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Letters: Southern California's car museum

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July 23, 2013

Re "Petersen taking its own road in selling holdings," July 20

As a scholar and teacher of Southern California's history, and one with a penchant for what we in the trade call "material culture," I have been dismayed about the news of the Petersen Automotive Museum's shift away from the car culture of the region to a broader perspective on automotive design and technology. The institution's emphasis on Southern California has made it a great place for students to experience the unique ways the region's distinctive culture has been expressed over time.

Robert E. Petersen, the museum's chief patron, recognized the links between automotive technology and the culture of Southern California; his publishing empire reinforced and reflected that. That's what has made the Petersen special among automotive museums and a treasure trove of the Southland's history.



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French deco cars and motorcycles are objects worthy of a museum, but they have no relevance to Southern California except to students of design and car enthusiasts like museum officials Bruce Meyer and Peter Mullin.

Gentlemen, you're ruining an exceptional museum in a way that suggests you have little respect for the region, past donors and best curatorial practices.

Denise S. Spooner

Claremont

The writer is a history lecturer at Cal State Fullerton.

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