

# CARS – PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE – THE CASE OF AUTOMOTIVE HERITAGE



On Wednesday evenings this quarter I have been hosting a series of conversations with colleagues at Stanford and beyond about the world of cars – past, present and future. Sponsorship has come from our Revs Program and Stanford Continuing Studies [Link]

With a very sharp and expert audience we covered a tremendous amount of ground, testimony to the pervasive reach of everything automobile.

*Jon Summers* – “motoring” as experience, and the history of epic sports. *Joe Hustein* – how the open road is running out with new technologies watching how you drive. *Fred Turner* – how car culture reaches into every aspect of modernity, and how we can come to understand this ubiquity. *Reilly Brennan* – the creativity of the custom

hot-rod. *Lochlann Jain* – putting people at the center of car design – workers on the factory line, people on the city street, modern perceptions of technology, danger and risk. *Cliff Nass* – with cars becoming more intelligent, just how should they talk to the driver? *David Kelley* – sharing with us his passion for car collecting, driving, customizing, showing, touring. *Barbara Karanian* – stories are at the heart of our relationships with cars. *John Stanfield* – how new and more functional attitudes towards mobility will favor sharing and smart networks of cars-and-drivers.

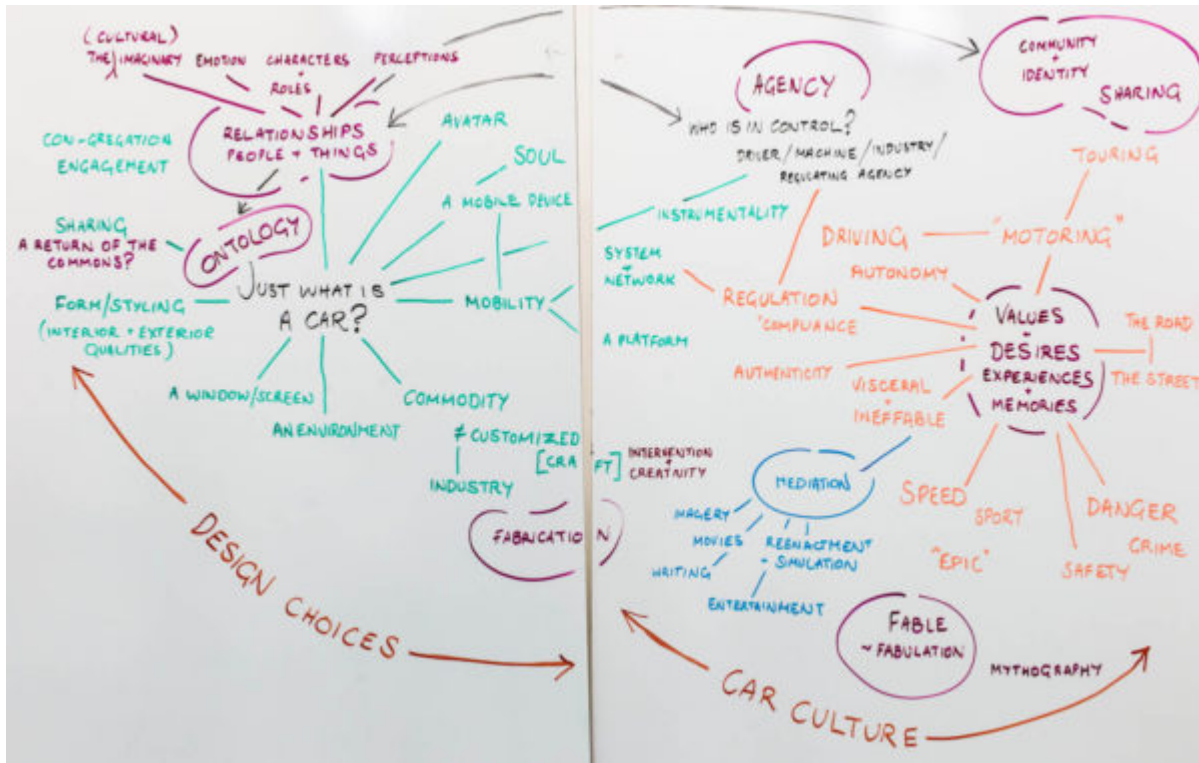
We ended yesterday with a session at VAIL, the Volkswagen Automotive Innovation Laboratory. *David Russell* brought his 2CV, *Neil Pering* his 1966 Lancia and *Dick Tuttle* his Peel Trident (the futuristic bubble car made on the Isle of Man in the 60s). *John Kegelman* and *Marcial Hernandez* introduced Junior and Shelley – Stanford's intelligent and autonomous cars [Link]. *Bill Barranco* shared with us his experiences in car design with an optimistic view of automotive futures and new kinds of relationship with these most personal of artifacts (will the car go the way of the horse – more cherished perhaps than ever, in spite of its disappearance as a primary means of transport?). *Bob Ogle*, who has two electric Chevy trucks, showed us how even recent technologies such as the electric car have fascinating appeal as collectables, as contemporary heritage.

What stood out for me in all of this?

### **A diversity of attractions, of human significances.**

I can get very serious, perhaps too serious, about how cars are iconic, instrumental in the vitality but also the impersonality and alienation of our modern world. Our roller coaster conversation this last ten weeks reminded me that so many of us find cars a means of sharing with friends, family, fellow enthusiasts – memories, hopes and aspirations, and times of fun.

And this human focus is, for me, the key to how I believe we should approach what is becoming **a new part of the heritage industry**. New developments in mobility, as we leave behind an era of the internal combustion engine, prompt assessment of the future of the history of cars. We do need to care about where we have come from, tending to the conservation of the recent past, and without forgetting the fun and sharing that have made the automobile what it was, is, and should continue to be.



car design and car culture – some of the themes we covered – click on image to get a closer look

## Freedom To Travel & Explore



Joe Hustein contemplating the future of the road



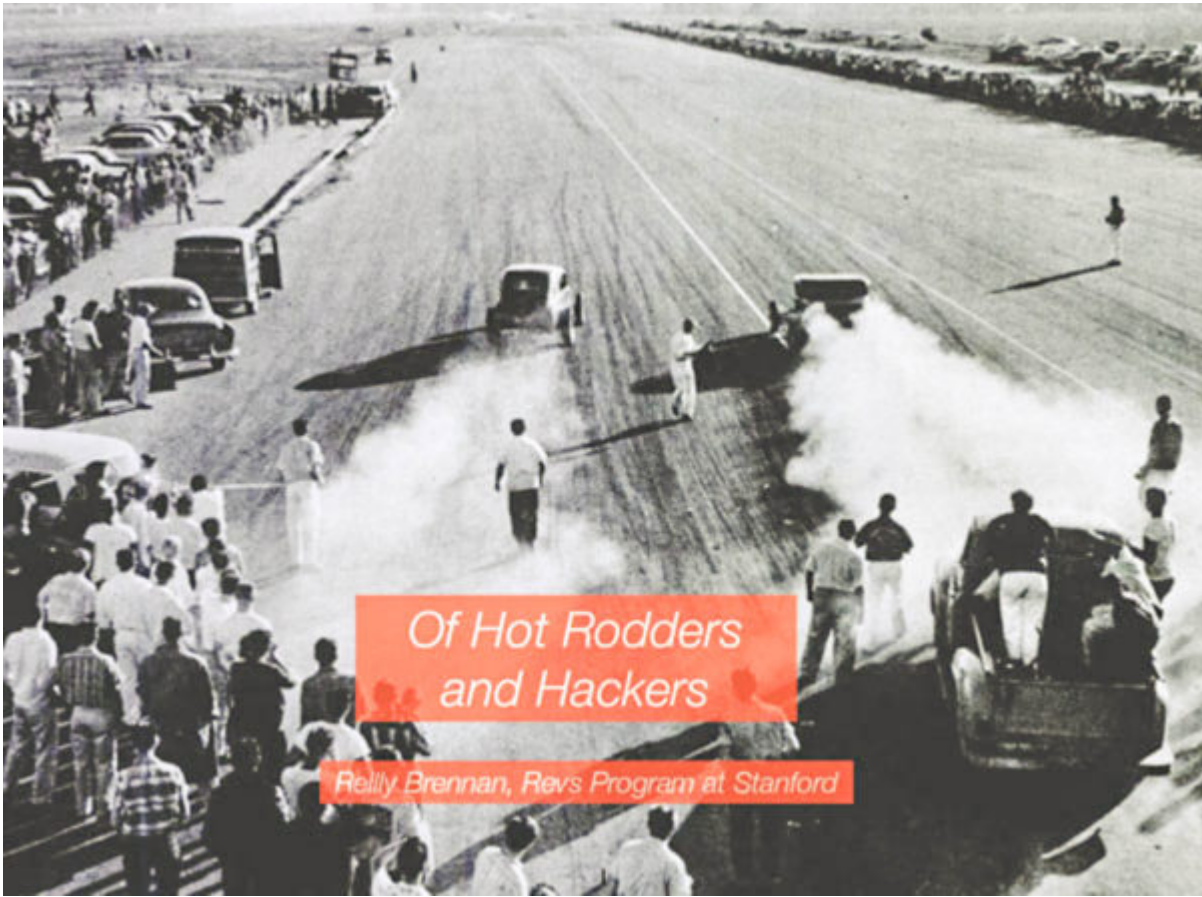
David Kelley at the wheel



days of Stirling Moss



0. Winston Link's technological sublime



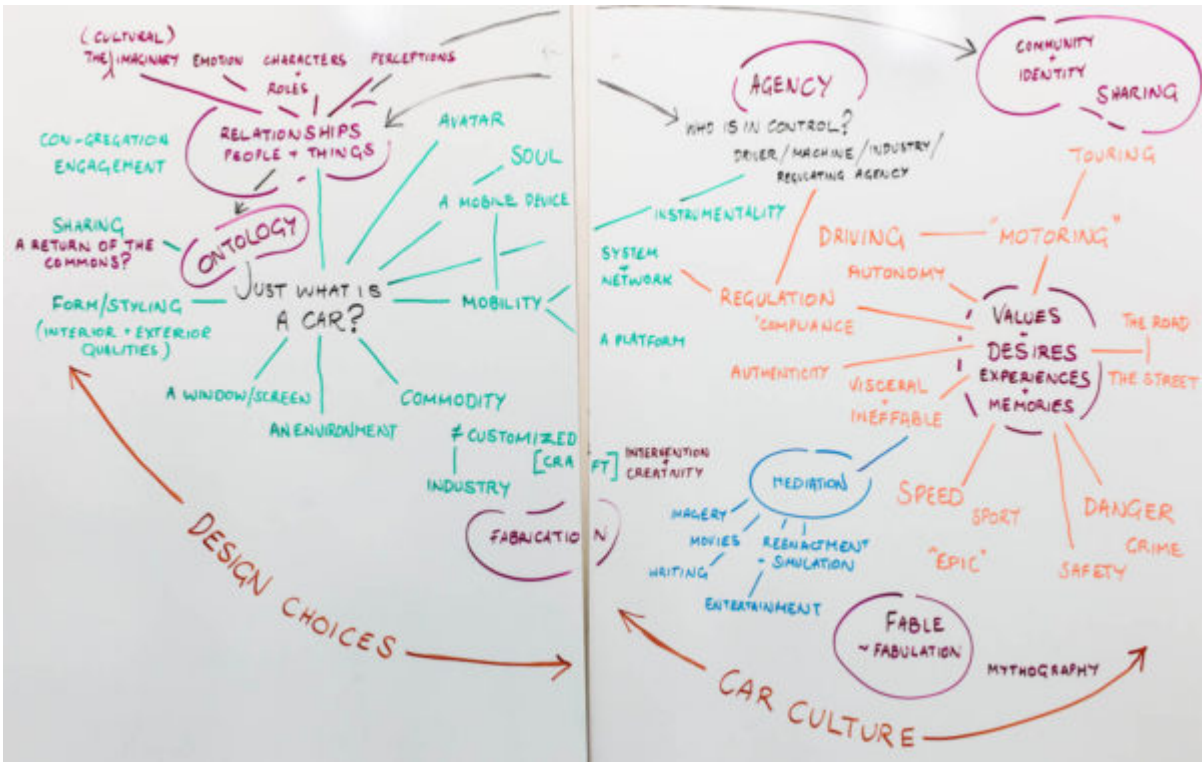
custom creativity



new car cultures from Localmotion



the new driver? Shelley the autonomous car



Here's how I advertised the series:

In F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel *The Great Gatsby*, it was a murder weapon. In the movie *The Graduate*, it was a symbol of youthful rebellion. In countless songs it has served as a metaphor for everything from sexuality to social status. It has shaped our cities and changed our history. It has expanded our horizons and determined our politics. It is the automobile.

In this course we will explore the past, present, and future of the automobile, bridging the humanities, social sciences, design, and engineering, and taking up the human experiences of designing, making, driving, being driven, living with, and dreaming of the automobile. Conversations with guest colleagues from Stanford and beyond will focus on a different theme each week and will be supported by readings and media: cars in the movies; the quest for speed and performance; the engineering challenges of automobility; the psychology of driving; automotive archaeology; the future of mobility; autonomous cars; the car as art; and cars and globalization. Overall the course is intended to offer a case study in the interdisciplinary understanding of human-centered design. Rooted in an appreciation of the richness of our human experience with the car, the course is informed by history, archaeology, ethnography, human-technology interaction, mechanical engineering, and cognitive science.

The conversations are offered as part of The Revs Program at Stanford – founded in 2011 to inspire a new trans-disciplinary field connecting the past, present and future of the automobile, to foster an intellectual community bridging the humanities and fine arts, social sciences, design, science and engineering, and the professions.

The Revs Program is focused on the human experiences of designing, making, restoring, driving, being driven by, living with, admiring, and dreaming of the automobile, as well as the automobile itself as machine, work of art, and cultural symbol.