



ART

## "Car Culture" Takes On New Meaning in This Mobile Gallery



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A roving curator offers creative routes around LA.

Paul Pescador, *Ajar (I)*, 2017. Courtesy of Paul Pescador

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In the 1972 documentary, [Reyner Banham Loves Los Angeles](#), Banham, a renowned architecture critic, drives the freshly paved freeways in a butter yellow 1970 Pontiac Grand Prix Hardtop, waxing poetic about what an “unspeakable sprawling mess” the city of Los Angeles is. “Devising a guide is a good way to explain a city,” Banham says from behind the wheel. “And LA needs some explaining.”

Car culture ruined Los Angeles, but rules it too; most of the city’s denizens see (or miss) their urban environs through the windows of an automobile. For Banham, the view from the freeway is a novelty, but for the traffic-bound Angeleno, it’s often a banal hell. On average, Angelenos spend [104 hours of the year](#) in traffic, and as Banham says, “You plan the day in advance, program your activities, and forgo those random encounters with friends and strangers that are traditionally one of the rewards of city life.”



Gallery1993. Photo by Michael Delaney

For gallerist and curator [Seymour Polatin](#), driving friends and strangers around LA without a destination is a foundational part of his curatorial project [Gallery1993](#), a champagne-colored Ford Crown Victoria whose car body and cabin function as an art space. Named for Polatin's birth year and launched in Boston, Gallery1993 was inspired by its founder's experience working as a teenage taxi driver in his native Massachusetts ("I just wanted to drive a really big car," he confessed to GARAGE). Exhibitions are announced via sparse, even cryptic emails, and opening events are staged in locations tailored to each show. Previously, this has seen him park the car on a dead-end street overlooking the Los Angeles River in [Frogtown](#), and at a meter spot findable only by using GPS.

After that, it's by appointment only, as Polatin travels to the viewers' neighborhood to pick them up and cruises around their area, talking about the art on view in and around the car, a conversation that wanders from topic to topic as the car moves from block to block. At the beginning of each trip, Polatin encourages his guests to look into his car through the windows, an otherwise questionable move in public space. "The car functions as a very strange part of our society," he said. "It's a private space in our public sphere."



Seymour Polatin piloting the gallery. Photo by Michael Delaney

Art is installed inside the car like a detail job, and removed as easily as a discarded plastic coffee cup. Some of the featured work is meant to be touched and interacted with, while more delicate objects are anchored with epoxy to protect them from being jostled by the ride (since the Crown Vic is Polatin's personal means of

For the next show, Polatin is working with LA artist Paul Pescador, who makes films, photographs, and performances. Pescador's practice is improvisational; he uses found objects to explore and amplify small moments, often rendering them quasi-monumental. He also restages personal memories in galleries, domestic spaces, and now in the cabin of Polatin's car. For his January 2018 show, Pescador has produced a set of photographs of objects shot inside the vehicle. He and Polatin drove around LA for five hours to collect his varied subjects, starting at a picturesque lookout point in Mt. Washington and ending their journey in a Target parking lot.



Paul Pescador, *Ajar (6)*, 2017. Courtesy of Paul Pescador

“Should I put on my seatbelt?” I asked as Polatin chauffeured me around downtown on a Sunday evening as the sun set behind squall clouds and a sepia-toned light flooded the road. Though I’ve walked the area extensively, we found ourselves on streets I’ve somehow never seen before. “The car allows the viewer to think critically about their own space,” he reflected. The interior of the car frames the world outside and prompts his viewers to consider their local streets in a radically different light.

“There’s so much tactility to the interior of the car—the leather surface and the shininess of it. It’s a sea of beige,” Pescador enthused. The cabin is indeed deceptively spacious, but Pescador was more interested in the way such spaces can exacerbate or enforce intimacy. “There is a narrative element to a drive,” he said.

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Paul Pescador, *Ajar (5)*, 2017. Courtesy of Paul Pescador

Tensions between LA's artists, institutions, and neighborhoods have run especially high of late. [Boyle Heights wants the artists and all interlopers out](#); rents have been steepening and project spaces shuttering. Right now, a transient mobile space seems like a smart and usefully inconspicuous alternative to a brick-and-mortar pop-up, and a Crown Vic—classic but far from flashy—is the perfect set of wheels.

Paul Pescador *opens at Gallery1993 in January*. E-mail [seymour@1993.gallery](mailto:seymour@1993.gallery) for an appointment. Sharif Farrag: *Smokeless Fire remains on view at the gallery through December 30, 2017*.

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