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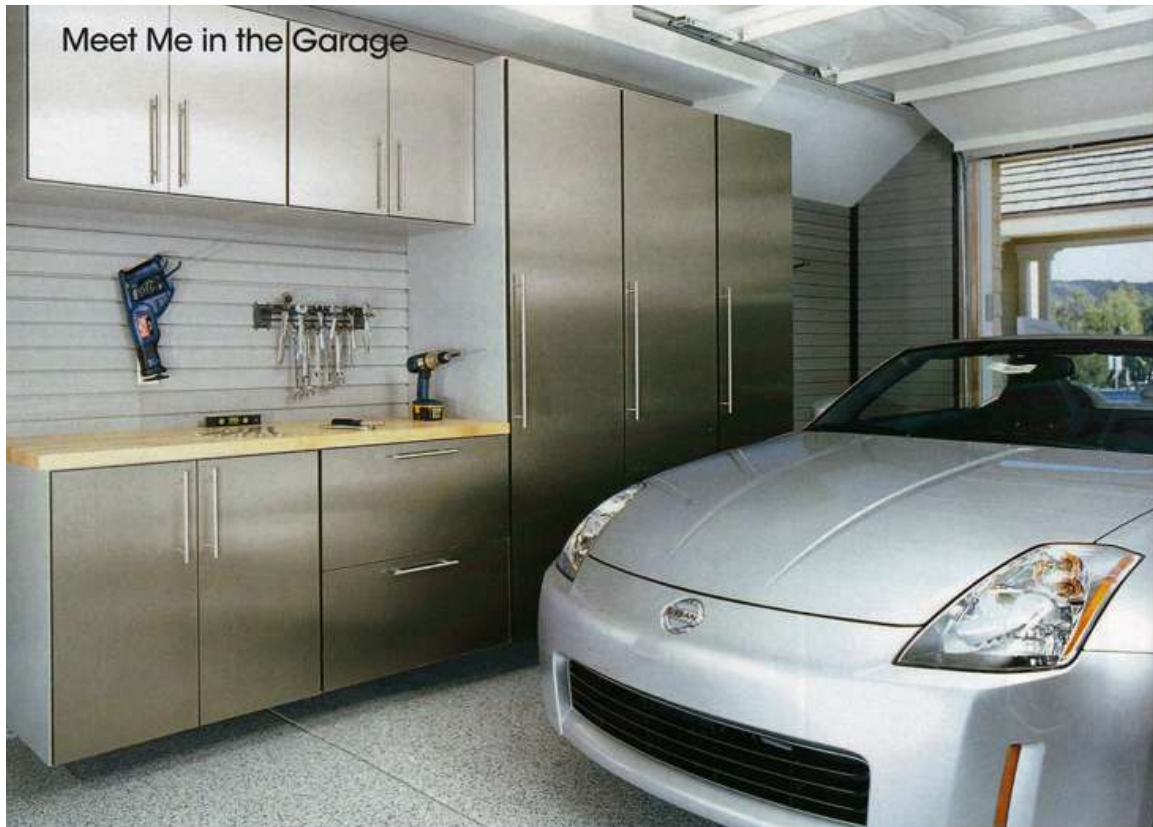
Great Garages Customized Space for Your Collection

COLLECTION CLASSIC: 1936 Delahaye 135 Competition
DRIVER'S NOTEBOOK: Ferrari Challenge, Aston Martin DBS
MUSEUM TOURS: The Nethercutt Collection, Mercedes-Benz Museum

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Meet Me in the Garage

FOR THE BETTER PART OF THE 20TH CENTURY, only those with extensive automotive collections saw a need for anything more than a three-car garage. And no one gave these spaces much thought—even the larger garages in high-end homes were decidedly unglamorous. They typically featured concrete floors, unfinished and uninsulated interior walls, and open rafters crowded with old kayaks and tennis rackets. Those who actually worked on their cars tended to make do with makeshift worktables, a dangling lightbulb, and Craftsman tool chests from Sears, which competed for space with the second refrigerator, the washer and dryer, and anything that didn't fit elsewhere. The garage was, in short, an unfocused jumble.

But all of that has changed. In the same way that Americans embraced the kitchen as a favorite spot to entertain, they have begun to regard the garage as a viable alternative to the family room or the media room. Homeowners now invite interior designers to extend their home's aesthetic into the garage, or to create an entirely new concept in the same way they might treat a home theater. This experimentation has produced a spate of avant-garde elements from designers such as Charles Allem, who installed stainless steel flooring and glass walls in one client's Bel-Air garage. Media centers, bars, and seating areas are no longer unusual.

Form is not achieved at the price of function, however, and garages also are being packaged with arrays of purpose-built

cabinets and high-grade flooring. Subterranean garages have become nearly ubiquitous in neighborhoods with smaller lots or restrictions on the size of aboveground structures. The addition of lifts in conventional garages further increases space, and also facilitates serious maintenance.

For Steve D'Gerolamo, who established New Jersey-based Ultimate Garage in 1996, there are already certain design clichés he prefers not to use in a garage. "I try to steer clients away from colors and styling elements that might be a bit too bold," he says. "I've seen too many Ferrari enthusiasts overdo the red/yellow theme, and way too many black-and-white checkerboard floors." He also refuses to use slot-wall storage systems in garages designed for high-end and collector cars. "These systems—with hanging racks, shelves, and cabinets—are fine for retail, but are accidents waiting to happen in a garage filled with prized automobiles, especially if the garage is in an area subject to seismic activity."

D'Gerolamo divides large garages into multiple zones: one or two garages for the vehicles that are driven on a daily basis; a garage workshop for maintenance and detailing; and, often, a storage area to showcase the client's collection of vehicles. Each of these areas has specific requirements, and he adds that size, detailing, and appointments can drive the cost of an extreme garage into the millions of dollars. "But these more extravagant garages are museums with extremely valuable vehicles," he explains, "which need to be protected from



Modular wall systems, custom cabinets, and heavy-duty racks (opposite) are among the features Garage Envy employs. Designs by Ultimate Garage (above) opt for enclosures that stow equipment out of sight.

humidity, UV exposure, fire, and theft. I don't consider many requests outrageous, although I did speak with an enthusiast who had a working 40-foot carousel in his garage museum to go along with the car collection."

D'Gerolamo notes the increasing intelligence built into today's garage: network cameras and addressable controls; fan-interlocked charging stations for electric cars; and OBD Bluetooth vehicle diagnostics for tire pressure, fluid levels, and fault codes. "For serious workshops," he says, "I'm now installing a digital three-phase power supply to safely and effectively run CNC equipment, large air compressors, and speed controls on fans for ventilation and fume extraction."

The ultimate garage can extend beyond the actual space dedicated to the storage of vehicles, says D'Gerolamo. "It can go out to the motor court and gardens, the patio and pool, the gym, the home theater, or the office." Likewise, many of those areas' features can be brought into the garage. And whether working with a consultant such as D'Gerolamo or a specialist manufacturer, it is becoming easier to find almost anything to suit your needs. Nearly everyone in the field cites as an inspiration the substantial and varied strides made in personalizing kitchens.

For many niche high-end outfitters, necessity proved the

mother of invention. Oregon's Baldhead Garage Enhancement Systems, which was an early entrant into the high-end metal cabinetry market, began when Eric Fleming—the owner of a metal fabrication company—noticed a hole in the market. "About six years ago I wanted to do my garage," he says. "I couldn't find what I wanted, so my engineer and I made some cabinets. We were somewhat ahead of the time—no one was really focusing on the garage—and this gave us some time to make a higher-quality product."

Baldhead prices start around \$5,000 to \$7,000 for a respectable workbench, and can go to \$50,000 with a full slate of cabinets; the typical customer spends between \$10,000 and \$20,000 on Baldhead components. "It's the wow factor," says Fleming. "It all comes down to that. Most of our customers are car guys doing a garage for several collector cars. They want a place where they can bring their buddies and show off the cabinets, floor, and upgrades."

Likewise, Chad Haas, also of Oregon, had a vision for an entirely new aesthetic. In addition to selling garage doors, his company, Vault, began to develop a proprietary flooring that he derived from a product rarely used in residences. The result, Garazzo, is a unique surface with color options resembling the range available for kitchen countertops. "Maybe 99.9 percent

Meet Me in the Garage



A triple workbench in yellow by Vault, which will unveil a new line of cabinets at this year's Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance.

of this product is an industrial application," says Haas. "It's used in warehouses that are heavily abused, and I even saw the product being used on bridge repairs. We saw an opportunity to bring that product into the garage." Oddly enough, the material is also used by dentists to seal cavities, and is therefore unlikely to bother those with environmental sensitivities. Covering the floor of a typical two-car garage with his premium flooring will cost in the neighborhood of \$5,000, a price that can rise if an owner chooses a hand-trawled quartz aggregate that is polished to a granitelike finish. "It's expensive," says Haas, "but it will outperform anything. And when other materials delaminate, the cost of repair and replacement can be high; we can easily put another coat of Garazzo on top of the surface for a lower overall price."

Haas is unveiling a line of cabinets at the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance this year. The handsome modular units have a distinct squared-off style, and are adorned with automobile-like Vault badging. Prices for the components

run from \$1,500 for a small wall cabinet to \$10,000 or more for a tall cabinet. Like the Garazzo flooring, they can be highly customized. One of Vault's customers, for instance, is having the flooring and cabinetry in his garage color-matched to the blue stripes of his Shelby Mustang.

Jaime Dietenhofer founded California's Garage Envy with his partners John Stanfill and Scott Siler for the same reason that Fleming started Baldhead and Haas launched Vault: They saw a new way to approach the garage. "Many of our customers know they need help," says Dietenhofer, "but don't have a specific solution in mind." Garage Envy places an emphasis on organization, but will go wherever the clients' imaginations go. "We have completely rebuilt garages and installed specialized lighting, windows, plasma televisions, car lifts, marble countertops, and glass display cases for memorabilia," he says. Garage Envy's typical projects cost between \$5,000 and \$10,000, but those with loftier goals can go beyond \$50,000, depending on size and scope. "We believe that the trend for transforming the garage into a multipurpose room will continue," says Dietenhofer. "It can serve not only as the home for the car and a workshop, but as a place where the whole family can enjoy a sports game, arts and crafts, or a weekend gathering." □

Resources

In addition to the service providers discussed in this article, the following companies may prove helpful in your renovation plans:

GarageTek, 866.664.2724, garagetek.com

Gladiator Garageworks, 866.342.4089, gladiatorgu.com

ModuLine, 888.343.4463, modulinegarage.com

Baldhead Garage Enhancement Systems, 877.966.2253,

baldheadcabinets.com; *Garage Envy*, 888.249.1766,

garageenvy.com; *Ultimate Garage*, 201.262.0412, ultimategarage.com;

Vault, 866.828.5810, vaultbrands.com