail left by the purple snail or the saffron-golden threads of the crocus – are to be found in nature. Similarly, MÜHLE-PINSEL's line of wet shave products and accessories for skincare reflects the benefits nature has to offer, featuring ingredients such as sandalwood, aloe vera, ocean algae and marigolds.

The lathering stroke – gentle or more intensive? Of what material should the circling brush be made? Is its crown made from fine badger hair, from sturdier bristles or from synthetic fibres? Should one favour wooden or acrylic grips, monochrome or colourful models? Every wet shave practitioner has his own motives, some even will change schools, replacing hair with fibre or bristles. Let us consider the artist's atelier and his implements: does he obtain the best lather from a porcelain bowl, made of gleaming metal or – even better – from the palm of his hand? How many blades does a razor need? Is the renaissance of the straight razor a thrill reserved for the adventurous? One thing is certain: even in times of modern art the rules of the "Golden Cut" still apply – whether in front of the canvas or the mirror.



The focal point of our efforts has always been our customers: it is their satisfaction and their needs that determine our actions. In the future, the MÜHLE-PINSEL brand will continue to stand for high-quality, durable articles – produced in harmony with nature and guided by a sense of economic responsibility. These values are embodied by our products, created by people who love their work. We continue to nurture this atmosphere – with passion and expertise.

The future of the brand



Fine badger hair, firm boar bristle and soft fibre

Handcrafted silver-tipped Badger Hair Shaving Brushes

The finest material for manufacturing shaving brushes. Its special features are the silvery gleaming colour and a black band running through the crown of the silver-tipped badger hair. These are the source of its unique quality and excellence in use – for years to come.

Super Badger and Super Badger Handmade

Their colour spectrum ranges from yellow-brown to light grey. Super Badger Handmade is fabricated by craftsmen, Super Badger hair by machines. In order to maintain the typical form of the crown, only slight trimming is applied. To gain the more delicate quality, no tools, only the sensitivity of fingertips is used.

Best Badger and Best Badger Black

Sound quality characterises these collections, preferred by those who appreciate a massaging effect while preparing for the perfect wet shave. Produced using state-of-the-art technology, these brushes feature pure badger hair with greater flexibility than boar bristle brushes. Available colours range from brown-grey to black.

Pure Boar Bristles + Pure coloured Boar Bristles

The stiff quality of boar bristles provides a particularly bracing massage – with use, this stiffness gradually subsides: a cost-effective initial step into the world of wet shaving. Made in colours from yellow to white, these brushes feature a sprayed black band as decoration.

Bristle and Badger Mixture

For this product line boar bristles are mixed with a combination of hairs, sorted for maximum softness.

Synthetic Fibres (vegan-friendly)

Using a vegan fibre developed specifically for wet shaving, these models resemble natural badger hair brushes in both appearance and performance. They offer a high level of quality, perfectly matching that of the natural product.



www.muehle-pinsel.com

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