

upfront

Reclaiming the Garage



The lowly garage—the cluttered depository for life's flotsam—has become the final frontier in home renovations. Chad Haas, founder of high-end garage cabinetry maker Vault, is leading the charge to transform the North American garage into livable flex space that can be used as a workshop, kids' playroom, organized storage, and more. You can even park your cars in it. Imagine that.

"The idea of furnishing a nice garage is so new, people don't even know how to visualize it," Haas says. So he's set up a website where homeowners can get excited about the future. Here, visitors will find specialized furniture, flooring, lighting, and overhead doors for their dream garage.

A collector of Ferraris and muscle cars, Haas conjured up his business idea after talking to other auto enthusiasts who shared his frustration with the apparent absence of durable garage furnishings. Existing products displayed all the quality of a common filing cabinet consisting of a single sheet of steel and rudimentary hardware, says Haas. "There's been no innovation in tool storage in fifty years."

Haas launched his venture last year with a premium line of stainless steel cabinets designed for the humid and cold environment of a garage. Vault uses 304-grade stainless steel, the same rustproof metal you'll find in a Viking range or Sub-Zero

refrigerator. "These cabinets are worthy heirlooms, owners can will them to their children," Haas says. "They're almost too beautiful to put in a garage." Indeed, he's heard from customers who want to install his metal cabinets in their kitchens.

Haas predicts the showcase garage is where guests will congregate in the future, having grown tired of the *de rigueur* granite kitchen and home theatre. Vault toolchests start at \$2,225 USD; typical workcentres sell for \$15,000 to \$20,000. For details, visit www.showroomgarage.com or call 1.866.828.5810.

—MARK TOLJAGIC