

Passion for cars

The unique collection of Thierry Dehaeck

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Throughout my entire life I have been passionate about beautiful cars, streamlined coachwork and high-performance engines. As a child I was already very interested in special cars and lucky enough to be able to start my collection at a young age. Fortunately, I met the right people and was able to build up an effective international network, which contributed greatly to the accumulation of this collection. In the end it turned out to be a good investment but that was never my motivation - I have always only been driven by passion!

After some hesitation, I finally decided to write this book. My worry was that it would be considered pretentious, but good friends convinced me to share my passion with other enthusiasts and people equally passionate about classic cars. The collection has grown to encompass a wide variety of interesting and iconic cars, whose detailed histories feature in this book.

In truth, we are only provisional owners of our classic cars; once we leave this world they will have new owners. This is the reason why it is our responsibility to research and document their history. Thus this book is a testimony of my passion and a record of each car's life story. I hope you enjoy this journey in the world of classic cars.

Thierry Dehaeck

There was a rumour concerning someone living in Ypres, owning several cars in pristine condition, with ridiculously few kilometres on the odometer. I remembered having seen one of those cars at an event somewhere. So I knew Thierry Dehaeck's cars and reputation before I got to know the man himself. I first met him when he loaned a Shelby GT 500 KR to Autoworld as part of an exhibition about Belgians at Le Mans.

This also gave me the opportunity to visit his company, Cady Cars, and discover the collection featured in this book. I remember how impressed I was. Not only because of the condition of the cars, and partly because of the care and dedication of the owner. And I still am with every visit, partly because of the cars, but also because Thierry always has something new to show or has made a new discovery. The collection is eclectic - it only comprises exceptional cars - and at the same time it is very diverse.

Not only are the cars special and in most cases extremely original, but the archives that accompany each of them are of a rarely seen quality. For most of the cars there is, in a manner of speaking, enough material to write a book. The library consists of several metres of accurately compiled documentation. In that respect, the book you now have in your hands does not do justice to the reality.

Thierry Dehaeck is internationally known, not least because of his love for the Citroën SM of which he now owns almost all variants. Earlier this year, Gooding & Co auctioned American Jerry Hathaway's SM record car together with an equally unique SM converted into a pickup and a custom-built trailer.

Of course, I immediately thought of Thierry but I reckoned it unnecessary to email him the news, he would certainly know too. When I got him on the phone not much later, the big story was that he had bought an SM record car at an auction... I should have known, that's Thierry alright.

Leo Van Hoorick
Curator Autoworld, Brussels

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Thierry Dehaeck



Who is Thierry Dehaeck?

I am Thierry Dehaeck, born and raised in Ieper, a historic town in West Flanders in Belgium. I am an entrepreneur in heart and soul (inherited from home) and a passionate collector of vintage cars, or more specifically exceptional classic cars. With an emphasis on exceptional.

I carry that passion from when I was young. I remember the spark. I was barely 6 years old when my father bought a Chevrolet Impala Coupé. It became an 'Aha experience'. As a child, cleaning that car was my utmost happiness. My father once said that I was born with a car in the stomach!

When I was 16 years old, I travelled to the US for the first time, where my love for American cars only grew. I bought a classic car myself when I was 19: a large 1965 Cadillac Sedan, that I sold a year later to friends of my parents who loved it. On my honeymoon in the US (1982) I bought two Cadillacs. I had both cars transferred to Ypres and sold them a little while later with a nice profit.

The question mark that my father initially put behind my purchases quickly turned into exclamation points of admiration. That scenario - buying and selling unique models - continued and that is why I decided in 1985 to transfer this activity to a new company: Cady Cars, or Collection Automobiles Dehaeck Ypres. Next to my own private collection, Cady Cars has grown to a reputed garage not only selling 'oldies', but also employing six passionate employees offering an unparalleled service, going from total restoration to repairs, maintenance and coachwork, at the service of all classic car owners. In 2016 my wife Anne and myself sold our pastry shells company Pidy. This gave me even more time to devote myself to classic cars from a bygone era and therefore realizing my life's dream every day.



Our company video.





The collection now?

Lovers of classic cars can indulge themselves with what you can often call 'museum pieces' without exaggeration. The pictures at the start of this book give a preview of the offer.

My collection is special because I never limited myself to one or two brands, but have an eye for many brands: Aston Martin, Citroën, Bentley, Ferrari, Mercedes, Maserati, Rolls-Royce, Cadillac, Jaguar, Shelby, in addition to a series of other brands.

The common thread through the collection is simple: the cars need to be iconic and difficult to find or ones of which only a limited number were built. My mission as an avid collector has always been: by differentiating you realize added value.





A filing cabinet full of stories

Collecting vintage cars is one thing. Gathering knowledge about all those beautiful models is something else, and the latter always fascinated me: What is the history of the car, who were the owners, how is the car documented, what is technically special about the car, are pictures available from earlier times?

In short: each car of my collection has a complete file with all possible documentation, such as: expertise reports, previous registrations, data sheets, FIVA identification cards, factory production records, publications, owner's manual, maintenance invoices...

I consider this aspect a 'must' for generations to come. How is that said that again? Anyone who does not know history cannot understand the present. As far as I am concerned, the same adage also applies to classic cars.

My passion for the Citroën SM

I was 16 years old and I remember it like yesterday: the first time I saw a Citroën SM Coupé, owned by friends of my parents living in Bergues, northern France. It was love at first sight. I was allowed to go on a ride with Monsieur Maurice, in the car that at that time was given the wonderful-sounding name 'Sa Majesté'. The Citroën SM was exceptional for more than one reason. Not only was the shape of the car *du jamais vu*, this dream car was also the result of an exceptional collaboration between two car manufacturers at the time: the French Citroën designed the model and the Italian Maserati supplied the engines.

Today I have more than one SM in my collection. Perhaps the most special one is the Citroën SM 'Espace', which first appeared at the 1971 Paris Motor Show. This dazzlingly beautiful and streamlined car has both side-opening electric roof and sporty louvres at the back. The spectacular interior offered an unmistakably futuristic look. Strange but true: the prototype proposed in Paris at the time was never put into production. But today it is in my collection along with other models of Sa Majesté, and still looks as sexy today as it was when it was launched.



The cosy retro bar and lounge

Looking at iconic cars is always exciting and an experience in itself. But as a collector I have always paid attention to the environment in which the *pièces uniques* had to find a warm home. Just as the clothes make the man, the right environment makes the cars look more attractive. I have always adhered to the principle that everything about the story has to be right. From an elevated footbridge - an extension of a very inviting bar, a cosy salon and a reception area - the visitor can see the collection at a glance in bird's eye view.





The bar is a warm meeting place, where adepts or old-timers can exchange their passion for hours, enjoying a good glass of wine, while going through dozens of photo albums of the many rallies and concours at which I participated.

The salon with comfortable Chesterfields houses a library with lots of classic car books, some display cases with car miniatures matching exactly the cars of the collection and a red Ferrari cigar box for the cigar aficionados.

The elegant reception area shows historical wall photos, display cases with very rare car miniatures and historical memorabilia, along with many trophies that I won on rallies and Concours d'Élégance. As at a real motor show, visitors can then feel, touch, and admire the cars.

With every new step, a new *coup de foudre* will undoubtedly follow. In the collection is another unique piece: an original Dutch carousel from 1953. Again, a nod to old-timers is not far away. The carousel is equipped with unique children's carriages manufactured by L'Autopède in steel and chrome. This brings us back to our childhood. Was this not our first time at a steering wheel shifting frantically the gear lever... The conclusion: pure nostalgia, that's what my collection is all about.

Aston Martin





1999 / V8 Volante LWB
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Aston Martin

1999 V8 Volante LWB



