

Abstract

The thesis examines car culture in Macao. It begins with the assumption that the automobile is not merely a tool of transportation, but is also a medium of communication and a means of self-expression. Local car owners are faced with a relatively homogeneous, mass produced consumer item. In order to distinguish their cars from the thousands of relatively identical other models, they decorate both the interior and the exterior of their cars.

The thesis explores how and why the car owners in Macao decorate their cars. The purpose is to find out the types of decorations and modifications car owners place outside and inside their cars, and to understand the meaning of the practice and content of the decorations for the owners. Participant observation is adopted as the research method, including three distinct but interrelated methods: direct observation and photography of car decorations on the streets of Macao; questionnaire distributed to car owners; and personal interviews with car owners. The photographed record identifies the typology of car decoration in Macao. Three major forms of car decoration are identified, which are decals on car body, decals on windshield and objects displayed inside the car.

The results of the questionnaire and the interview disclose that local car owners decorate their cars mainly because car decorating is a way to express lifestyle; car decorations distinguish one's car from the identical others; and car decorations serve as means of self identification.