

The Telegraph
L U X U R Y



Roddy Giacosa 2013

Design with va-va-vroom

Ron Arad's Pressed Flowers exhibition perfectly embodies the extraordinary power and emotional impact of car design



BY HENRIETTA THOMPSON
DECEMBER 12, 2013 09:00

Over the past week or so, I've been struck repeatedly by the fact that cars have an extraordinary power to move people. It's the emotional impact of a car that I'm talking about, not its physical one. A car with a strong enough brand, and a clever enough designer behind the wheel, can take a person to places that horsepower alone can never reach.

Thompson, Henrietta. "Design with va-va-vroom", *Telegraph*. December 12, 2013.

FRIEDMAN BENDA 515 W 26TH STREET NEW YORK NY 10001
FRIEDMANBENDA.COM TELEPHONE 212 239 8700 FAX 212 239 8760

In the beginning, there was the Aston Martin. We borrowed a Vanquish Volante in bright racing red for the weekend and were astounded as we were transformed Cinderella-style from our scruffpot selves into a sleek, sexy couple in sports mode. It sounded like a tiger, drove like a dream, and everyone we passed stopped and stared as we swooshed past. It was at once embarrassing and fabulous, a feeling that can be yours for just £200,000.



Keith Haring Untitled (Car) 1986
Enamel on 1963 Buick Special

The Vanquish experience made me think about design and how the feeling of a car can be extended, or not, into other products. “I want an Aston Martin office chair,” my boyfriend said at one point, a little overexcited. Also the Aston Martin desk, sofa, jacket, the coffee pot, the works. But did we really? Aston Martin doesn’t make office chairs, and hopefully it won’t ever feel the need. But it does have a Lifestyle Collection including product collaborations such as silverware by Grant Macdonald, and a lounge by Formitalia. Several other car marques, from Mini to Ferrari do the same.

The problem? Fine craftsmanship, advanced engineering, sleek good looks and valuable materials aside, great design can make you feel wonderful, but even when created by the best in the business the end results rarely appear more than mere merchandise – nothing beats driving the super car itself.

It was with Ron Arad last week at Art Basel in Miami that I witnessed a more creative alternative. Brand extension products are not the only way a car marque can capitalise on its products’ emotional impact. The designer was presenting one of his projects at an exhibition entitled *PISTON HEAD: Artists Engage the Automobile*.

Thompson, Henrietta. “Design with va-va-vroom”, *Telegraph*. December 12, 2013.

FRIEDMAN BENDA 515 W 26TH STREET NEW YORK NY 10001
FRIEDMANBENDA.COM TELEPHONE 212 239 8700 FAX 212 239 8760



Pressed Flowers 2013, Ron Arad

For the show, on the top floor of Herzog & de Meuron's incredible car park, a selection of classic cars had been reinterpreted by a distinguished group of artists including Arad, Bruce High Quality Foundation, César, Keith Haring, Damien Hirst, Kenny Scharf and others. Not a million miles away from BMW's Art Cars series, the collection included many a make and model of transformed four-wheeled wonders.

Arad's contribution was a squashed Fiat. One of a series of works he has been building with Fiat called Pressed Flowers, the car – far from being scrap – is preserved like its botanical equivalent, huge, fragile, evocative and beautiful. While other artists in the 1960s have attempted the squashed car sculpture in the past, these are fresh, and Arad and his team have experimented with a fantastic array of methods to allow the cars to stay as cars, just flat ones, seen from a new perspective. The best result, incidentally, was achieved using a 500-ton press found in the Netherlands.

“Pressed Flowers 2013”, originally shown at the Design Museum in Holon, is soon to be “going home”, to a three month-long exhibition at Fiat's Pinacoteca Agnelli, where the cars were first made. The crushed vehicles will surround a curved wooden forming buck, a mould, made by Dante Giacosa and his artisans in 1956, that was used to shape and fit the metal panels of the 500, which is on loan from the Fiat Archive and Museum. They will be joined by "Roddy Giacosa (2013)", a new sculpture created by positioning hundreds of polished stainless steel rods on a metal armature in the shape of a Fiat 500, which is extraordinary to look at, and speaks volumes about materials, construction and the artist at work. It's a project that is certainly very close to Arad's heart. “Doing In Reverse has been a fascinating journey

Thompson, Henrietta. “Design with va-va-vroom”, *Telegraph*. December 12, 2013.

FRIEDMAN BENDA 515 W 26TH STREET NEW YORK NY 10001
FRIEDMANBENDA.COM TELEPHONE 212 239 8700 FAX 212 239 8760

with lots of unknowns, and lots of ups and downs,” he says. “We thought the journey was concluded when the show opened in the Museum we designed in Holon. But here is another surprise – the Cinquecento are going home.”

The tiny cars have such a hold on those who’ve ever driven one, and are as much a symbol of Italy as a Ferrari, or an Aston Martin is of Britain. And although the Pressed Flowers are no longer functional vehicles, they are still moving in the emotional sense, possibly more so in this incarnation than they ever were.

Thompson, Henrietta. “Design with va-va-vroom”, *Telegraph*. December 12, 2013.

FRIEDMAN BENDA 515 W 26TH STREET NEW YORK NY 10001
FRIEDMANBENDA.COM TELEPHONE 212 239 8700 FAX 212 239 8760