

The Car Shop as Sculptor's Studio

Story by Kurt Lightfoot

Photos by Kurt Lightfoot and Will Gibson

Artists and car culture writers understand the level of wholly integrated aesthetic design that goes into a fully functioning street-worthy hot rod or custom car. And part of the aesthetics is that it must work great and appeal to its audience. When you look at these cars in that light you see them like you have never seen them before - rolling sculpture.

To grasp how a car shop can be a sculptor's studio, let's start with the big picture: Americana car culture. And there's no better example of that than Escondido's Cruisin' Grand.

Cruisin' Grand is one of America's all-time great cruisin' venues because it brings all the cultural content together; awesome car creations, real cruisin' on an intimate tree-lined boulevard, a large audience, food and beverages, music, hula-hoop competition for kids, old and new friends. I can't think of any event that brings together more Americana than Cruisin' Grand.

Cars as Art — as Rolling Sculpture

It's the awesome car creations that are the catalysts that ignite Cruisin' Grand. So let's think a moment about the art of these cars, and about the car artists — the hot rod and custom car sculptors.

World renowned installation artist Robert Irwin describes the aesthetic effort of a young custom car builder creating a hot rod: "...I mean real aesthetic decisions, truly aesthetic decisions. Here was a fifteen-year-old kid who wouldn't know art from schmart, but you couldn't talk about a more real aesthetic activity than what he was doing, how he was carefully weighing: What was the attitude of this whole thing? What

exactly? How should it look? What was the relationship in terms of its machinery, its social bearing, everything? I mean, all these things were being weighed in terms of the aesthetics of how the thing should look. It was a perfect example."

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Escondido's award-winning car artists include Super Rides by Jordan, located near Escondido's Auto Park on Venture St. It's where art sculpture happens in the form of hot rods and custom cars.

The Super Rides By Jordan two-page spread on the previous pages is my conceptual brainchild born out of my love affair with cars and car culture. Although Jordan Quintal, the owner of Super Rides By Jordan, was a stranger to me when I explained the concept to him, his artist's eye could envision the end result. To my amazement he instantly approved the project. It was no small commitment on Jordan's part: it took almost eight hours to arrange the cars and shop tools, perform the lighting, and photograph the scene.

To implement the project with me, I recruited Will Gibson. Will is a Palomar College photography instructor and "painting with light" expert. Working with Jordan and his employees Will and I directed rearranging the cars and tools in the shop to get a composition that worked photographically.

I cannot thank Jordan Quintal enough for trusting us with his Car Shop as Sculptor's Studio and letting us create the image you see on the previous pages. It gave Will and me the opportunity to merge the art of photography with the art of creating hot rods and customs.

Cruisin' Grand starts April 5th and we begin a season of living America's love affair with our car culture.

Pictured below (left to right), Jordan Quintal III, Henry J owner Larry Henderson, Jordan Quintal II

