

ART IN MOTION

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Art thru the ages has demonstrated the ways people have reimagined their worlds thru painting, sculpture, architecture, photography, films, performance and design. More than anything else, it is a history of creativity.

As art moved from the classical period, the renaissance, to modern art a revolution was taking place in Europe and the U.S. Between 1760-1820 the first Industrial Revolution was born when manufacturing went from hand production to machines. This Revolution was basically in the textile industry in Great Briton and agriculture in the U.S.

The First Industrial Revolution marks a major turning point in history. Almost every aspect of daily life was influenced in some way. In particular, average income and population began to exhibit unprecedented sustained growth. The major effect of the First Industrial Revolution was that the standard of living for the general population of the western world began to increase consistently for the first time in history.

Between 1840 to 1870 and beyond the Second Industrial Revolution took place with the adoption of steam locomotives, expanding railroads, steamboats, and steamships. New innovations also included new steel making processes, mass production and an electrical grid system.

Between 1885-1886 Karl Benz invented and then patented the first "Vehicle powered by a gas engine". In the U.S. Henry Ford in 1896 unveiled his gasoline powered Quadracycle, named Quadracycle because Ford basically put a large bicycle wheel and tire on the 4 corners of his vehicle.

With these revolutionary means of transportation, locomotives, steamships and automobiles, people and commerce were now able, in a relatively short amount of time, travel unheard of distances. Yet to come, of course,

was the Wright Brothers first flight of 12 seconds on Dec. 17, 1903, which would revolutionize travel even more.

So what does all this have to do with “Art in Motion”? During the latter half of the 19th century the consumer goods industry grew rapidly becoming very competitive. This necessitated the creation of designer goods. Consumers were now ready to spend more on luxury items and lush interior items for their homes.

By the 1920s in order to create products from appliances to automobiles, that would capture the imagination and dollars of the consumer a new profession was born; Industrial Design. Trained artist from different art schools were hired for creating commercial art to facilitate the designing of industrial products. Aesthetics was now becoming a marketing tool to enhance a products competitiveness and success.

Some of the better known early Industrial Designers include Raymond Loewy, George Nelson, Henry Dreyfuss, Charles Eames, Walter Dorwin Teague, Buckminster Fuller and Brooks Stevens.

No Products received as much attention of art and design as those related to transportation, classics like Raymond Loewy’s the Pennsylvania Railroad S1 and T1 steam locomotives and the electric GG1, and Henry Dreyfuss’ New York Central’s Hudson. Even though not an Industrial Designer, aeronautical engineer Kelly Johnson’s beautiful 1943 Lockheed Constellation that demonstrated how strictly functional aerodynamics could create a very attractive product. A bit of trivia regarding the Constellation; the signature 3 tails was a result of aircraft hangers, at the time, not having tall enough doors to accommodate a large single tail airplane. Streamlining was becoming all the rage and Industrial Designers were applying it to, not only locomotives, but to radios and washing machines, “Art in Motion” even on stationary products.

But it was the automobile that received most of the attention to art and design. Early automobiles, such as the Ford Model T, were pretty much pragmatic designs driven by engineering and manufacturing requirements. However for the wealthy, particularly those residing in Hollywood, San

Francisco and New York, who valued distinctiveness and craftsmanship, custom bodied vehicles, became *de rigueur*. From the 1920s thru the 1930s auto companies such as Duesenberg, Auburn, Cadillac, Packard, Chrysler and Lincoln, to name a few, supplied chassis to numerous coachbuilders, Le Baron, Dietrich, Brewster, Fleetwood, Derham, etc. to design and build customs bodies for their well-to-do clientele. These vehicles have become iconic classics of this era that are works of art, many of which are worth millions of dollars today.

By the mid-1920s General Motors president, Alfred P. Sloan Jr. recognized that the auto market was saturated. In order to maintain unit sales Sloan suggested annual model year design changes to convince car owners that they needed to buy a replacement each year. Sloan called his strategy dynamic obsolescence or planned obsolescence as called by critics. In order to implement his plan Sloan hired a 33 year old designer of custom car bodies for Hollywood celebrities, Harley J. Earl. Together Sloan and Earl set up the Art and Colour Department at GM's Fisher Body facility.

The auto companies, prompted by their own sales people, quickly realized, or at least acknowledged, that physical appearance, - good looks, glamor, verve, flair, color, sexiness, sportiness, - call it what you will could help sell cars.

And hence began a profession within a profession; automobile design or, as it was called then, styling. It was General Motor's Art and Color department under its creator Harley Earl that became the model for Ford and Chrysler styling studios. Another of Earl's contribution to automotive art was the concept car or as it was known then as the "dream car". One of the reasons that Sloan hired Earl was Earl's eagerness to be first in everything, particularly in fashion. Earl consciously tried to lead the American automobile industry in styling and did, throughout most of his career. His 1938 Buick Y-job and 1951 LeSabre not only became a look into the future of automotive design, but because they were the cars he drove they were an extension of Earl himself and his wardrobe.

When General Motors bought the Electro Motive Co. in 1930 Earl's design staff had another product to apply their talents to; the Diesel locomotive. The results of their efforts were the streamlined E series passenger locomotives introduced in 1937 and the F series freight locomotives which hit the rails in 1939. In addition to designing the locomotive bodies the GM designers also were responsible for many of the colorful paint graphics that adorned their flanks. The American Locomotive Co. ALCO, competitor to GM, in 1946 came out with their PA and FA locomotives. Designed by industrial designer Ray Patten these locomotives are considered by many to be the most beautiful on the rails.

I would be remiss if I also didn't give quick mention to boats when discussing "Art in Motion". Artist for centuries have been painting sailing vessels such as the one seen here. There is an inherent beauty of a large yacht under full sail. The America's Cup Regattas of the 1930's saw the emergence of the J Class yachts which measured 120'-136'. Beautiful at the dock and spectacular under sail is the J Class Rainbow painted here by marine artist John Macrey. Today Wally Yachts, headquartered in Monaco is creating beautiful modern yachts that are also works of art.

Back to the automobile: In addition to the concept car, one of Earl's main weapons to revolutionize the design of mass produced automobiles was clay. A sculpted model helped his clients, (first, movie stars and millionaires and later GM executives) get a feel for the proposed design in a way that sketches and diagrams couldn't communicate.

But that was a long time ago, and today modern automotive designers have at their disposal computers, specialized design software, giant monitors, large scale 3D printing, computerized milling processes, and fancy virtual reality setups. However as wonderful as the electronic images are there is still no substitute for a 3D model of a product as complex as an automobile. As designers we always saw something in the full size clay model that we didn't see on the computer screen. But I degress.

It wasn't long before Ford and Chrysler caught on to the value of creating and displaying "Dream Cars". Over at Ford it was Henry's son Edsel that

had an artistic flair and a feel for design. Edsel, against his father's instincts, in 1931 hired 23 year old designer Eugene T. (Bob) Gregorie. Gregorie's first assignment was to develop the Lincoln brand that Henry Ford had bought from Leland in 1922. Gregorie's crowning achievement was the lunchtime sketch he did in 1938 of a highly modified Lincoln Zephyr. When Edsel saw the sketch he immediately wanted it built to be his personal car for an upcoming holiday in Florida. Thus was born the Lincoln Continental. After 2 weeks driving around Palm Beach Edsel called Gregorie saying he could sell a thousand of these things. In 1940 the Continental went into production selling for \$2840. Today they are worth over \$40,000. The continental with its modern design soon became a Hollywood favorite. Among those who personally owned and drove Continentals were Clark Gable, Ronald Reagan, Mickey Rooney and Rita Hayworth.

In 1951, the Museum of Modern Art chose the 1941 Lincoln Continental as one of eight cars that represented excellence in automotive design. And in 1959, 100 of the world's leading designers, architects and teachers of design were surveyed by the Illinois Institute of Technology ranked the Continental sixth among the 100 best commercial products of all time, definitely Art in Motion.

Over in Highland Park, Michigan Chrysler Corp. was last to realize how much new and exciting vehicle design could influence sales. Kaufman Thuma (KT) Keller, who Walter P. Chrysler chose as his replacement in 1935, was convinced that Chrysler could maintain its second place sales position by virtue of its engineering leadership. Consequently, after World War II when demand for new cars skyrocketed, Chrysler came to the market with boxy and staid models. K.T. Keller's insistence that buyers of Chrysler Corporation cars should be able to wear their hats inside their cars caused the corporation's sales position to slip to third place. Fresh new cars from GM and the revolutionary 1949 Ford were going to dominate sales. Though Chrysler's production totals were increasing slowly each year market share was dropping rapidly. Even stubborn KT saw that something had to be done.

In 1938 Studebaker had contracted famed Industrial Designer Raymond Loewy to establish a design department. While looking for up and coming designers Loewy first stop was General Motors. Three designers were lured away from GM by doubling their salaries and a chance to work for Loewy. One of those designers was 30 year old Virgil M. Exner. Exner's first task at Studebaker was to tidy up the design for the all-new 1939 Champion. So successful was the new design that Studebaker sales doubled that year. Exner was also responsible for the post war 1949 Studebaker Champion and a sketch done in 1948 that would become the theme for the design for the break-thru 1953 Studebaker Starliner coupe that Loewy generally gets credit for.

By the late forties Exner became more dis-encharmed at Studebaker. Politics and disagreements with Loewy had Ex looking for other opportunities. When KT Keller heard of Exner's availability he enthusiastically agreed to meet with the designer. The meeting in August 1949 went well; Keller officially offered Ex the post of Chief of the Advanced Styling Studio that did not as yet exist but would be created for and by Virgil Exner. Keller told Ex and his team to design a parade phaeton, create a series of concept or what Ex would call "idea cars", and work on ideas that could be used on future production vehicles. He told Exner "I want to design the most beautiful car you can" and Ex did just that.

Three dual cowl Phaetons, designed by Exner, were built on stretched Crown Imperial chassis with a stock 1951 grille and bumpers to ensure Chrysler identity. Of the three parade Phaetons built, one went to New York, one to LA and since the White House was not permitted to receive gifts Chrysler kept the car in Detroit and shipped it around the country at its discretion. The passenger list reads like a *Who's Who*: Presidents from Eisenhower to Nixon, Winston Churchill, Nikita Khrushchev, Colonel John Glenn and the Crew of Apollo 11 to name a few.

As the U.S. economy rebounded in the 1950's the Big 3, now fully committed to highly styled automobiles, created numerous concept cars each year to attract the buyer to their product. Ford "Dream Cars" as they were called, like the 1955 Ford Mystere and Lincoln Futura were probably

more rocket ship inspired than those from GM or Chrysler. The Lincoln Futura would later be used by Hollywood as the Batmobile.

GM's Dream Cars of the 50's were somewhat more restrained but one could still find the influence jet aircraft. Some noteworthy examples are the 1954 Cadillac El Camino, the 1956 Buick Centurion, the 1954 Pontiac Bonneville and of course the 1953 Chevrolet Corvette.

Over at Chrysler their "Idea Cars" were much less flamboyant, but quite handsome by comparison. Virgil Exner worked with Carozzeria Ghia in Italy to create a series of cars thru the early 50's the first examples being the 1952 K310 and Chrysler Styling Special. 1953 saw the debut of the DeSoto Adventurer and Chrysler D'Elegance. Nicely surfaced and proportioned with minimal ornamentation these vehicles still look very attractive today.

Reflecting the rising economic and social spirit of the 50's the automobile became the poster child for "Art in Motion". By the mid 50's the big three came to the market with fresh, multi colored, highly "styled" vehicles. Some well-designed standouts that still look great today are the 1955 Chevy Bel Aire, the 1956 Lincoln Premier Coupe and this 1956 Chrysler 300B. Some beautiful new vehicle designs were also being created across the Atlantic; the 1955 Mercedes Benz 300SL gullwing, 1955 Ferrari 750 Monza Spider and the Jaguar D Type racer.

The high style of the 50s reached its peak when in 1957 Chrysler Corp. came out with a line of dramatically low, be-finned beauties. Lowered 5 inches to an overall height of just 54 inches the cars looked sensational. They had a basic dart like appearance, with large clean fins, delicate pillars and gently curving, thin section, light looking roofs.

A handful of GM designers, seeing the pre-release 1957 Chrysler cars in a holding lot, were thoroughly shaken up by how low and gorgeous the '57 hardtops looked. Among the spies was design director Bill Mitchell who realized that if GM brought out the fat, over chromed designs Harley Earl had in mind for 1959, Chrysler would wipe the floor with all of them. With Earl away in Europe Mitchell and his staff developed the lower, slimmer, more sharply designed shapes that ended up becoming GM's 1959

models. In 1958 when Earl reached the mandatory retirement age of 65 William L. Mitchell was appointed Vice President of GM Design.

At Ford the marketing and design disaster of the 1958 Edsel had the company back on its heels. In addition the Lincoln division was losing money hand over fist prompting Ford president Robert S. McNamara to forcefully suggest that Ford drop the entire Lincoln line. The Ford family however felt the company needed a flagship car, and a car that they themselves would want to be seen in. McNamara resisted but then wisely gave in stipulating that the next generation Lincoln be significantly smaller than the 1958-60 bloated low selling vehicles it would replace. In the Thunderbird studio under direction of Elwood Engle an all new T-Bird was being developed for 1961. When McNamara saw Engle's T-Bird clay, he asked that it be stretched into a 4-door so he could view it as a smaller Lincoln.

The downsized, beautifully conceived 1961 Lincoln Continental became one of the division's most successful and enduring designs winning the prestigious Industrial Design Institute award. Elwood Engle had done himself proud with the '61 Continental and by Nov. 1961 was lured away by Chrysler to replace the ailing Virgil Exner as Vice President of Styling.

The Engle years at Chrysler also produced some notable well designed cars that still look great today and are very collectable. The 1968 Charger, 1970 Barracuda and Challenger are prime examples. Recently a 1970 Hemi Cuda convertible, of which only 14 were built, crossed the auction block at \$2.7 million dollars.

Over at GM with Bill Mitchell at the helm General Motors had a styling renaissance. The 1963 Buick Riviera, with crisp razor edges inspired by Rolls Royce blended into the sporty overtones of Ferrari was a Mitchell favorite. The 1966 Oldsmobile FWD Toronado, 1967 Camaro and 1968 Pontiac GTO were also design hits. Most noteworthy of the Mitchell cars though has to be the 1963 - 1967 Corvette Stingrays. Derived from Mitchell's Sting Ray racer and designed by, just out of Art Center School,

19 year old Peter Brock, this now classic design has been the benchmark for Corvettes ever since.

Gene Bordinat Jr. who was elevated to VP of Ford design in June of 1961 wasn't the flamboyant extrovert of Earl or Mitchell. In fact in Bordinat's time Ford rarely led the industry in styling. Never-the-less one of the most significant vehicles in automotive history was developed under his reign; the 1965 Ford Mustang. Spear headed by sales and marketing guru Lee Iacocca, the Mustang was as much a marketing success as a design success. With classic long hood short deck proportions, built on a lowered homily Ford Falcon platform, and selling for \$2368 the 4 seat Mustang found a unique niche in the market. Sales for the first year of production totaled 418,812 units, a record that still stands today. It's been said that as much as Lee Iacocca made the Mustang, the Mustang made Lee Iacocca. Here again the appearance or "art" of the product was a major factor for its success.

Other than some of the early 70s muscle and pony cars and the 1974 Lamborghini Countach the 70s were devoid of any great automotive designs. The resources needed to create exciting new vehicles were being siphoned off to meet federally mandated standards for fuel economy, emissions, safety and body damageability. For instance one of the biggest design challenges we faced at Chrysler was the 5 mph front and rear bumpers. We struggled, did our best, but these bumpers still looked like 4"x4" attached to the front and rear of most of our vehicles.

Other than downsizing and other weight reduction measures to improve fuel economy, aerodynamics offered fuel saving opportunities at relatively little cost. Ford was the first to take advantage of aero. Beginning in 1981 Ford designers began developing sketches and clay models that emphasized softer, rounder more slippery shapes and introduced them slowly to senior management to get them comfortable with this new look. The results of their efforts was the 1986 Ford Taurus that was without overstatement, the single most important American design of the 1980's, it was also a huge sales success. The Taurus gave a Ford a decisive styling lead over all other U.S. automakers; It also gave designers at the other car

companies the courage to incorporate the aero look; and marked an end of the sheer look and square cars.

Another significant vehicle of the 1980s, though not known as a beauty, was the 1984 Chrysler minivan. The enduring quality of this vehicle is its no-frills functional industrial design that created a new niche in the market and was second only to the 1965 Mustang with first year sales of over 400,000 units.

As the 80s rolled into the 90s vehicle design experienced a series of success and failures. At GM Chuck Jordan, now Vice President of Design, had his team develop a series of concept cars to reverse GM's image of staid, badge-engineered products. The 1995 Oldsmobile Aurora and Buick Riviera were the stylistic homeruns that Jordan was hoping for. At Ford things didn't work as well when Ford replaced its successful 1986 Taurus with an all-new model in 1996. The multi-oval design, though in many ways revolutionary, never caught on with buyers. I kept waiting for it to grow on me; it never did.

Over at Chrysler a design renaissance was taking hold. With Robert A. Lutz brought aboard by Lee Iacocca in 1986 as Executive VP, Design had a patron it needed to lead Chrysler through its most massive styling revolution since Exner's 1957 models. Led by newly appointed VP of Design, Tom Gale, Chrysler Design created a series of stunning cab-forward concept cars. However, no one took much notice of Gale until in January of 1989 when Chrysler unveiled the Dodge Viper R/T 10 at the Detroit International Auto Show. The Viper showed the world that Chrysler once again could design exciting automobiles. The public responded far more eagerly than the company anticipated. People started sending in \$1000 deposits along with orders for the Viper directly to Lee Iacocca. Chrysler returned all the checks. The production of the Viper began in 1992.

A series of cab-forward production sedans code-named LH (that we said stood for "last hope") were introduced in 1993. These uniquely proportioned spacious sedans were an instant sales success. Once again confirming that style/design can become the driving motivation for purchase.

Chrysler Design continued on a roll with the 1996 Viper GTS Coupe and the 1997 insane Plymouth Prowler hot rod.

Starting in the new millennium the auto market shifted dramatically to SUVs and Trucks. There isn't much glamor to talk about with these boxy upright vehicles. In fact many of them, in an attempt to distinguish themselves from their competitors, are pretty hideous with strange forms and intersecting line work adorning their body sides. Some of the sporty car makers tried, with some degree of success, to incorporate the performance image of their cars into their SUVs, Porsche Cayenne and Macan and Alfa Romeo Stelvio are good examples. Although you can now buy a SUV from Toyota to Rolls Royce, the most recognized around the globe, with a brand value of Nike and Apple is Jeep. The iconic look of the Jeep Wrangler that has evolved successfully since WWII is a testament to its classic design.

There are a few automotive design standouts from the 2000 to present. The 2004 Chrysler 300 was a very successful breakaway form the cab forward Chryslers of the 90s. Ford brought excitement to the market in 2004 with its 2 seat mid-engine Ford GT which paid homage to the Le Mans winning Ford GT40s of the mid 1960s. The Tesla Model S introduced in 2012 is becoming a classic contemporary design for a 4 door sedan. It's in the pricy exotic car market, however, that stunning design can be found. Cars from Ferrari, Aston Martin, Lamborghini and McLaren; limited production and handcrafted inside and out these cars are works of art that are capable of tripling the speed limit in most states.

These sketches represent the thinking and communication skills of the designers who created them. But are they really art? Unfortunately, so far, the traditional and fine art elitist refuse to recognize the creative talent of those who don't just look and record the past or present, but look excitingly forward.

In conclusion some of the most beautiful and coveted cars, other than classics of the 1930s, were created in the late 50s and 1960s. Bill Mitchell's one off Stingray racer being one of them. Others race oriented cars are the Chuck Pelly 1958 Chevy powered Scarabs, Peter Brock's 1964 Ford powered Shelby Daytona Coupes and the 1962-64 Ferrari 250 GTO.

Shelby Daytona Coupes today auction at \$10-\$15 million. This 1963 Ferrari GTO recently was bought by Weather Tech founder David McNeil for a cool \$70 million dollars. This GTO is predicted to be worth \$100 million in the next 5 years. At the top of my list, and many others, as one of the most beautiful production cars ever is the 1960 Jaguar XKE. Inspired by the Jaguar D type racer, a pristine early '60s E-Type will fetch close to a half a million dollars today. All this is to say that valuable art just doesn't reside in the Louvre or the Guggenheim, but as rolling pieces of sculpture in museums, garages and on roads around the globe. Art in Motion!