



The View

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Author to speak at museum tonight

Krevsky to present her new book focusing on golden age of autos

Michigan author Margery Krevsky will be appearing at the Belleville Area Historical Museum on Thursday to talk about her book, "Sirens of Chrome: The Enduring Allure of Auto Show Models."

Though Krevsky has a background in fashion, including stints at Glamour magazine and Hudson's, she tackled the auto industry as an insider, and helped turn the auto show models into savvy, representatives of the auto industry rather than merely as human hood ornaments.

"The first auto show I saw was as an adult. The auto show circuit was not as expanded when I was a child," the central Pennsylvania native said.

"There was not an auto show near us. Today there is the Greater Harrisburg auto show and the amazing Philadelphia auto show."

But what she did see every year was the Convention Hall at the American Medical Association.

"My Dad was a physician and every year I was taken with him to see the convention floor. The presenters mesmerized me. Some had nurse's uniforms and some other costumes," she said. "It was like Broadway to me. With lights, music and a dramatic presentation. I loved this part and the free samples of baby powder and shampoo."

As she began researching the auto shows, the old Vegas style presentations were light years away from medical conventions and lot more expensive.

"In my research I could not find specific budgets for the Ziegfield Follies type shows of the 1930s and the Big Band shows of the 1940s," she said. "But there were major stars, bands and players employed for these. Some were part of a marketing contract of which this was one facet.

"Show girls, magicians, song and dance teams; Las Vegas style entertainment were definitely part of the marketing budget."

Based on the city - Chicago, New York or Detroit - the promoter for the show and the individual car companies all combined resources to present the extravaganza.

"This made it all possible - so there was not one source for the revenue," she said.

After all this research and with a background in design and fashion, you have to wonder if Krevsky has a favorite era.

"Each car design era has its mystique from fins to simplicity. Each has its place in the car design tome," she said. "It is impossible to choose one over the other. Rather they all connect - one leading to the next."

Krevsky found the shows where Pontiac featured concept cars particularly exciting.

"Especially with the recent news of the demise of this segment. The muscle-based theme cars attracted scores of people who really wanted them to be built and not just to be show pieces," she said.

Krevsky looks back fondly on the auto show's she personally worked on.

"An image that stands out in my mind is a Black Tie Charity preview with Lee Iacocca from 1992.

"Press from all over the world considered him a rock star and the fury to get near him or take a photo was at fever pitch," she said. "This year the image of Gov. Jennifer Granholm walking into the press conference waving and smiling was memorable."

No matter how bad the economy or how strained the social or political climate in the country is, auto shows traditionally have never reflected them.

"The presentations have always been upbeat and positive. Attending the auto show is usually an optimistic experience as we deal with yesterday, today and tomorrow," she said. "Each of these eras has its positives and challenges. The American automotive business is going through changes now but it is a rock solid business and everyone needs a car."

The auto execs weren't exactly rushing to changing auto show models from eye candy to technically handy.

"Changes take time. The idea of transitioning models from objects beside cars to walking gear heads took time. Certainly there was resistance," she said. "If we look back in history there was even a time when women could not vote, or even become executives in corporations."

During her 28-year career as president of Productions Plus, Krevsky has heard many stories about the auto show business.

"I started to write them down. Some sounded absurd like the 1950 Cadillac 'debutante' concept convertible," she said. "I heard the interior was lined with Somali leopard. I thought it couldn't be true but after the research I found the photograph and it was confirmed."

Krevsky also is drawn into the lore of the past.

"The hood ornament for The Spirit of Ecstasy on a Rolls Royces was fascinating to me. I wondered if the sculpture was an artists' muse," she said. "I found the incredible love story that resulted in this classic sculpture. These and many more stories were the inspiration for the book."

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