

DreamCruise By Ryan Cykiert

As a child, I grew up in a family that only drove Cadillacs. My Zaida (Grandfather), worked hard for everything and saved his money. When he first started his career, he began painting signs, working his way up to painting houses and then building houses. He was a man who knew the value of a dollar and who never wanted his family to know what he had to go through during the Holocaust.



He believed in having a big, loving family who supported one another. However, due to his experiences under German occupation my Zaida would never purchase or own a German vehicle. He purchased his Cadillac because it was an American made luxury sedan. To me, there wasn't anything nicer than driving in a brand new Cadillac with that fresh leather, right out of the factory, smell. I remember my last car ride to lunch with my Zaida, Walter Cykiert, Saturday March 25th, 2000; I sat in the back seat of his big Cadillac Deville, off

white with a tan top, gold trim and a tan interior. The car was made for a king. As important as this car ride was, the following morning was not as pleasant. After his passing, my dad and his brothers had to split up his possessions. When my dad finally came home, he brought with him this emblem he found behind a bunch of boxes when he was cleaning the garage. This old Cadillac emblem, fresh out of its original box, is a reminder of why I love cars.

Every year since I received my license, I have cleaned-up my 2002 black Chevrolet two-door Blazer, inside and out. My dad always told me: "If you want to get something done, right. Do it yourself." After hearing this repeatedly, I never enjoyed going through the car wash. I wasn't comfortable having these machines, that have already cleaned hundreds if not thousands of cars before me, brush against my truck just to leave it clean, but scratched up. I've always enjoyed the manual labor that comes with cleaning my truck thoroughly. After spending hours-on-end cleaning, waxing and polishing, I take pride in my hard work and love watching people's heads turn as they drive by the black two-door Chevrolet Blazer with paint like a mirror.



One example of showing off my cleaned-up ride is the Woodward Dream Cruise. The Woodward Dream Cruise is unlike a car collection or the auto show. It's as though you are stepping back in time. Muscle cars and classics ride up and down Woodward Avenue, making their engines roar. The owners line the road, letting people come up close to their cars. It's the week where you are able to see, hear and touch some of the most amazing machines. Whether I

drove an old classic or not didn't matter because it showed how much work I had put into preparing my truck for the Woodward Dream Cruise. I was part of this car culture.



At the North American International Auto Show at the COBO Center in Downtown Detroit, I got to see hundreds of different cars. It was very impersonal and sometimes I was feeling as though it's better to just look at a picture in a magazine, since there are hundreds, if not thousands of people walking around the building. At the Ken Lingenfelter Car Collection, I got the opportunity to get up close to about 150 different cars ranging from classic cars to the new age super cars. It was like being in a dream - three garages and 40,000 square feet of cars, some of which will never get to see the road again. It was like being at museum, just looking at rows and rows of cars crammed into one large garage to be preserved.

While documenting the cars at the Ken Lingenfelter Car Collection, I lost track of time, spending 3 hours taking about 330 images in a 40,000 square foot building consisting of three large garages and about 150 cars of all years. It was unlike the Dream Cruise where you can see people showing off their cars and the Auto Show where you can barely even touch the cars. At the collection, I was able to touch and be close to these rare expensive automobiles. Some of which I had only seen online or on television.



During my last semester I was unable to attend the lecture by Anne Mondro. Watching it online, I was not sure I understood what exactly she was trying to say throughout her lecture. After listening to it a second time, it is clear that her message is about how her life experiences are engines that motivate her to make pieces of artwork. She talks about how the Model A's engine at the Henry Ford Museum inspired her and how she makes a replica out of metal wire. It's ironic and clever how a heavy, solid piece of metal could be recreated from metal wire; a looser, more airy structure. She understands that it's our life experiences, the little things that change the way we look at the world, that inspire us to create works of art.

This lecture related to the work in my Integrative Project, where I am trying to figure out how my love for classic cars inspires me and how my passion for the auto industry grows with the images taken. I have gone to and driven down Woodward during the Woodward Dream Cruise, visited the North American International Auto Show and attended the Ken Lingenfelter Car Collection in search of those images that would push me forward and show off the beauty and uniqueness of these classics. Although I don't have a classic car in my garage, I take images to take a piece of these beautiful cars home with me. I learned from Anne Mondro that maybe it isn't just the cars that inspire me. Its experiences that I have are the most influential.

My Inspiration was drawn from American and street photographers, Mitch Epstein and Garry Winogrand. Mitch Epstein explored how landscape and society intersect in the United States via energy production in his most recent works, "American Power". Another work of his I found to be useful was titled, "The City". It is an older piece of his that focuses on a series of photographs that show the balance between public and private life in New York. In this piece he shows how people in the early 1990s no longer like their picture taken in public space, unlike the early 1970s when people enjoyed their photo taken in the streets of New York. Garry Winogrand, whose work depicted social issues of his time and how the role of the media shaped attitudes. All of these photographers displayed different approaches to photography and portraiture, but none of which used the type of lighting I was looking for in my final images. It was Italian Painter, Caravaggio, whose lighting approach captured what I was looking for when explaining a certain mood or tone in an image. His paintings displayed dramatic lighting that showed human nature in both a physical and emotional state. Another interesting fact about his specific painting style, that I hope to incorporate within my portraits, is his ability to shift from light to dark with little intermediate value.

I want my images to show how the cars should be seen. I want to show this still car back on the road, with the wind blowing and clear sky bright above. These images are my way of connecting with these cars. I understand that I'm not able to own, drive, or even get a chance to stand beside them. These cars are like rolling sculptures that turn heads as they roll by. The metal beasts stand strong with clean lines, chrome on the bumpers and rounded body panels. Taking these images allows me take a piece of automotive history home with me. It's comforting to see in my photographs, not only the cars themselves, but also the others that got to relive their childhood during the Woodward Dream Cruise.

I digitally altered these images to bring back that feeling of when these cars were brand new, rolling right out of the show room floor. Although they were taken with a Digital SLR, I stayed

away from the crisp clean lines, but instead blurred the images and then faded the colors out to show age. It was important to me that these photos gave off the appearance of when these cars were the norm and not just a collector's item. The angles these photos were taken from viewer experience the specific body styles from the eras - from the stare down of the bold muscular headlights of the 1967 Pontiac LeMans to the smooth flowing body panels of the 1933 Ford 5-Window Coupe or even the art deco inspired interior of the 1946 Mercury Sportsman. Cars like the 1946 Mercury Sportsman just don't exist today in the factories; a hand-made work of art, a solid wood dashboard accented by metal and chrome, a car that was truly man-made and not mass produced by a bunch of machines and computers.



Owning a car becomes a symbol of independence, freedom and sometimes even an increase in social status. The automobile has been integrated into books, movies, and music. Cars have become iconic, such as the 1969 Dodge Charger the Duke brothers drove in the American television series, *The Dukes of Hazzard* or the iconic Aston Martin that James Bond, a fictional British Secret Intelligence Service agent, drove.

What I have come to figure out about going to the Dream Cruise, Auto Show and the Lingenfelter Collection is that there are different ways to celebrate the benchmarks in automotive history. At the Auto Show it wasn't like that, although I was able to take pictures of the cars, I wasn't always able to get close to some of the expensive ones. At the Lingenfelter Collection, I had the opportunity to be the only one in the garage. I was able to get close to the cars, look at the interior and was able to look beneath the hood of rare cars. The Dream Cruise however, I was able to approach the cars, look in them, and hear them drive down the road. It was as though I taken back into time to a place where people took pride in their work and the bodies of these cars were hand crafted metal. By combining all of my experiences and inspirations from other artists will help me create images that show my love for automotive design. DreamCruise is a blast from the past, bringing to light the craftsmanship of the cars of yesteryear.