

Garage Turntables Take Your Car for a Spin

Auto buffs and developers are installing electronic car turners to help address narrow driveways or to boost the bling factor

Developers of luxury properties are building electronic turntables inside garages. Some spin-happy homeowners are even adapting revolving platforms for living rooms, dining rooms and patios. Photo: Sandy Huffaker for The Wall Street Journal

By

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Andrew Canter's oceanfront home in La Jolla, Calif., has a rooftop infinity pool, retractable window walls, a steam room of Brazilian granite and a rubber sink for washing off his surfboard. But the star attraction? The revolving turntable in his subterranean garage, where he keeps his Ferrari 458, his Aston Martin DBS and his Range Rover.

"I'm a car guy. I always wanted my dream house to have a really cool garage," said Mr. Canter, 31, who owns a real-estate development and financial services company in San Diego. Once his two sports cars are parked on the 19.6-foot turntable, it can be rotated 180 degrees so that Mr. Canter never has to back out through his titanium-and-koa-wood garage door—or turn his back on his ocean view.

"It's a safety thing. It's also really cool," said Mr. Canter, whose guests often congregate in the climate-controlled garage to watch his cars revolve. "When too much wine is flowing, the turntable starts spinning."



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A Ferrari sits on a turntable in the garage of Andrew Canter's oceanfront home in La Jolla, Calif. *PHOTO: SANDY HUFFAKER FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL*

Car turntables, a fixture of car shows and dealer showrooms, are the shiny new toys of prestige real estate. Developers of luxury properties are installing electronic car turners both for the wow factor and for their practical advantages in tightly-planned lots with narrow driveways or limited turnaround space. Collectors are

installing turntables to show off their favorite sports cars. Some spin-happy homeowners are even adapting revolving platforms for bedrooms, living rooms and patios.

“Our [residential] sales have doubled every year for the last five years,” said John Thomson, the owner and president of Carousel USA, a 15-year-old vehicle turntable company based in Irwindale, Calif. Although Carousel sells most of its gear-driven turntables to car dealerships, as well as to industrial manufacturers and the military, home installations now account for 30% of its revenue, Mr. Thomson said—and demand is growing. “At any time, I probably have 40 to 45 residential jobs going at once,” he said, adding that an average home installation costs between \$30,000 and \$40,000.

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Car turntables have been used since the turn of the century. Both Henry and Edsel Ford had garage turntables to accommodate their car collections. James Buchanan Duke, the tobacco magnate, installed a hand-turned one in the basement of his Charlotte, N.C. mansion, so that his Rolls Royce could be spun to face the manse’s narrow, curving drive.

“They kind of went by the wayside for a long time,” said Mr. Thomson. Now, “a lot of high end homes are being built that need it for access. And car collectors think it’s cool.”

Mr. Canter’s 3,250-square-foot house takes up almost every inch of its tight, 2,700-square-foot lot. The ambitious design necessitated a steep driveway to the underground garage—too steep for his low-slung sports cars to handle without nose-diving into the garage floor. A hydraulic ramp was designed to incline upward and flatten at the entryway, then lower to a near horizontal position in front of the turntable. Built into the white epoxy floor, the stainless steel platform table is operated by remote control; if Mr. Canter’s Ferrari is misaligned, safety sensors will stop the turntable before the car can knock into a wall.

The garage is bathed in custom lighting, and music plays on a built-in sound system. “I want my cars to be comfortable,” said Mr. Canter, who said the cost of his house “started at \$1,000 a square foot, and probably went over.”

Turntables are trending among the ultrawealthy, according to Rick Albers with the Chubb insurance company’s personal appraisal department, who evaluates high-end properties on the East Coast. “I’m starting to see it all throughout the mid-Atlantic,” Mr. Albers said. “I looked at one a couple of months ago—a \$2 million garage with a McLaren, an Aston Martin and a Bentley. The owner got a turntable with its own built-in wash stall.”



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Mr. Canter's 19.6 foot turntable can be rotated 180 degrees. *PHOTO: SANDY HUFFAKER FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL*

Architect and developer Jared Della Valle decided to install fob-operated car turners in the garages of four luxury townhouses that his Alloy company was building in Brooklyn's Dumbo neighborhood.

It was the solution to a space crunch: The townhouses' only street access is a narrow, shared alleyway. "You don't have to make a 78-point turn," said Mr. Della Valle, who spent \$48,000 to put in the turntables. "It's much easier to have the car turned around straight ahead than to back out, especially in New York City with a lot of pedestrian traffic."

Joe Inzerillo hadn't owned a car in 10 years when he bought one of Mr. Della Valle's townhouses for \$4.536 million last June, according to public records. "I like taking the subway," said Mr. Inzerillo, 42, executive vice president and CTO of Major League Baseball Advanced Media. Then he found out he was getting a turntable. "I went out and put my order in on the Tesla," he said.

Mr. Inzerillo moved into the finished townhouse a few months ago with his wife and his new Tesla P85D (base price \$105,000). He's installing a laser system with a beam that will guide him onto the turntable. "There's a bit of precision to making sure the car is aligned in the center," he said, adding that he occasionally enjoys standing on the turntable as it revolves.

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“It’s one of the highlights to see the car spin—it’s like living in the future,” Mr. Inzerillo said.

Practicality aside, car turners are being installed as kinetic trophy displays. Mr. Thomson built a 13-foot turntable into the white granite floor of the Los Angeles home of filmmaker Michael Bay for the 2010 Chevy Camaro that appeared as the autobot Bumblebee in “Transformers: Dark of the Moon.” “His assistant called me a few years ago and said ‘Hey, we want to spin Bumblebee,’” Mr. Thomson said. The Camaro is displayed on a slow-moving turntable along with other movie props in a high-style playroom on the home’s lower level, complete with a bar with a large LED screen.

“Turntables have gained popularity in the Los Angeles luxury housing market in recent years,” said Michael LaMontagna, one of the listing agents [for a \\$49.995 million spec house on Bel-Air’s Stradella road](#) that has a turntable as the centerpiece of its 10-car garage. Not to be outdone, Nile Niami, the film producer-turned-developer, is building a 100,000-square-foot Bel-Air home with a 30-car garage—and two turntables. He hopes to sell it for \$500 million.

“That’s important for my buyer group—they all have nice cars and they want to show them off,” said Mr. Niami, adding that his buyer group consists primarily of single men, of many nationalities.

Mr. Niami is wrapping up construction on a more modest \$45 million home in Beverly Hills that will have a jewel box-like glass-walled room with a platform turntable. “You keep the million-dollar car separate from the other cars,” he said. “When you’re in the lower living room, you will look through a glass window and that’s where you’ll have the turntable—all polished stainless steel—with a car turning on it. It’s its own moment.”



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Marie and Ronald Gade's home in Sands Point, N.Y. has a revolving platform in its living room. The property is on the market for \$13.999 million. *PHOTO: CASSANDRA GIRALDO FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL*

Reggie Lopez, the general manager of Carturner, the Vista, Calif., based company that built Mr. Niemi's turntable, said that its standard-size 13.4-foot platform model sits on top of the floor and can be plugged into a wall outlet. It costs \$11,900 and will spin any car, he said—with the exception of the 19.16-foot-long Rolls-Royce Phantom. Carturner will unveil a larger model later this year. "That will obviously take care of the Phantom," he said.

Mr. Lopez said that he has fielded requests from homeowners who want to install turntables in their bedrooms and living rooms. "It never ceases to amaze us what people come up with," said Carousel's Mr. Thomson, who has put everything from dining rooms to Christmas trees on specialty turntables. He recently installed a revolving rooftop deck for a Florida client, built to withstand hurricane-strength winds.

A revolving platform was already set into the floor of Marie Gade's living room overlooking Manhasset Bay in Sands Point, N.Y., when they bought the waterfront property 23 years ago. "What do we use it for? We use it to amuse our grandchildren. They want to be on the carousel," said Dr. Gade, 71, a retired diagnostic radiologist. "I say, 'If you're really good, if you're not screaming, yelling, running around, you can go on it for 10 minutes.'"

The Gades put the 11,000-square-foot home on the market for \$13.999 million last winter. "Everyone is impressed that the room rotates, but I don't think that would be a selling point on its own—it's more the property and its waterfront view," said their listing agent, Patricia Shroyer.

A turntable may even carry certain liabilities. "It's kind of hard to show it to someone on a first date without coming off as a complete jerk," said Mr. Canter, who waited awhile before taking his fiancée, Arianna Brugh, down to his garage. Ms. Brugh, 28, who is getting licensed as an architect, prefers to park her Mercedes-Benz SUV on the street rather than on the turntable alongside Mr. Canter's sports cars.

"It's really cool, but it's a little scary," she said. "There are a lot of beautiful cars in that garage."