

## PHILIPPE MOUGIN

### Of Cars and Trees



All over Europe, in the world of classic car lovers, a rumour about a mythical car cemetery was circulating. It was supposedly hidden somewhere in Switzerland, in an undisclosed location. It was said this mechanical Mecca, deep in an impenetrable forest, was haunted by the ghosts of hundreds of classic wrecks from the 30's to the 60's, Buicks, Fords, Mercedes Benzes; all legends from the pages of automotive history.

In this surreal locale, wooded trees and metal sheets fuse in a marriage between car and nature. As it turns out, this place was no myth after all; it was nestled solemnly in the forest near Bern. Its origins hark back to 1933, when W. Messerli began storing cars in his garden, to use their parts to make tractors. After the Second World War, faced with the industrialized production of farm machinery, he moved into the spare parts business. Unfortunately, the oil crisis in the 70's sounded the death knell of these old gas-guzzlers.

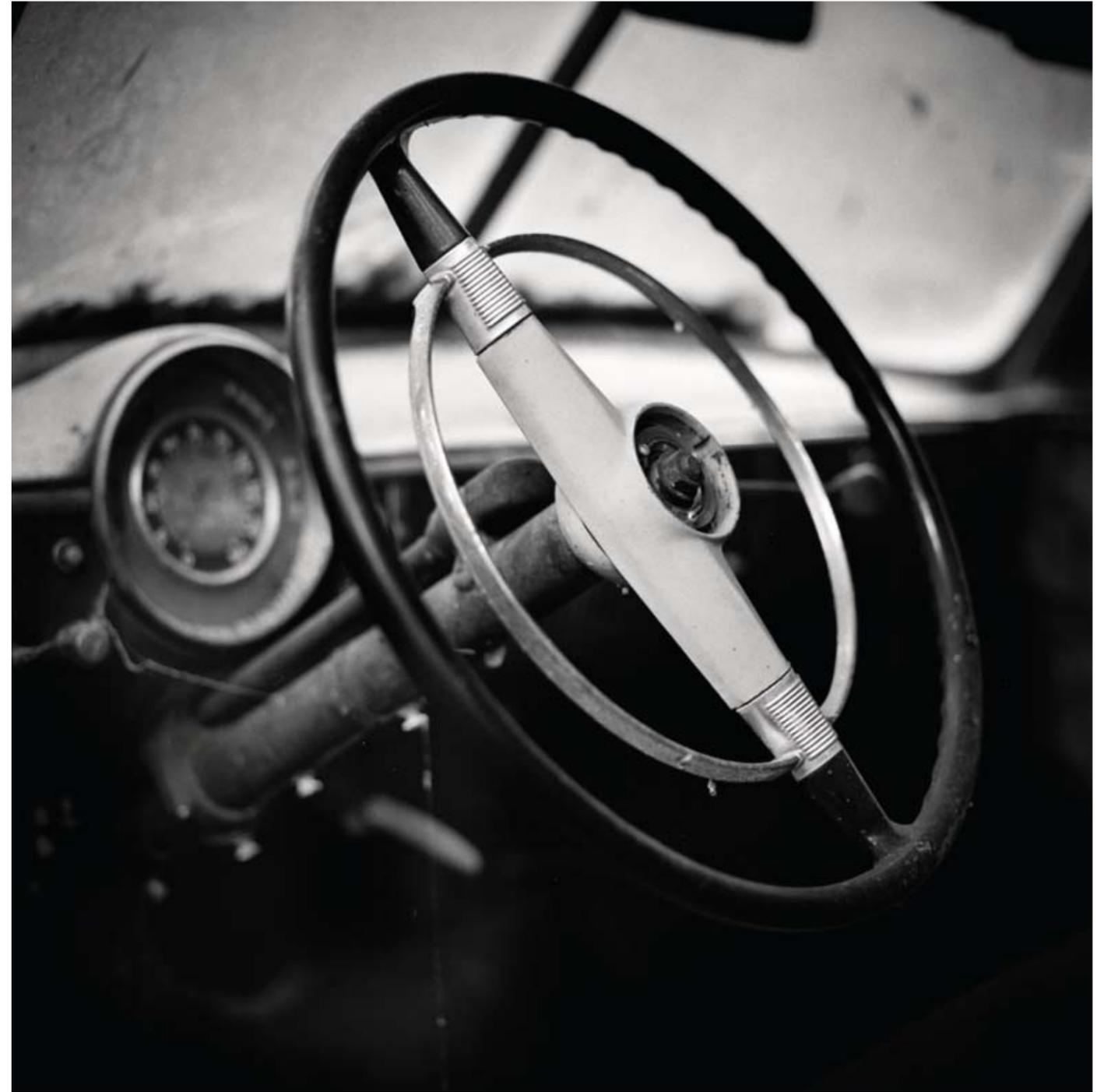
“ For more than 30 years, they lay undisturbed. As each season passed, Nature reasserted its dominance... Today, of the marriage between car bodies and forest, only the ghost of memory remains.

From then on, this collection of bygone vehicle bodies began to attract the attention of the authorities, who saw it as an eyesore. Trees were planted to hide this reassure trove. The trees grew, enveloping Buick and Valliant alike. For more than 30 years, they lay undisturbed. As each season passed, Nature reasserted its dominance. After years of legal struggle, the authorities forced the owner to clean the site. Today, of the marriage between car bodies and forest, only the ghost of memory remains.

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## Layered Stimulus

I was born in Paris but grew up in Switzerland. At the age of 20, I began a career as an independent computer consultant. Around the same time, I started experimenting with photography during many of my expeditions across Africa. There, I would spend months exploring the different types of deserts. After a number of years I decided to improve my technical skills and learn more about the medium of photography. So, in 2004, I started a one-year study program at a photography school in Geneva. After completing a number of workshops in a variety of subjects including portrait, fashion and advertising, I decided in 2006, to start my own photography project called l'âme de fond. This project involved using long exposures, a medium format camera and black & white film.

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I see my photography process as an attempt to find and create beauty out of the visual layers in the world. I try to capture a serene and mysterious world, where the places are minimalistic, and where each image shows the imprint of man on that particular place. I'm deeply interested in the way each human being's experiences influences their own perception of the environment, and in tempting viewers to stimulate their own imagination.

In 2008, together with other photographers, we created a collective, the collective 8Reg'ART ([www.8regart.com](http://www.8regart.com)). The purpose of this collective was to promote of fine art photography in France. The 8Reg'ART Group, beyond sterile and sectarian chapels of photography classifications, expresses itself as being openly contemporary and could be assimilated to the international "Fine-Art" photography trend.

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