

Hand Painting My Engine Compartment

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I purchased my 1969 1800S in 2000. It was originally British racing green with tan interior, both of which I don't care for. The car had been painted a darker green by the time I got it, but had been sitting out in the weather for a long time and looked very bad.

In 2001 I had a "temporary" Macco paint job on the car that included under the hood and trunk. My "temporary" paint job is still on 7 years later and will probably be there for some time. I do get compliments on the champagne (with metal flake) paint job if they don't look too closely, but my dream paint job is a 1969 Volvo medium blue that used in my model year.

While the interior has been completely redone in black and looks very nice, the engine compartment has always been a complete embarrassment to me, especially at car shows where everyone opens their hood for people to admire. My hood has been closed at 7 or 8 car shows.

For those of you with an 1800 or familiar with one, the engine compartment is packed and mine is made worse with the air conditioning system and cruise control (yes I like accessories!). There is no unused space and everything is very hard to reach especially with all the hoses and wires. However, I was encouraged a year or so ago by PSVSA member, Greg Kauffman, who had done his and was certain I could do mine also.

So I decided to give it a try and went and purchased black and silver 500 temperature spray paint at Schucks and a whole bunch of brushes of various sizes and types, mostly small craft store brushes. In speaking with PSVSA Coordinator, Gary Ramstad, he suggested POR-15 paint (1500 degree) for the engine and exhaust manifold as the 500 degree paint wasn't enough. I got gloss black and Chevy red in the POR-15. He also suggested a lot of Acetone for mistakes. I also bought a quart of Rustoleum gloss black for the body and bracket paint and for the wheel wells and body in the trunk.

After cleaning the engine twice, the first time with the pressure washer, I was actually able to see some red on the engine for the first time! The exhaust manifold was a brown rust color along with the exhaust pipes that you can see when looking down into the engine compartment. The body was still British racing green sort of.

I set to work on the engine first with the POR-15 Chevy red using small brushes, much of the time taped to the end of a paint stir stick so I could reach way down. Same thing with much of the black. The silver spray paint had to be sprayed into a container and then applied with a brush. Nothing could be sprayed.

The fan proved to be the hardest even with the brush on the end of a stir stick. You can only get parts of it and it's very easy to get paint on the radiator. I finally got smart and covered the radiator. I still have a lot of work on the fan as I have to start the car and hope the fan ends up in a different place so I can paint more of it.

What did I use to cover the radiator, sides of the engine compartment and underneath the car for drips? Unused puppy pee pads. My new puppy got house trained so quickly that I had 20 left over and they proved to be excellent for covering the sides, sliding down between the radiator and fan and to put under the car to catch spills.

This is a back breaking job, especially when you're 5' 3". Although I had a clip light hooked on the hood along with an overhead light, I spent most of the time with a flashlight in one hand and the paint brush in the other as I was working in my garage rather than outside.

Due to a complete lack of knowledge on my part of how cars run and what is actually in the engine compartment, I only removed the spark plugs and the battery. Every hose and wire was still in place during this paint job – obviously making it harder. I had also been painting everything that I could get to so I was truly hoping the car would start when the job was complete and the paint dry.

Gary also suggested that after the 4-6 day waiting period that the POR-15 requires, that I start it up and immediately drive it outside and let the engine run with the hood up in the event there is smoke from the new paint – good idea Gary!

The only thing I broke was a wire end that hooks to the battery. It was so old it just sort of disintegrated as I tried to hook it back on so off to Schucks again. I did pick up new nut and bolts for the battery clamps that definitely look better than the rusted ones I had previously. I also bought some plastic cord covers that I used to cover some of the older wiring.

When I completed the painting, I cleaned up all the hoses with Mequiar's "Endurance High Gloss Tire Protectant Gel" to make them look shiny and new. Then it was off to the trunk for a new paint job.

The only thing left is to switch the battery (Black) from my Ford Escape to the 1800 to replace the ugly white Interstate battery it currently has.

By the time I was done I had at least 30 hours of work into it but only \$112.00 in paint, materials and parts. While I know I didn't get to everything under the hood, mostly the bottom of the engine, I got most of it and it really looks good. I keep going out to my garage to admire my work.

Material	Usage	Approximate Cost
POR-15 Gloss Black	Engine components that get hot especially the exhaust manifold.	\$22 per pint
POR-15 Gloss Chevy Red	Engine block	\$22 per pint
DupliColor Spray Paint in Aluminum	Anything that used to be silver/chrome and used on intake manifold. Also used for lug wrench.	\$5
Krylon Spray Paint in Safety Yellow	Fan	\$5
Rustoleum metal paint in High Gloss Black.	For body, brackets and for trunk.	\$5
Craft Brushes (came in pack of various sizes – about 15)	For painting small areas but I used for the entire engine block.	\$5
Throw away foam and bristle brushes	Various places. Foam ones were especially good at getting under hoses and wires and places you could just push it into.	\$10
Puppy Pee Pads	For under the car, taped to sides and in front of radiator.	\$15
Acetone	For mistakes and for cleaning brushes and my arms which regularly got covered with paint. Used almost the whole quart	\$6
Plastic flexible wire covers	Used both small and large	\$12 for 12 feet
New battery bolts		\$4
Paper towels (used 2 rolls)	For cleaning up the car, brushes and myself	\$1
Lots of little plastic cups	For holding the paint. Note that the spray paints ate right through yogurt cups in about 3 minutes so I switched to sturdier fruit cups and a tuna can for the acetone.	Free
Meguiar's Tire Gel	For all hoses	Already had
	Total Supplies	\$112.00

After three weeks of working on the paint job, the day came to see if the engine would turn over and amazingly it started right up! I drove it out and parked it and let it run for 20 minutes as there was paint smoke as Gary predicted but just from one area under the carburetor that I had painted red as it looked like part of the engine. It is now black so I will be repainting it black this time.

So on September 6th, I'll have an open engine compartment at the Edmonds Hot Autumn Nights Car Show!