TOM MATANO ON TIMELESS DESIGN

Our Revs Program class on judging the historical significance of artifacts – cars – is in flow [Link]

This afternoon we were joined by Tom Matano – designer of the Mazda Miata and the RX 7 – two timeless classics.

And this was his subject –

what makes design “timeless”?

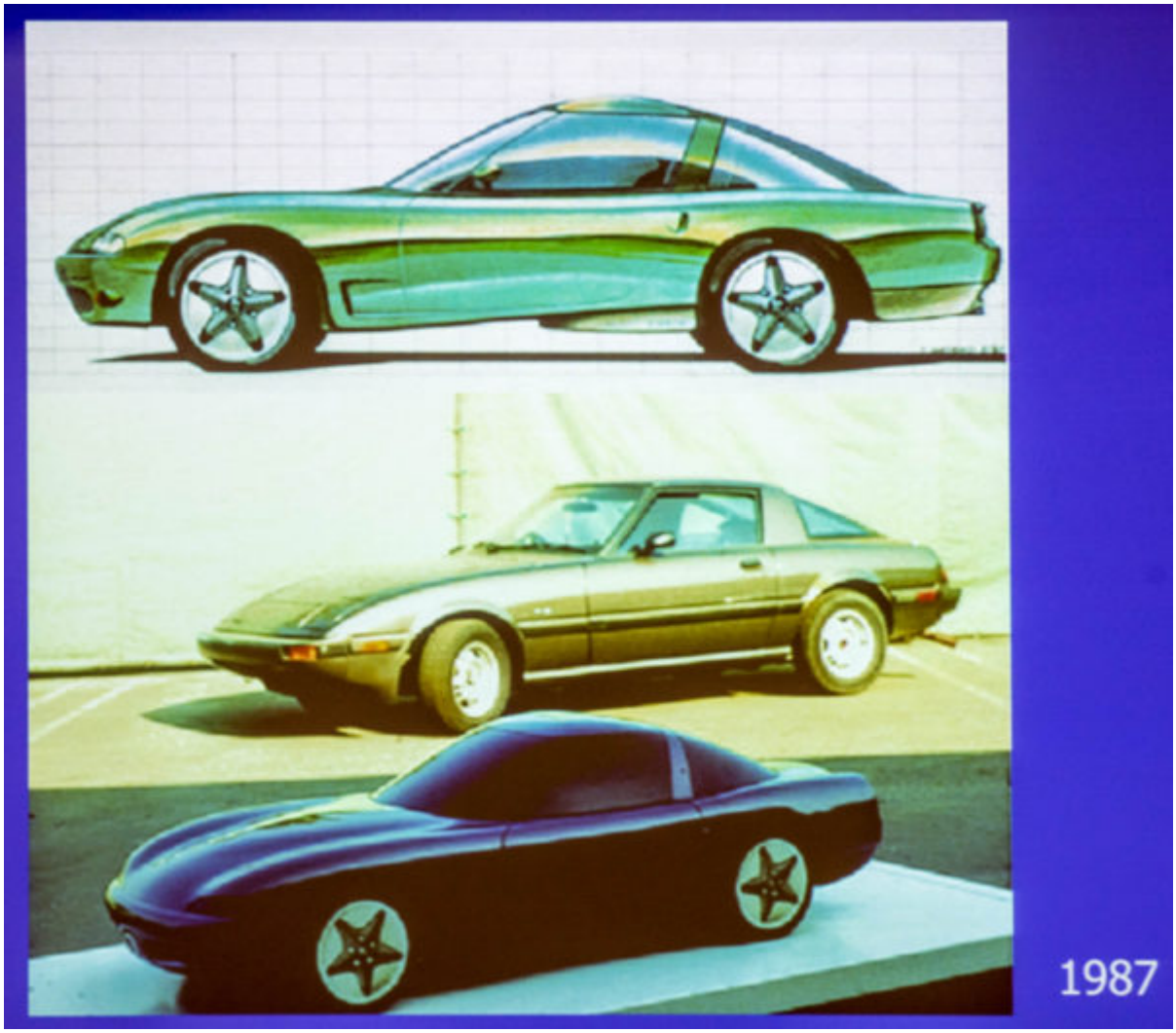
For Tom it comes down to truth – the artifact should be open, honest, communicate it nature, its essence, its inner self even, in relation to function and material. Good design, timeless design is about this kind of relationship with people. The artifact should’t confuse or obfuscate, trick or falsify.

We can all think of cars that pretend to be something they’re not.

Such notions have a wonderful genealogy. They take us back to a Platonic principle of elemental essential forms receiving expression according to different degrees of truth to concept. And to rhetoric and sophistry, with artifacts making statements and arguments. We are invited to judge such witnessing – is this authentic, fake, genuine? [Link]

And how does the artifact, the car, communicate such truth? Through line, balance (weight distribution), visuality, says Tom. And Tom also talked about what I would call gesture – the way an artifact asserts and makes its case – push, urgency, graceful elegance, understated restraint.

We went to look at Jon Feiber’s Bugatti Type 50 – certainly a commanding presence.



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Timeless / Lasting Design Quality
Usefulness
Truthfulness
• Correct use of materials, technologies
• Communicates what's i
Good Proportions
Technological Advance

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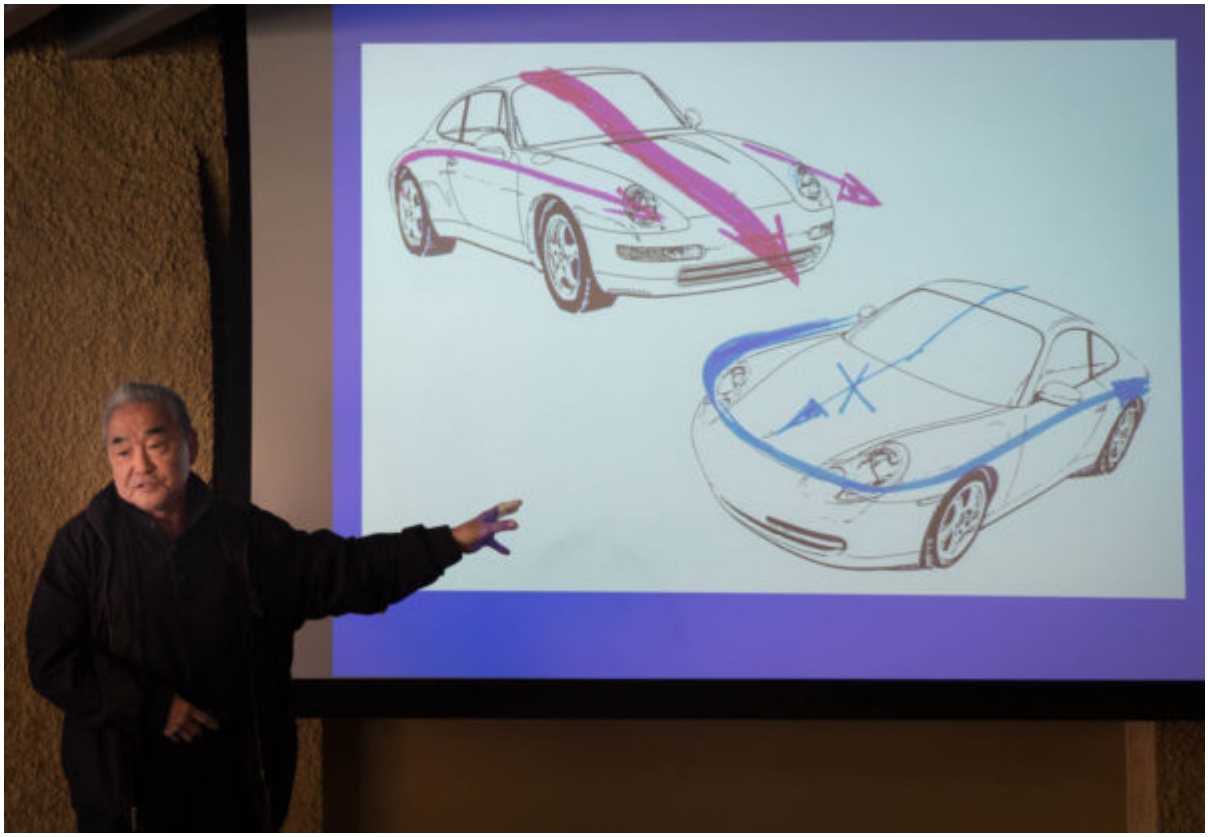

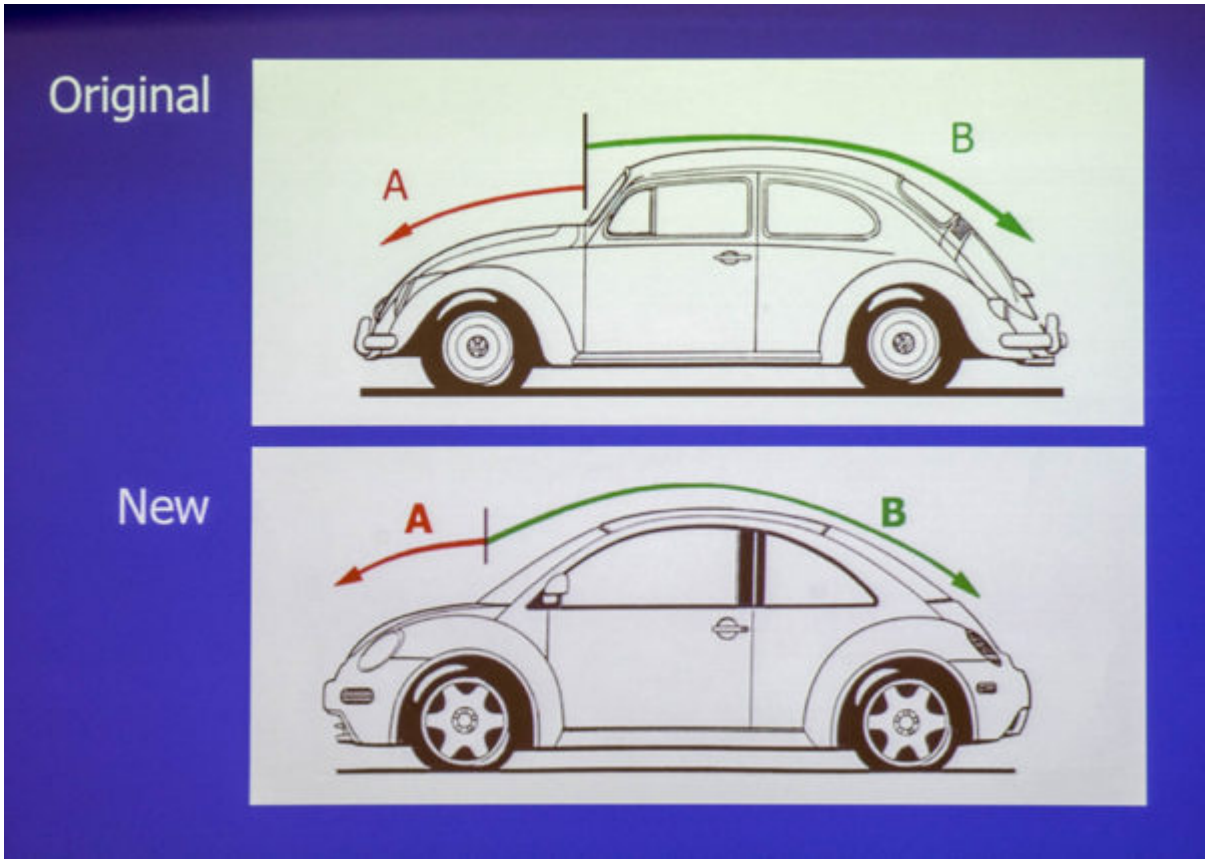

Balance displayed and lost