

## Behold the ultimate man cave (with room for 16 vintage cars)

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Photo by Manuel Martinez

Stephane Rambaud in his party lounge and garage for his collection of European cars.

When Stephane Rambaud handed over the keys of Phoenix International Freight Services, a Schiller Park logistics firm he helped build, he took on a new project, collecting and restoring European cars. That was early 2015, and less than two years later, he's up to 15.

There's room for just one more in the 16-car garage and combination office/party lounge that Rambaud built inside a century-old brick warehouse in the white-hot Fulton Market neighborhood. It's a sleek space, 5,600 square feet, with a wall of windows to divide the garage from an elegantly appointed bar, lounge and meeting space.

The garage, really more of a showroom, is where Rambaud's finished cars stand on a polished concrete floor with LEDs overhead to highlight the gleam of their paint, the sparkle of their chrome and the sensuous curves of their sculpted hoods.

"I wasn't going to have a warehouse where you pile up your cars, and your friends can't see them," Rambaud, 52, says. He's spent about \$2 million buying and restoring the beauties, and says he's not doing it to resell them but "to create a fun collection and share it with people." Share by invitation, that is. It's a private lounge, with no signs out front and frosted-glass windows to block peepers.



"I wasn't going to have a warehouse where you pile up your cars, and your friends can't see them," explains Rambaud.

Shortly after he started collecting, Rambaud bought the warehouse space, a piece of a larger complex developers are turning into rental properties for small businesses. He enlisted **Tandem** in Chicago to make it into a place that could accommodate his cars as well as his business meetings and parties. Between the purchase and the renovation, completed last summer, he says he's spent about \$1.8 million.

Three-quarters of the space is for the cars, including a 1959 Aston Martin DB2/4, a 1976 Ferrari 308 GTB and a powder blue 1980 Mercedes-Benz SLC like the one Rambaud recalls from his childhood in Paris, the car his dad drove. There's a small area for repairs and washing, but for most of that work, Rambaud drives the cars to specialist mechanics in the suburbs. Here, "they're my children, and this is the children's room," he says.



Photo by Manuel Martinez

A comfy hangout space has none of the usual car enthusiast "clutter."

The garage walls are white, covered with a panelized material that Chris Walsh, Tandem's principal architect, says is most often used for the walk-in freezers in grocery stores. It's easy to clean. The exhaust from some of his classics, Rambaud says, "explodes out the back, and I don't want my guests looking at the mess that makes on the walls." The panels also provide insulation.

While vintage race posters and car advertisements are a common sight in car enthusiasts' spaces, Rambaud has none. "That's clutter," he says. "You don't need to see that when you can be looking at the cars."

To create an open showroom feeling, Tandem removed two of the garage space's three rows of support columns. Two original columns still stand, and another three mark the separation between the garage and the entertainment space.



Photo by Manuel Martinez

The living space has tables for hanging out, a well-stocked bar with wine refrigerators and views of the star attractions: the cars.

Tandem hung windows along that dividing line and within the entertainment space dropped the bar's workspace about a foot below the floor level, to prevent a bartender from blocking guests' view of the cars.

The living space's brick walls, wood support beams and cedar ceiling have the look of an old loft, but much of it is new materials. The brick walls are set inside the original exterior brick walls, with insulation stuffed in the space between, Walsh says.

The new brick has a painted-and-scraped surface, like a recently rehabbed wall, because "I'm French," Rambaud says. "I want it to look old even if it isn't." The cedar ceiling masks a fire-breaking layer of drywall above it.



Photo by Manuel Martinez

The living space has the look of an old loft, but much of it is new materials.

The interior design, by **Amy Cassell Atelier** in Chicago, plays on the industrial look of the building and its setting in the former meatpacking district. Within the living space, smoky gray wallpaper with protruding rivets wraps the two slab walls that set apart the foyer on one side and the big-screen TV room on the other end. The curtains are made of chain mail.

The faux-ostrich covering on the bar chairs is nubby, an echo of the false rivets. "I did not want some froufrou chairs," Rambaud says.

The couch in the TV room is big enough for sleeping, and a wall in the bathroom opens up to reveal a hidden shower, but it's not home for Rambaud, who lives in Lincoln Park, in a house Tandem designed several years ago.



Photo by Manuel Martinez

Et voilà la raison d'être . . . les voitures.

It's the 15 cars that call the Fulton Market space home. In a few months, a Citroen SM Sport Maserati moves in after its restoration is complete. "That's all the space I need, enough for 16 cars," Rambaud says. "For now."