

DESIGN detail

the architecture magazine



[WORK][SPACES]
SPECIAL FOCUS

**UNLEASHING THE
CONTEMPORARY**

AR. ROMI KHOSLA

WHERE ECOLOGY MERGES WITH TECHNOLOGY



Text: Team Design Detail | Photos: Laura Dass

The Mullin Auto Museum, located in Santa Barbara, California is a place where the barriers separating ecology and technology slowly evaporate. One will be awe-struck to find that eco-consciousness has become a design priority in a museum that showcases gas-guzzling vehicles. The major credit for this goes to David Hartz, the principal architect of Studio of Environmental Architecture.

Previously, it was an automotive museum owned by the newspaper tycoon, Otis Chandler. Mr. Mullin purchased the building with the mission of transforming it into a new world class museum that celebrates the Art Deco Movement. It was a movement that produced exquisite decorative art and magnificent automobiles. The 45,000 sq.ft. museum holds the private automobile collection of Peter Mullin. It displays some of the finest historic French automobiles from Bugatti to Voisin, as well as decorative art from the same period. Interiors of the museum include a theater, gift store, private club, archives and offices - in addition to display areas for cars and automotive artifacts.

When a discussion was held on eliminating certain green features due to budget constraints, the team insisted on retaining the same as that they were not merely a cost, but an investment. The museum features dramatic luxury details, such as

1) An abstract graphic design of a 1938 Talbot Lago adorns the street view of the museum



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2) An elevated platform with a turn table showcasing most exciting automobiles

3) Energy-efficient lighting installed throughout the museum

4) Vintage cars displayed along the ground floor

a grand entry way covered by repurposed automobile windshields, a lush green roof that doubles as an event space, and uber-modern wind turbines vaulting off of the roof over the entrance.

The architect had to face a real challenge to create a unique structure out of an existing warehouse, within a relatively tight budget of five million dollars. He was able to attune with this limitation by changing the focus and creating highly dramatic and outstanding features. Although he moved along with the idea of keeping the basic core and shell very simple without showing an extravagance in the employment of budget, he was able to produce maximum architectural effect in a few areas.

The major effects among these include a stunning pair of vintage gates from Argentina that were remodeled to create the entrance to the museum's glass elevator, which lifts visitors up to a mezzanine, and to the green roof. The museum also features a photovoltaic array that, along with the wind turbines, supply all the energy needed for the building. Energy-efficient lighting is also installed throughout the museum, which is controlled by an automated day lighting system to maximise natural light.

DAVID HERTZ



A firm dedicated to the conservation of ecology, David Hertz Architects Inc FAIA, & S.E.A. (Studio of Environmental Architecture) has a long history of over 30 years in designing and constructing environmentally responsible residential and commercial buildings. S.E.A. has won several awards like the City of Santa Monica Sustainable Leadership Award, the Eco-Home Network's Sustainable Living Award, to name a few. David Hertz' innovative works include Mullin Automotive Museum in Santa Barbara, 747 Wing House in Malibu, Californication House in Venice and Butterfly House in Venice among many others.

MULLIN AUTOMOTIVE MUSEUM FOUNDATION

The Peter Mullin Automotive Museum Foundation is a nonprofit institution organized to support nonprofit public forums that are dedicated to the study, preservation, and public display of classic automobiles and period art objects.

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The ground floor level display area was designed to recreate a 1930s Parisian auto show with lighting, decorations, and furnishings from that period. Three elevated platforms – one with a turntable – situated in the center of the space, showcase some of the very special automobiles in the collection. It has a "barn-find" that displays a bygone and unrestored French car in the setting of a decrepit country barn, with hay on the floor and gas cans lying all around. There is another room that displays a rusted chassis of a 1925 Bugatti that was dredged up

5) Vintage gates from Argentina

6) The interiors are designed to provide privacy within the public space



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FACT FILE

PROJECT : MULLIN AUTOMOTIVE MUSEUM
 LOCATION : SANTA BARBARA IN OKNARD, CALIFORNIA
 PRACTICE : STUDIO OF ENVIRONMENTAL ARCHITECTURE
 ARCHITECT : DAVID HERTZ
 AREA : 45,000 sq. ft.

7) Entrance to the Museum

8) View from the mezzanine floor

9) Aluminum paneling below the canopy that resembles the skin of a vintage Bugatti race car

10) Night view of the museum with the olive tree and other greenery removing a natural beauty to the museum

after 70 years from beneath the chill waters of Lake Maggiore in Switzerland.

At the point of entrance below the canopy, the architects envisioned an aluminum paneling around the glass doors. A design plan was made, where the aluminum shroud mimicked the skin of a vintage Bugatti race car. After numerous mock-ups of aluminum finish and the shifting and spacing of rivets, approval was made to proceed which resulted in a surprising facsimile of the skin of a vintage Bugatti race car.

The street side of the exterior features three fabric wrapped scrims to cover the existing building alcoves. Each of these scrims has a graphic abstract from the front fender, roof, and rear fender of a 1938 Talbot Lago. Extensive new landscaping that includes several 100 years old olive trees, adorns the exterior. The roof incorporates a roof deck with a grassy garden area for guests. Thus, with a fine balance of oxygen and carbon emissions, Mullin Automotive Museum proves that it is not yet time to entirely forget ecology for the sake of technology. **55**