

Art Center College of Design Receives Largest Gift in its 83-year History

\$15 Million Donation from Peter and Merle Mullin will Enhance Industrial and Transportation Design Programs, Fuel Campus Growth and Support Future Creative Leaders

(PASADENA, Calif.) October 15, 2013—Today Art Center College of Design announced an unprecedented \$15 million gift to the College from Southern California philanthropists and classic car enthusiasts Peter and Merle Mullin. The donation is the largest ever to the college in its 83-year history. The commitment will help fund construction of a new industrial and transportation design facility, fuel campus growth and support future creative leaders. The proposed site of the new facility is on the five-acre Art Center South Campus located on the corner of Glenarm Street and Raymond Avenue, near the entrance to the historic Arroyo Seco Parkway.

The couple's gift, says Peter Mullin, an Art Center trustee, is "a chance to make a difference. I've been luckier than I ever expected in business and in my life. Los Angeles has been a great place for me. I was born here, stayed here, never left and I don't have any intention of leaving. So our gift is also an expression of gratitude to a great city that provided me with great opportunity."

He notes the robust concentration of talent in Southern California, where every major carmaker in the world has established a design studio. "The fact that all of these studios are populated by graduates of Art Center is impressive and really means that Art Center is a jewel," he says, "a worldwide center of elegance and excellence."

"We are extremely grateful to Peter and Merle for their extraordinary philanthropic investment," says Art Center President Lorne M. Buchman. "Their gift will make a transformational impact at the College for generations to come."

Peter Mullin is chairman of M Financial, a national reinsurance company, and chairman emeritus of MullinTBG, the nation's largest independent executive benefits services and solutions provider. He co-founded the Mullin Automotive Museum in Oxnard, Calif., with his wife Merle and serves as chairman of the Petersen Automotive Museum in Los Angeles. The Mullin Automotive Museum pays homage to the machine age and the art deco era; its renowned collection features historic French automobiles from the Bugatti to the Voisin, as well as decorative arts from the 1920s and 1930s. At the Petersen Automotive Museum, a permanent exhibition is dedicated to Art Center's legacy of leadership in transportation design education.

How does an investment of such magnitude improve an industrial design program already renowned for graduating many of the world's top vehicle, furniture and product designers?

In recent years, the scope of industrial design projects has become significantly constrained by lack of space on the Hillside Campus. The Mullins' timely gift will create strategically important new studios and shops for the College's undergraduate programs in Environmental, Product and Transportation Design, enabling students and faculty to create and simulate the scale and quantity of projects that will be demanded over the coming decades. The Mullin donation will also contribute to the creation of studios, labs and prototyping facilities needed by the College's current graduate programs in Environmental, Industrial and Transportation Design.

All of which, says Buchman, will reinvigorate the College educational experience and reinforce Art Center's place at the cutting edge of design education.

"Expanding spaces for learning is a central element of the College's Strategic Plan," says Board Chairman Robert C. Davidson, Jr. "This generous gift from Peter and Merle will help make our dreams a reality."

A Legacy of Support to the College

The Mullins have funded scholarships for Art Center students since 2005, including the Peter W. Mullin Endowed Scholarship, which provides financial support to students majoring in Transportation Design.

Fourth-term Transportation Design student Christian Christensen del Rello received the Mullin Scholarship in Summer 2013. Along with financial assistance, the scholarship provided Christensen del Rello with an invaluable sense of affirmation. "Learning that there is someone who believes in my effort was one of the most motivating experiences I have had at Art Center," he says.

"I'm fascinated with the brain, how art students think, their commitment, their curiosity—how they explore an idea, put it on paper and then turn it into a real object. That's what Art Center students do so well," says Peter Mullin. "Having an opportunity to help with the development of this new building dedicated to industrial design and knowing the tremendous impact it will have on the future of transportation design is an exciting project for both me and Merle."

"Peter has a real love affair with art and design, and he's endlessly curious," says Stewart Reed, chair of the College's Transportation Design Department. "He absolutely views cars as functional objects that are really works of art, a beautiful marriage of aesthetics and function."

“I’m grateful the Mullins care so deeply about our students who, thanks to this incredibly generous gift, will now have more of the resources they need to continue developing their talent and skills to make a difference in the world,” Reed continued.

A Lifetime of Passion for All Things Fast

The son of a chemical engineer, Peter Mullin first fell in love with fast cars and boats at events sponsored by his father’s employer, Mobil Oil Company. As a young boy, Mullin got hooked on the thrill of speed while enjoying boat races with his dad at Long Beach Marine Stadium and meeting Indianapolis 500 racecar driving champion Ralph DePalma.

He remembers the solid steel of the family’s ’34 Cadillac because he and his five siblings would jump from the top of the car onto the hood without making a dent, until they got caught.

When he had his driver’s license and had saved up the cash, he bought his dream car, a ’54 Chevy. The vehicle needed an overhaul, so Peter and his best friend’s brother became after-school and weekend grease monkeys. “That’s really how I learned how engines worked,” says Mullin. Meticulously numbering and labeling every part removed from the engine, he proudly recalls his surprise, after putting it all back together, that it ran “like a top.” “We had a box full of leftover parts. Neither one of us could figure out what they did or where they went,” he laughs.

Mullin, today a vintage car racer, drove the rebuilt Chevy convertible painted Sierra gold through high school in Pasadena and college at the University of California, Santa Barbara. “I had a great time cruising down Pacific Coast Highway and looked pretty cool with my surfboard sticking out the back.”

In addition to serving on the Art Center College of Design Board of Trustees, Peter Mullin serves on the Guggenheim Foundation Advisory Board; Occidental College, St. John’s Hospital and The UCLA Foundation Boards of Trustees. He is chairman of The Music Center Foundation of Los Angeles, as well as past chairman and current member of the Board of Visitors of the John E. Anderson Graduate School of Management at UCLA and chairman of the Peter Mullin Automotive Museum Foundation. He is also president of the American Bugatti Club.

About Art Center College of Design

Founded in 1930 and located in Pasadena, Calif., Art Center College of Design is a global leader in art and design education. Art Center offers 11 undergraduate and six graduate degrees in a wide variety of art and design disciplines, as well as public programs for all ages and levels of experience. Renowned for its ties to industry, Art Center is the first design school to receive the United Nations’ Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) status, providing opportunities for students to create design-based solutions for humanitarian and nonprofit agencies around the world. During the College’s 83-year

history, Art Center's alumni have had a profound impact on popular culture, the way we live and important issues in our society.

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Images: A high-resolution image is available for download from this [online gallery](#).

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