

CLASSIC DRIVER

[The Petersen Automotive Museum is re-imagined, remodelled, and re-invigorated](#)

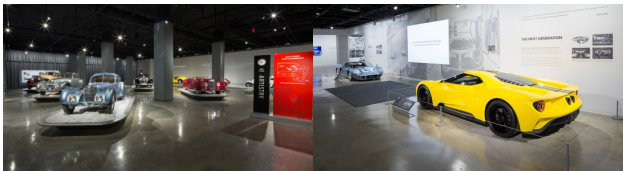
Lead

Los Angeles California's Petersen Automotive Museum had been closed to the public for a little over a year, but by no means out of business. Rather, it's been to the spa for a full body makeover...

Opened in 1994, it was long the apple of the eyes of American speciality publishing doyens and world-class car collectors Margie and Robert E. Petersen. A decade earlier, the Petersens purchased an abandoned department store building on Wilshire Blvd. at the west end of L.A.'s museum district. The property was remodelled into a proper museum with its prime themes being education, and the preservation of Los Angeles' car culture and transportation history.

The Petersens have both since passed away, leaving a highly qualified group of West Coast business and automotive experts in charge. The museum remained viable as a prime attraction, but the physical plant was becoming dated.

Traffic-stopping architecture



Architecture, museum design and exhibition craft have evolved hugely since the mid-1990s, so the board of directors and the museum's considerable support group decided the property and concept needed a complete reboot, turning it into something that would really dazzle and excite. A team of architects, designers, curators, researchers, contractors and project managers was assembled to reconceive the museum in every way possible, but all remaining within the footprint of the existing building. The old floors were gutted, for the creation of more open, modern, dramatic gallery space inside. Architectural firms were engaged to create an exterior that would literally and figuratively stop traffic, in the way other dramatic 'architectural statement' properties do. The teams devised an avant-garde exterior look comprising red painted panels, and an intricate web of girders and beams, with sweeping and cascading stainless steel ribbons creating a highly original visage.

Precious metal aplenty



The board undertook a fundraising effort of just over \$100m for the design and construction plus endowment reserves. The results are successful beyond words from the moment you approach the property until you've seen and done it all.

The elegant new galleries are presented typically: via spaces encompassing history, hot-rodding, technology, motorsports, design, art, and significant star cars. Among our favourites is the 'Precious Metal' gallery, containing only prime-fillet machines painted silver.

The New Petersen Automotive Museum is a superlative place to visit and revisit. You will be educated and entertained, with all senses satisfied.

Photos: Matt Stone / Petersen Automotive Museum

Gallery

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