## GM design: 85 years of making art that moves you

As GM Design celebrates its 85<sup>th</sup> birthday this month, the 1,900 men and women in GM's 10 global design centres are focused on the future, united in their vision to entice consumers to fall in love and see vehicles as they do: art that moves you.

GM was the first automobile manufacturer to single out automotive design.

On June 23, 1927, the Executive Committee of General Motors approved the creation of a new department to "study the question of art and colour combinations in General Motors products" and hired Harley Earl, a custom coach builder from Hollywood and the creator of the 1927 LaSalle, as its leader.

Earl's entry into the auto industry doomed rival Henry Ford's "the customer can have it any colour he wants as long as it is black" motto.

Among Earl's numerous accomplishments are the development of concept cars; the yearly model changeover; the vehicle tailfins of the 1950s; the travelling Motorama auto shows and the development of the iconic Corvette. Earl also is credited with hiring the industry's first female automotive designers.

Earl also was responsible for identifying architect Eero Saarinen to design the GM Technical Centercampus, which is on the National Register of Historic Places and recognized around the world for its mid-century architecture.

While other corporations have moved



GM Design celebrates the 85<sup>th</sup> anniversary that all began with legendary designer Harley Earl seen here sitting in the industry-changing 1938 Buick Y-Job.

operations out of midcentury Modernist buildings or renovated them beyond recognition, GM and GM Design have balanced functionality and design esthetics, adapting to modern technologies and needs while maintaining and preserving an architectural masterpiece.

The iconic Design Dome, adjacent studios and administration building's long life are a testament to architect Saarinen's

innovative and flexible plan, but also to the company's commitment to good design.

GM Design vice presidents following Earl were William Mitchell (1958-1977), Irving Rybicki (1977-1986), Charles Jordan (1986-1992), Wayne Cherry (1992-2003) and Ed Welburn (2003-present).

In 2005, Welburn was named to the newly created position of GM vice presi-

dent, Global Design, and the first to create and lead a network of the company's Global Design Centers. Welburn is also a member of GM's Executive Operations Committee. The Design Centers are located in the United States, Germany, Korea, China, Australia, Brazil and India.

—Metroland Media WheelsTalk.com



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