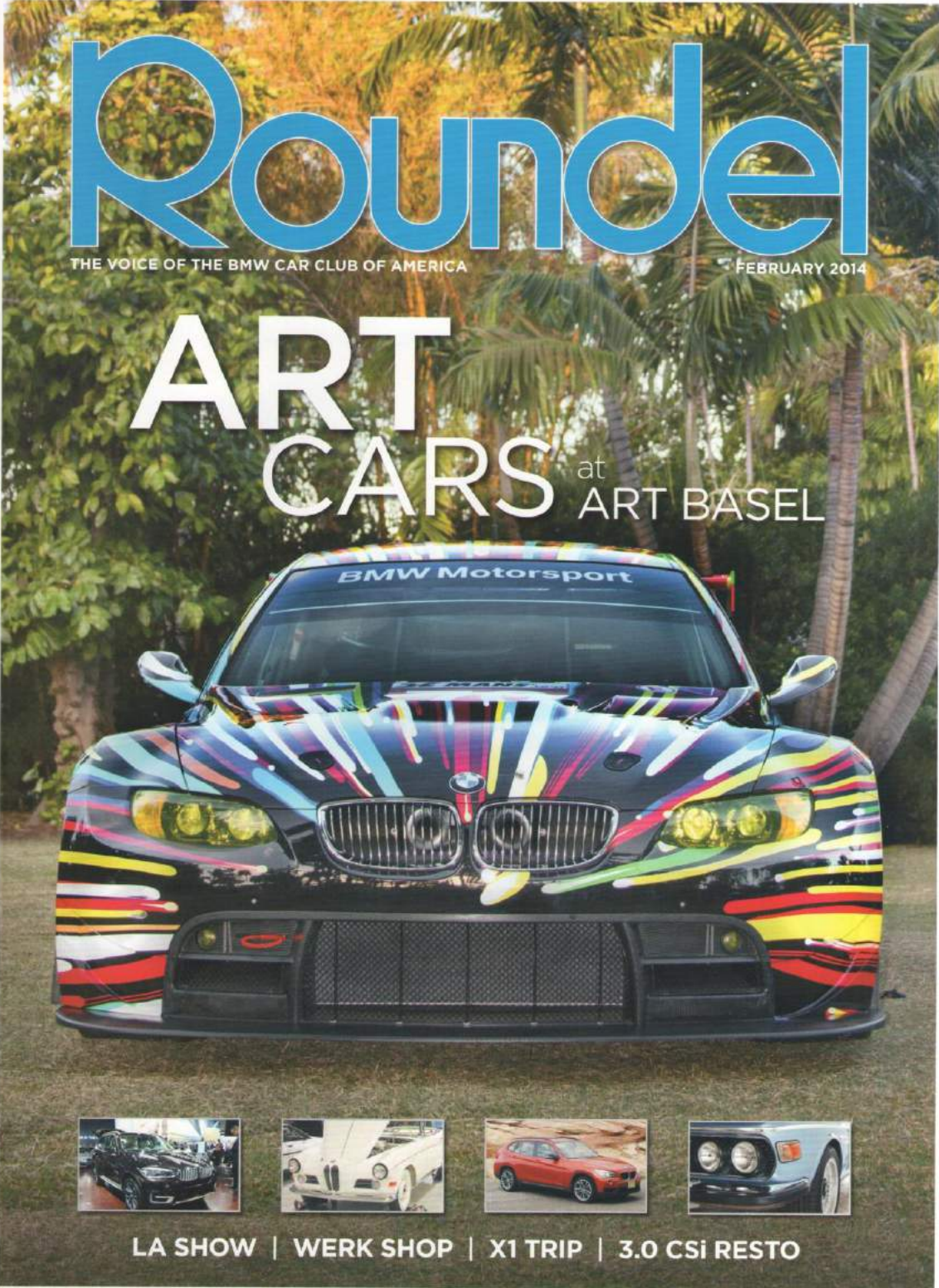


FEBRUARY 2014

ART CARS IN FLORIDA • LA AUTO SHOW • X1 ROAD TRIP

ROUNDEL: THE MAGAZINE OF THE BMW CAR CLUB OF AMERICA, INC.



Roundel

THE VOICE OF THE BMW CAR CLUB OF AMERICA FEBRUARY 2014

ART CARS at ART BASEL



LA SHOW | WERK SHOP | X1 TRIP | 3.0 CSI RESTO

All Werk And

In ten years, one Illinois shop has



Mike Marijanovic eyes two recent restorations, a BMW M1 and a 503 cabriolet.



Restored doesn't always mean stock.



BMW's E9 coupe has become a collectible classic.



The interior is a work in progress.

ROUNDEL FEBRUARY 2014

Well over a decade ago, Chicago's Don Dethlefsen attended Oktoberfest in Columbus, Ohio. He was relatively new to the CCA, and this was his first O'Fest. Prominently displayed at the host hotel was a pristine red 2002i; all of us walked by this beauty several times every day, but its charms began to work a deeper magic on Dethlefsen.

So he bought the car.

To most of us, that would be the entire story, but for Dethlefsen it was just the beginning. He began researching vintage BMWs, then acquiring one or two. Like most old cars, they needed a little TLC, and news of his success in providing that kind of care began to get around. Meanwhile, Dethlefsen was in the process of retiring from the shipping business he had built, and he now saw an opportunity to combine business and play. The Werk Shop was born.

The restoration business is not an easy one, but vehicle by vehicle, Dethlefsen's shop built the cars—and the cars built the shop's reputation. Dethlefsen's cars became favorites at Oktoberfest, often taking home best-in-class and people's-choice awards. Brian Lancelot's pair of Ceylon 2002s—one in pure stock street trim, and one outfitted with go-fast goodies appropriate to the era—debuted not coincidentally at Colorado's 2002 O'Fest. A few years later, Lancelot's 2002

Some Play

made its name by restoring vintage BMWs.

By Dave Farnsworth



There may be no more appropriate restoration candidate for a BMW CCA member than the 2002 around which the Club was formed.

Turbo, also a Werk Shop restoration, appeared before an admiring cadre of BMW fans in Texas.

In 2005, Dethlefsen was joined in the business by his son-in-law, Mike Marijanovic, an entrepreneur in his own right—and in 2008, Marijanovic bought the operation from Dethlefsen. By 2011, the business had outgrown its original 8,000 square feet, spread over two buildings, and moved to its current

digs just down the road. The shop now specializes, as it did when Dethlefsen got it rolling, in BMW restoration—with every aspect except paint done in-house. But they also have an active service department, and work on Mercedes and Porsches as well as BMWs. When we visited, they had several 2002s in various stages of rebuild, with requests varying from purely mechanical freshening to interior restoration to total ground-up, every-nut-and-bolt

Pebble-Beach-quality jobs.

Inside the nearly 20,000 square-foot facility in the northern Illinois town of Libertyville, the Werk Shop staff—automotive artisans, actually—work away in their bays on a wide variety of BMWs. While 2002s dominate the shop at the moment, a beautiful Fjord Blue E9 coupe sits awaiting its interior reconstruction. Wire harnesses hang like sinews on a half-chewed bone, but soon they'll



Take one BMW 327, add money, time, and love....



Every BMW has someone who loves it—especially a 2002.



2002s are a primary focus at the Werk Shop.



Rare? Yes; this is one of nineteen 3.0Si wagons.



An Ascotgrau 3.0CSi is immaculate.

be tucked neatly up, a fresh dashboard installed, new carpets, reupholstered seats—everything needed to make it look even better than the day it left Munich, bound for its home in the U.S.

As the reputation of the Werk Shop spread, the shop and its artisans acquired a history. Sometimes they restore a beloved member of the family, a car with memories stretching back decades. Those memories rekindle at a price; a potential customer might want a car brought back from a brink it has long since gone over. In those cases, the Werk Shop may offer an alternative: find a similar car that is much closer to whole, one that will require a more reasonable investment—and result in essentially a clone of the original. Finding those cars can be part of the fun.

However, sometimes a car has few clones to choose from. Tucked in the row of vehicles being readied for final preparation and shipment back to its native England is a car I'd not seen before—or even knew it existed: a 3.0Si estate wagon. It turns out that there were only nineteen created, the merging of a 3.0Si and an Austin Maxi. The owner wanted it restored to perfection, and shipped it to the Werk Shop. As work progressed,

it became increasingly challenging to replace some of the unique pieces—until the owner somehow managed to score a parts car. So for a time, fully 10% of the total production of these unique vehicles was parked inside the hangar-like shop. The owner of the now-restored car has that percentage beat, however; at one time or another, he has owned four of the nineteen cars.

Barn finds form many legends in the vintage-car community, and the Werk Shop has certainly been involved in its share. The latest could have been straight out of *Chasing Classic Cars*. A customer of the Werk Shop called to discuss restoration of two classic BMWs, a 503 cabriolet and a 327. Both cars were, quite literally, in a barn, and he was trying to talk the owners—a father-and-son team—into selling them. After months of fruitless discussion, he gave up—but called Marijanovic and gave him the address, wishing him better luck.

Since the Ohio location wasn't too far away, Marijanovic and Dethlefsen decided it was worth the drive. Sure enough, they found the two cars stuck in a barn, covered with chicken feathers and the other byproducts chickens tend to produce (no, not eggs). The father, of

Eastern European descent and now in his early 80s, had brought the cars over from Europe with the intention of restoring them himself. As such projects often go, it kept being put off until it was no longer a reasonably foreseeable project. Unfortunately, the father didn't quite see the project as hopeless; while his son was in favor of selling the cars, he was a little reluctant. Discussions went back and forth for some time, but finally the owners relented, and the Werk Shop was able to acquire the two vehicles.

Now came the really important decision: Should they invest the very considerable time and money into restoring the cars, or should they sell them as-is? The solution was to sell the cars and their future restoration as a package deal. A woman in California who had always been an admirer of classic BMWs, and who had reached a point in her career where she had the means to begin a collection, snapped them up—and the work began.

The 503 cab was finished and headed to California to run in a vintage rally. After its debut there, it will head back to the Werk Shop for some final spiffing up and hit the show circuit full-time, its ultimate destination the dewy lawns



The Werk Shop caters primarily to BMW collectors, but other marques receive their attentions as well.

The restoration business is not an easy one, but vehicle by vehicle, Dethlefsen's shop built the cars—and the cars built the reputation.

of Pebble Beach. The new owner was so pleased with the 503 that she is sending a CS coupe she had restored elsewhere for a re-do to the standards she saw in her "new" 503.

The 327 is still sitting in the shop, with various parts—and chicken souvenirs—filling its ancient interior. Marijanovic figures it to be a two-year-plus project to bring it up to concours condition. It's certainly in the right spot for the job.

And then there are the cars that never actually existed in a BMW of North America catalogue. One enthusiast fell in love with the idea of an M5 Touring. While these were popular in Europe, the U.S. branch never saw a profitable market for an *überwagen*—but that didn't stop the Werk Shop. Taking an E39 Touring the customer brought in, they swapped out the entire suspension, braking system, and, of course, the awesome M Power drivetrain to create a truly unique grocery-getter for those days when the sale is just too good to pass up and you have to get there first.

Tucked off to the side, awaiting delivery, we see a pristine—as if there are any other kind—white M1. Its engine rebuilt

and restoration complete, it will soon head back to its doting owner, a fellow who knows his way around fast cars and race tracks: Bobby Rahal. A longtime BMW enthusiast, Rahal has entrusted three BMWs to the Werk Shop for restoration; two were M1s, and the third was his original Inka 2002.

A Norwegian BMW fan was worried that his 1602 might not get the proper treatment on his side of the ocean. He wanted a totally original restoration, down to every proper nut and bolt—no shortcuts, and no non-OEM 1600 parts. The reputation of the Werk Shop had spread enough to pique his interest, and after visiting the shop—subjecting Marijanovic and crew to a fairly rigorous interview—he shipped the car. Since the restoration has begun, he has visited the car whenever he's in the States. That job is nearing completion, and the car will soon be cruising the highways of Scandinavia.

Noticing a pristine—if somewhat out-of-place—white Alfa Romeo spider tucked in beside a couple of BMWs, we asked Mike if they work on other makes. "We do some work on other makes," he acknowledged, "but we don't solicit the

work. Usually it comes in from one of our BMW owners who also has an old 356 or 911 they'd like freshened up. One of our guys has a lot of experience with Porsche, so we feel comfortable accepting those jobs."

How far afield have they gone? "Well," says Marijanovic, "we did a 2002 for a customer in Dubai. He was so pleased with the car that he asked us if we would work on his Oldsmobile 442. Turns out another of our guys enjoyed working on '70s muscle cars, so we took the job." That Dubai job may have led to another from that same country: a 3.0CS coupe—with a heartbeat courtesy of Alpina—currently in the shop for a full restoration.

It's been roughly ten years since the Werk Shop first opened its overhead doors, and its reputation has grown both nationally and internationally as a premier place for BMW restoration. So whether an enthusiast is looking to get his gem buffed up or has stumbled on a piece of automotive coal requiring superpower to convert into a diamond, the Werk Shop stands ready and able to take on the challenge of preserving BMW's historic heritage.

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