

CLASSIC DRIVER

[Breaking barriers in the collector car world with L'Art de L'Automobile](#)

Lead

Following his appearance in our new-generation dealers feature, we decided to delve deeper into the mind and showroom of Arthur Kar and L'Art de L'Automobile, a Parisian paradise for all things cars, fashion, and, above all, passion...



What are your earliest automotive memories?

It all started in Beirut, where my father owned a garage. My earliest memories of him are there, and I would watch him work on sports cars all day. At the time, I remember him working on cars like the Golf GTI, Pontiac Firebird, or sometimes a Porsche 911.

How did you turn your passion into a career?

I always knew I needed to be around cars. My first job in Paris was at a Porsche garage called Sonauto, where I started as an apprentice and went on to become a mechanic for five years. This was when I started to acquire my knowledge of cars and learn their secrets. I then realised I wanted to be able to deal cars and, ultimately, choose my inventory based on my personal taste.

How would you describe the classic car culture in Paris?

There are a lot of beautiful cars in Paris — more than you would expect from walking around the streets. But the French mentality is such that a display of luxury or wealth is often frowned upon. As a result, people sometimes feel a little risky when it comes to taking their beautiful classic cars for a drive, but behind closed doors, there's actually an impressive amount of wonderful cars here.



What was the reason behind expanding your dealership to encompass a fashion label?

I have always been attracted to and, to a certain extent, involved in the fashion and arts industries, and I am surprised that no one thought of translating the automotive culture into another creative form. So, I decided that with my knowledge of the car world and experience in fashion, I would create a brand that would represent not only cars but also every memory linked to them. A journey, a roadside billboard, a gas station, a smell, or even a breakdown...

Could you tell us a bit more about the L'Art de L'Automobile label?

It's more about the experience and the universe around the automobile than the car itself. That's why I named the company that way...plus my name is Arthur. The making of a car is an art to me — it involves so many people and a long creative process, just like a piece of art for an artist. To me, there is virtually no difference between a mechanic, a Formula 1 driver, a car dealer, or a car washer — the same way there is no difference in the love one can have for a Volkswagen Golf GTI or a Ferrari F12tdf. It's all about the passion we share for the cars that mean so much to us and the central role they play in our society. At the same time, L'Art de L'Automobile became a brand both through the particular relationship and trust I have with my clients and the aesthetic I have always communicated through it, even before the birth of KAR, the clothing label.

Your stock is very diverse — is that something that reflects your own taste in cars?

Absolutely! I only choose to work with cars I have a particular affection for. It wasn't always that way, but through hard work and patience, I managed to create a collection

that reflects my personality.



How do you select cars for your inventory? Are there certain criteria?

There's obviously a personal aspect of my taste, but also a business aspect with the law of supply, and there must be a priority given to a more technical aspect. I check a car for every possible flaw, inside and out.

How has your time spent in Los Angeles influenced your business?

It's a city where the car culture is an enormous part of the lifestyle, probably more than anywhere else — the gas stations built by the best architects of all time, the vintage cars at every corner, and a climate that allows you to use any car at any time.

What do you drive on the weekend?

In Paris, it depends on the weather! It ranges from a Ferves Ranger to a 308 GTB or 458 Speciale.



You feel very strongly about getting rid of the stigmas surrounding the classic car world — why?

Because it's much more than just buying and selling cars. It's a world of beautiful creations too often depicted by uptight dealers who tend to scare away another crowd. I would love for more people to have access to the more attractive and glamorous part of our industry, regardless of the budget barrier. That's also the purpose of the KAR clothing label: to attract people from different worlds into a new passion that I love sharing.

You're already considered one of the new-generation dealers — how do you see the industry evolving further in the future?

It is a very globalised industry already, so there won't be much of a market change in my opinion. The major change is environmental. Clearly, the environment has to be the priority today, and if not, the result could be that we may notice a decline of design and a clear lack of character in cars of the future — unless new players emerge and manage to combine both. On the other hand, there is always going to be a market for classic and luxury cars in my opinion, precisely because of the art aspect of it, and I'm happy I can contribute to it and also be involved in protecting the environment on a personal level.

Photos: Mathieu Bonnevie for Classic Driver © 2017

Gallery

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