The Devotions of Restoration: Materiality, Enthusiasm, and Making Three “Indian Motocycles” Like New

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Amid growing attention by geographers to materiality, emotion, and work, we draw together practices of making and communities of enthusiasm to autoethnographically trace the restoration of three Indian motorcycles, revealing restoration as a dynamic aesthetic and political practice that links restorers to communities of enthusiasm as well as to the agentic materiality of the things they restore. Restoration, we show, is a culturally and geographically situated skilled practice that links material agency to labors of love and devotion. Such devotion to things, in turn, suggests a provocative counternarrative to the unsustainable throwaway society of the Anthropocene. Emotional labor, material devotion, and handcraft skill could, we suggest, proffer positive pathways as we endeavor to make, restore, and, indeed, sustain our material world. Key Words: devotion, enthusiasm, making, materiality, restoration.

En medio de la creciente atención prestada por los geógrafos a la materialidad, la emoción y el trabajo, concertamos las prácticas de fabricar cosas y las comunidades de entusiasmo, para trazar de manera autoetnográfica la restauración de tres motocicletas indias, con lo cual se revela la restauración como una práctica dinámica estética y política que vincula a los restauradores con las comunidades de entusiasmo lo mismo que con la materialidad agencial de las cosas que ellos restauran. Mostramos, pues, que la restauración es una práctica de experticia cultural y geográficamente situada que liga la agencia material con trabajos de amor y devoción. Tal devoción por las cosas, a su vez, sugiere una sugestiva contranarrativa sobre la insostenible sociedad del desperdicio del Antropoceno. El trabajo emotivo, la devoción material y la habilidad manual podrían ofrecer, sugerimos nosotros, unas rutas positivas cuando nos proponemos construir, restaurar y, en verdad, sostener nuestro mundo material. Palabras clave: devoción, entusiasmo, fabricación, materialidad, restauración.

Restoration—making something old like new again—is extraordinary in the life of a thing. All things are made or manufactured, most see maintenance and repair, some see conservation and even modification, but few ever undergo restoration (Pirsig 1974; Dannefer 1980; Laurier 1998; Graham and Thrift 2007; Crawford 2009; Gregson, Metcalfe, and Crewe 2009; Edensor 2011; Strebel 2011; Warren and Gibson 2011; DeLyser and Greenstein 2015). In this article we use the restoration stories of three Indian Motocycles (without the®, made in the United States, 1901–1953) to reveal restoration as a dynamic aesthetic and political practice that links skilled restorers to communities of enthusiasm centered on the agentic materiality of the things they restore and to labors of love and devotion. The point of the article is to illustrate, amid the unsustainable material relations of the Anthropocene, what such material devotion can do.

To attempt this, we situate three motorcycle restorations at the intersection of five strands of literature: making, enthusiasm, autoethnography, materiality, and love. We begin with practices of making and link

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those to enthusiasms—hobbies—showing how restoration, like other forms of making, can be undertaken without remuneration but nevertheless requires extensive expertise and handcraft skill. To provide context for this, we offer a brief history of restoration, drawing attention to the restoration of mechanical things by enthusiasts and situating motorcycle restoration within that movement. Then, because restoration is an embodied practice, we engage autoethnographic methods to illuminate such practices. This enables us to show from inside how, although the objects of restoration appear inert, their formative materiality guides, inspires, and even hinders their restoration. We narrate the restorations of three bikes—a 1937 Indian Sport Scout, a 1939 Indian Chief, and a 1910 Indian—curated to illustrate different approaches to restoration and to explore the politics, ethics, and aesthetics underneath restoration practices. All three motorcycles could economically reward their restoration efforts, but enthusiasts seldom sell the fruits of their labor, instead finding the motorcycles’ cultural, historical, and indeed emotional and community values more significant than their monetary ones. That leads to our fifth area of literature which we interweave throughout the article: Placing restoration within communities of enthusiasm reveals a culturally situated skilled practice of making that works with agentic materiality in devotional labors of love.

**Drawing Together Making, Enthusiasms, and Love**

In this article, the practices of (motorcycle) restoration link the literatures on geographies of making, enthusiasms, and love. As we show, the three are connected in the practices of restoration because restoration is a form of making practiced by enthusiasts, one successful only with love. We begin by introducing separately each concept, its definition(s), and its contemporary (geographic) literature.

**Geographies of Making**

Recent years have seen growing scholarly interest in the array of creative practices called making—the skilled crafting, fabricating, and (re)constructing of materials that bring a thing into being (see Carr and Gibson 2016). This scholarship seeks to return the embodied tasks of handwork and manual labor to focus in a way distinctly different from examinations of production-line manufacturing—these are efforts that seek to validate the embodied practices and material knowledge such labor exacts (Carr and Gibson [2016] offered a rich review; see also Crawford 2009; Charney 2011a; Gauntlett 2011; Miller 2011; C. Anderson 2012; Ingold 2013; Paton 2013; Thomas, Harvey, and Hawkins 2013; Warren and Gibson 2014; Luckman 2015; Patchett 2015; Gibson 2016; Carr 2017).

Indeed, the term *making* serves not as a distinction from manufacturing but as a cultural turn, focusing attention on makers’ “disposition and practice” no matter the scale, output, or mode of production, and validating the “deep and considered relationship with materials” that lie at making’s heart (Carr and Gibson 2016, 299). As Carr and Gibson (2016) have indicated, emphasizing the maker together with the “materials, their skilled manipulation, circulation, redeployment, and their agency, simultaneously across a much wider set of spaces and circumstances . . . [draws] attention to the lives of materials that transcends their configuration as things or objects at a singular point in time” (302–03)—it highlights the culturally embedded, nonlinear biographies of commodities. Thus, looking at making opens up the bonds between material and skill, thing and person (Carr and Gibson 2016).

Skill matters because making of all kinds requires significant practiced and knowledgeable handcraft labor, the kinds of effort frequently mourned as lost or forgotten in twenty-first-century postindustrial affluent countries (Crawford 2009; Luckman 2013, 2015; Thomas, Harvey, and Hawkins 2013; Warren and Gibson 2014; Carr and Gibson 2016; Gibson 2016; Carr 2017). The scholarship on making portrays it as positively countercultural—because it is blossoming in the Global North often in the self-same cities that have endured manufacturing decline, because it consciously celebrates skill and craft traditions perceived otherwise as eclipsed, because it is regularly practiced for pleasure rather than profit, and because it is so network and community based (Crawford 2009; Dawkins 2010; Gauntlett 2011; Miller 2011; Warren and Gibson 2011; Carr and Gibson 2016; Gibson 2016; Carr 2017). Making, to some commentators, serves as an empowering response to our throwaway society and distance from production—it is a way of “defying conventions, enjoying life or solving its problems” (Charney 2011b, 7). As Miller (2011) has put it, made objects can reveal “the sheer fun, imagination and brilliance” of craft making, for they are “founded in the art of care”—the care for things that is a “cousin to the care we retain for other people . . . for our environment and [for] its future” (17, 22).
Significantly, that care need not be paid for. Although makers might work for profit or for a living, they also often work for just the love of it—as hobbyists or enthusiasts.

**Geographies of Enthusiasm**

Enthusiasms can be defined as “organized leisure”—the pursuits of hobbies and hobbyists, of those who (alone and in groups) engage a topic or a thing for pleasure, not profit. Enthusiasts pursue their hobbies because they want to, never because they have to. Despite lack of remuneration and also often the absence of professional credentials, in many areas enthusiasts become experts, even the experts, devoting their energies to exacting accuracy (Haring 2007; Geoghegan 2009, 2013)—so much so that they are described as dedicated (Geoghegan 2013) and even zealous (Geoghegan 2009).

Enthusiasms are geographical phenomena, for although enthusiasts might labor alone, they find community with like-minded individuals: They are linked through networks of enthusiasts articulated spatially through club and society meetings (e.g., of car clubs), public outreach events (e.g., architectural tours), and other gatherings of those who share the passion (e.g., specialty swap meets), as well as through online forums and collecting practices (R. M. Ellis and Haywood 2006; Haring 2007; Geoghegan 2013; DeLyser and Greenstein 2015).

Significant for this article is the fact that enthusiasms, as Geoghegan (2013) demonstrated, are also fundamentally emotional affiliations—looking at enthusiasms can reveal the love “nurtured between people and things” (Geoghegan and Hess 2015, 452). And so it is to love that we next turn.

**Geographies of Love and the Love for Things**

Both making and enthusiasms have been cast in a romantic glow, and it is precisely that romance that we here highlight. We do so by engaging with a topic few geographers write about: the geographies of love (Hinchliffe 2008; Wylie 2009; Thien 2011; Morrison, Johnston, and Longhurst 2012; Geoghegan and Hess 2015). Here we join Morrison, Johnston, and Longhurst (2012) in efforts to take love seriously as a subject of our scholarship. For love, as Thien (2011) has explained, involves “specific spatial practices” that “attach one to another” (316)—love connects. Love can flourish between people but also between people and things. As we demonstrate by examining restoration by enthusiasts, such “object love” (the term used by Geoghegan and Hess 2015) is a profound and agentic process shaping people, places, and things.

Love is additionally significant for our work here because of the long-standing gendered (male) portrayal of efforts to repair and restore mechanical things, something perhaps best epitomized by that quintessentially masculine machine, the motorcycle (Pirsig 1974; Sennett 2008; Crawford 2009). What love (of motorcycles) helps us show is that, contrary to the false binary between masculinized garage-, shop-, or factory-based mechanical labor that requires technical expertise and handcraft skill and feminized in-home craft work that entails emotional engagement and care (see, e.g., Warren and Gibson 2014; Holmes 2015; McRobbie 2016; Reimer 2016), motorcycle restoration—like other forms of making—must be infused with accrued skill and love. Although motorcycle restoration, like the surfboard making described by Warren and Gibson (2014), is “an artistic labor dominated by men,” it remains equally an “emotionally charged form of work” involving what Warren and Gibson’s respondents termed “passion,” “soul,” and “love” (172) and what we term devotion.

In what follows, we draw together understandings of making, enthusiasms, and love to dispel this false gendered binary, to reveal how motorcycle restoration opens up a romance between material and maker, and to show how enthusiasts extend love to a material devotion. First we provide context for that by sketching the history of restoration practices more broadly.

**Restoration: A Brief Historical Geography**

Restoration, today widely practiced in Europe and the Anglophone world (in the United States it has its own reality TV series, *American Restoration,* as well as a college major; Simanaitis 2005), has not been widely written about by geographers (but see Laurier 1998; Gregson, Metcalfe, and Crewe 2009; Lowenthal 2016). Legions of articles, books, videos, and Web sites exist to guide the would-be restorer through the restoration of just about anything—from art to ambulances, from guns to guitars, from houses to horseless carriages. Despite histories of restoration craft in specific areas (e.g., Mikesh 2009), outside of architecture and art (e.g., Conti 2007; Glendinning 2013), little has been published about the broader histories and geographies of restoration as practice (although see Dannefer...
Restoration, as it is understood today, involves returning a thing to an “original” appearance and working condition, reversing any nonoriginal modifications, and using original or original-style materials to do so (Dannefer 1980; Laurier 1998; Lowenthal 2016). Restoration, then, is a debt paid forward to the future by accurately interpreting the past.

Anything old can, in principle, be restored. As a practice, restoration is literally ancient (Lowenthal 2016), emerging first in classical Greece with restorations of buildings, temples, and sculptures (Glendinning 2013). Yet across restoration’s long history, styles and tastes as well as philosophies for what “restoration” should be have shifted with the tastes of the times. As Lowenthal (2016) has pointed out (and as we illustrate), period opinions have differed about whether old things should be restored at all and, if so, about whether a restored thing should look new, look old, or even be improved upon. Tastes have vacillated about whether new materials should be clearly distinguished from the old and original materials (as modern additions, not pretending to be original) or should be blended into original surfaces; about whether restoration should restore to new appearance or leave the appearance of antiquity intact; and, ultimately, about whether restoration is even possible or whether any effort simply destroys the thing itself.

What stands out across this history is a division between those things individually produced and those made originally by mechanical means and in multiples—the deep perceptual chasm between handcraft labor and mass manufacture, between a work of art and a mass-produced mechanical thing, between highbrow and lowbrow (see, e.g., Adorno and Horkheimer [1940] 1993; Benjamin 1968; Levine 1990)—relicates itself in restoration. Buildings and temples, for example, have undergone restoration in the Western world for millennia—the Romans restored ancient Greek buildings (Glendinning 2013), and paintings and painted art have undergone restoration in Europe for hundreds of years (Conti 2007)—the frescoes in the Sistine Chapel endured their first restoration just some fifty years after they were painted (Pietrangeli et al. 1986). The examples of architecture and fine art are key: These one-off, typically highbrow works of artists and master craftspeople have been the focus, historically, of nearly all of restoration’s efforts.

Restoration of mass-produced mechanical things began as an enthusiasm, one substantially gained only in the twentieth century, for it was only then that an increasing number of mass-produced mechanical things were recognized to have, first, become too old to be used “as is” (or as was) and, second, become “antique.” By the turn of the twentieth century, all sorts of mass-produced mechanical things needed more than just maintenance and repair; they needed restoration (see, e.g., Revill 2012). To warrant restoration, though, they had to transcend being old and outdated to become recognized as valuable and even collectible. In the twentieth century, as machines themselves became objects of history, memory, and love, all sorts of mass-produced mechanical things underwent a dual and inverse transition: from working to worn and from worthless to worthy.

As we illustrate in what follows, the practices of restoration link historical knowledge and understanding of historical aesthetics with high levels of technical and mechanical knowledge and handcraft skill. All of those together are typically mastered only after years of experience; like other practices of making, restoration must be learned haptically and iteratively (Dannefer 1980; Sennett 2008; Warren and Gibson 2014). Because of these significant investments, restorers today are often professionals, working in commercial or museum environments. Commercial professionals endeavor to earn a living from restoration, restoring things for others, and mobilizing significant skill and expertise to do so. Subject to market forces and clients’ whims, their work is often exacting, although sometimes willfully not technologically accurate, pandering to public ideas of restoration (as seen on TV on American Restoration). Museum professionals, with institutional backing and often also scholarly credentials, along with typically significant volunteer support and without the need to sell or profit from the fruits of their labor when it is finished, achieve elaborately meticulous results, although the things they restore are then seldom returned to their original uses (see, e.g., Mikesh 2009).

Still others practice restoration as enthusiasts. As with other enthusiasms, those who practice restoration as enthusiasts undertake their craft for the pleasure of it and out of a love for the objects of their enthusiasm. Because they earn no pay and need earn no profit, they may undertake excruciatingly painstaking restorations, devoting years to master the tiniest details (Dannefer 1980; Revill 2012; Geoghagan 2013; DeLyser and Greenstein 2015). These three worlds are not sealed from one another. Enthusiasts and professionals in particular specializations often know and rely on one another, sharing expertise (and parts). Because of the devotion that the labor of
restoration demands, some restoration enthusiasts become (full- or part-time) professionals—professionalizing the personal, allowing others to finance it, and shifting their hobby (at least partly) out of the private space of the home or garage. Here we focus autoethnographically on restoration by enthusiasts.

Methods: Autoethnography and Materiality Illuminate Restoration

Autoethnography and Motorcycle Restoration

In this article, we pursue Indian Motocycle restoration autoethnographically, which enables us to mobilize thirty and forty-five years (respectively) of engagement with the international community of Indian Motocycle enthusiasts and hands-on motorcycle restoration experience, presenting lived experiences and embodied practices through studied, focused, and critical reflection. This retrospective power is one of the strengths of autoethnography: Like oral history, it links decades of life experience with deep introspective self-reflection, relying on the self-conscious self-examination of personal experiences and the insights of personal reflection over many years (see C. Ellis, Adams, and Bochner 2011; Shaw 2013). Such methods are here particularly pertinent because machine restoration and antique motorcycle enthusiasm have been underdiscussed in academic literature (although see Sucher 1977; Dannefer 1980; Laurier 1998)—although these topics have been little documented, their histories can today still be revealed by those who have lived them.

In this work, our research is also embedded in the materiality of our three motorcycle case studies: To trained hands, eyes, and ears, the very materiality of the bikes and their parts narrates their restoration stories, and it is these stories we here unpick. Skilled restorers recognize those parts rare and those common, those parts original and those reproduced, and those parts authentic to a given year and type of bike and those that belong elsewhere. What we here offer is a deep material analysis (see also Paton 2013; Carr 2017).

Motorcycle Materiality

Materiality, a term used to encompass the lives of and the very thingness of things, has gained interest among geographers and other scholars (e.g., Bennet 2010; Miller 2011; in geography, see, e.g., Jackson 2000; B. Anderson and Tolia-Kelly 2004; Cook 2004; Whatmore 2006; B. Anderson and Wylie 2009; Gregson, Metcalfe, and Crewe 2009; Cook and Tolia-Kelly 2010; Gregson and Crang 2010; Gregson, Watkins, and Dalestani 2010; Rose and Tolia-Kelly 2012; Bartolini 2015; Gibson 2016). Things, according to these works, have influence, agency, and what Bennet (2010) has termed vibrancy of their own and so deserve our attention in novel ways. Our rush to embrace materiality, however, has led at times to an uncritical acceptance of matter’s agency—scholars caution against “surface geographies” that overlook political engagements and stop short of critique or evaluation (Tolia-Kelly 2011), advising three things we here seek to heed.3 Those who, to Tolia-Kelly (2011), penetrate materiality do so by first demonstrating a “clear politics of ‘doing’ materiality” and, second, by providing “a transparent account of research practice” (154). As Bartolini (2015) has shown, however, overfocus on materiality still risks losing touch with the ways in which things are socially constructed and culturally embedded: “By pushing to the side the social life of objects to emphasize inherent vibrancy . . . matter can be decontextualized” (195)—so those who engage it well must seek, third, to embed materiality in place, history, and culture.

We believe that an autoethnographic focus on making that is culturally and spatially situated can enable researchers’ engagements to highlight matter’s agency and politics. In this article, we attempt to account deeply for the vibrancy of motorcycles and their parts and simultaneously to situate them in their historical-cultural contexts, revealing the practices by which we (and others) engage them materially and make them matter—in both senses of that word. To do so, we first offer a history of the Indian Motocycle Company and next show autoethnographically how a culturally and spatially situated community of Indian enthusiasts forwarded the marque after the company's demise. We situate author Paul Greenstein in that community and turn to the practices of making involved in his restoration of three different Indians, with each bike chosen to reveal restoration's practices and politics as they have unfolded over time.

The Indian Motocycle Company

The history of the Indian Motocycle Company has been well documented (Sucher 1977; Girdler 1997; Rafferty 1998; Youngblood 2001; Haefele 2005). Founded by bicyclists (a racer and an inventor) in the early twentieth century, the company made its first “Indian”4 motorcycle in 1901, becoming pioneers of
design and performance. By the 1910s, Indian was the world’s largest and most influential motorcycle manufacturer, and in World War I Indians became the primary (mechanical) mount of the U.S. Army, solidifying their reputation across Europe and the Commonwealth. Over the next fifteen years, however, the company faced a series of challenges: Some 100 other U.S. motorcycle companies, including Harley Davidson, mounted fierce competition; the rider and inventor founders retired; company stock was badly manipulated by corporate officers; European currency intervention weakened Indian’s once-strong overseas markets; their nonmotorcycling board of directors launched forays into unsuccessful nonmotorcycle ventures; and the stock market crash and Great Depression eroded U.S. sales. Indian became a hard-luck company.

In 1930, the company was purchased by E. Paul DuPont (of the paint and chemical company) and struggled through the Depression in an aging factory. Although Indian continued to innovate, they were never able to truly best the last remaining U.S. competitor, Harley, whose market dominance financed research and development. During World War II, although Indian’s smaller capacity engines were preferred by British Commonwealth and Russian allies, Harley became the U.S. war bike, and Indian came out of the war again crippled financially. The company faced a hostile takeover, and by 1953 Indian had ceased making motorcycles in the United States, although imports under the Indian name continued until about 1963 (Sucher 1977; Girdler 1997; Youngblood 2001).

Even though no new motorcycles were produced, the bikes were renowned among riders, and the brand developed a devoted following of enthusiasts—people who wanted to ride Indians. Some key enthusiasts strove to keep the brand alive, and dedicated riders remained true to their marque, repairing and eventually restoring their mounts. Brand loyalty among Indian Motorcycle enthusiasts has become legendary, but this is not merely because of badge loyalty. The differences between Indians and Harleys are partly aesthetic—Indians showcased unlimited color choices (they were, after all, owned by a paint company), and they featured a more fluid and streamlined form. In addition to aesthetics, though, the differences between Indians and Harleys have also always been functional—the embodied practice of riding them is very distinct.

For example, Indian front ends of the late 1920s to 1930s offer excellent handling, whereas Harleys of the period yield high-speed “death wobbles.” Second, the angle of Indian v-twin engines provides smooth firing impulses, particularly at idle, whereas Harley’s gives a rougher “potato-potato” idle. Then there are the different controls: Indians, developed first, favor the right-handedness of most riders—Indian’s left-hand throttle offered police officers the freedom to use their right hands for other tasks. So Indians feature left-foot clutch, left-hand throttle, and right-hand shift; whereas Harleys have left-foot clutch, right-hand throttle, and left-hand shift (Harley’s control arrangement became known as “suicide shift” for the awkward and imbalanced motion required of the rider).6

Between Indians and Harleys, the rides themselves are as distinctive as the bikes are in their appearances. Such significant differences in materiality—in form, function, and performance—gained Indian a following

Indian Motorcycle Enthusiasts and Motorcycle Restoration

Despite careful attention to the Indian Motorcycle Company’s history, the history of Indian enthusiasm has not been richly documented (but see Sucher 1977). To trace it, and to show what this kind of enthusiasm can do, we turn to autoethnography, mustering decades of personal and embodied engagement with Indian motorcycles and the international community of Indian restorers and enthusiasts.

By the mid-1950s, although Indian was defunct, its adherents were not, and dedicated riders remained true to their marque, repairing and eventually restoring their mounts. Brand loyalty among Indian Motorcycle enthusiasts has become legendary, but this is not merely because of badge loyalty. The differences between Indians and Harleys are partly aesthetic—Indians showcased unlimited color choices (they were, after all, owned by a paint company), and they featured a more fluid and streamlined form. In addition to aesthetics, though, the differences between Indians and Harleys have also always been functional—the embodied practice of riding them is very distinct.

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of loyal enthusiasts, one that remains vibrant to this day. For Indian enthusiasts, this initially meant simply continuing to ride their motorcycles but, as years passed and parts aged and wore, just riding became less simple. Maintenance led to repair, and repair led to restoration.

In the 1950s, as Indian stopped making new bikes, motorcyclists across the United States were developing and formalizing an interest in bikes that were old—as all sorts of mechanical things made the transitions from working to worn and from worthless to worthy, the mid-twentieth century saw the emergence of enthusiast groups and the restoration of all sorts of mass-produced mechanical things (see, e.g., Revill 2012). For motorcycles, a group of New England enthusiasts, led in part by Ted Hodgdon, a former Indian employee, founded the Antique Motorcycle Club of America (for motorcycles at least thirty-five years old), helping connect a national network of enthusiasts.7 As we will see, once motorcycle restoration commenced, it followed, in a time-condensed fashion, the path already long-since established by art restoration (see earlier) insofar as early restorations involved cosmetic procedures (cleaning old paintings, repainting an old motorcycle) and modernizing the objects (reworking an altar piece with newer iconography or replacing an Indian front end with an aftermarket one; on art see Conti [2007]).

For Indians, when restorations began, people like Pierce (in southern California) strove to stock as many parts as possible. This was important because of the tangible materiality of the parts themselves (well-made and durable), underlain by Indian’s own decision to make most parts interchangeable. So if, in the 1950s, you blew up the motor on your 1939 Chief, a surplus World War II Chief engine from Pierce could serve as organ donor. Not technically the correct engine (your frame and engine numbers would no longer match, and because Indian engine numbers are encoded with their year of manufacture, the few who were concerned, would, with a careful eye, know that the engine was not original), but your bike would be back on the road. In the 1950s and 1960s, restoration chiefly involved keeping something running rather than meticulously returning something to its original “stock” condition; changes like swapping in a later motor mattered little. The ethics and aesthetics were those of the time.

By the late 1960s and early 1970s, though, stashes of old parts were no longer enough to keep bikes running, and Indian enthusiasts and maker mechanics like Bob Stark (in Orange County, California) had begun sourcing some renewable parts8 by cleverly adapting existing parts made for other vehicles. They were also beginning attempts at reproductions of renewable parts no longer available—like head- and taillight glass and floorboard rubber. Enough old Indians were now on the road, with enough problems with broken taillights and worn-out floorboard rubber, that makers like Stark could profitably reproduce certain relatively easy-to-make parts.

By the early 1970s, growing Indian enthusiasm led to increasing Indian making: Shops emerged (like Stark’s Starklite Cycle originally located in Anaheim, California, and Ken Young and Sons in Long Beach, California) specializing in Indian motorcycle restorations. Other shops around the country had stayed with Indians and had themselves made the shift from repair to restoration. All of these shops built their expertise working on bikes that were already “vintage,” providing their services to customers who wanted to ride bikes that were not new but old. Those customers grew into a varied group: Some had the expertise to work on their own bikes and came in for parts only, others came for service and repair, and still others bought bikes restored, serviced, and repaired by others—the enthusiasm was expanding beyond just riders to collectors.

Initially, those collectors were motorcyclists—riders simply began collecting the bikes they liked (in many cases just cheap “used” bikes) and stretching those interests to older and older motorcycles. Riders, racers, and mechanics became collectors—like legendary desert racer, stuntman, and Sherman Oaks, California, Triumph dealer Bud Ekins.9 Ekins amassed a huge collection of antique motorcycles—considered by the 1980s the most valuable motorcycle collection in America—and Ekins rode the bikes (Starr 2008; American Motorcycle Association n.d.). Once a few notable riders began collecting, the bug spread: Another Angeleno, 1960s side-car racer Mike Parti, became one of the most well-known antique motorcycle restoration specialists in the United States and established a collection of meticulously restored antique bikes himself (many of them Indians)—inspired by his friend Ekins. Antique motorcycle restoration, like other forms of enthusiastic endeavor, spread via enthusiasts and linked professionals forming a closely connected community.

These early rider-restorers relied on stocks of “new old stock” (NOS) parts—original manufacturer’s parts never used, sometimes still in the original packaging. Even today it remains possible to buy new original parts for an Indian. NOS, however, has never been a reliable parts source, always just luck: the kismet of a
swap-meet find, of talking a collector out of a part he had kept for years, or of finding a Harley rider who had some Indian parts. This was a tenuous supply chain, one that by the 1970s was beginning to be replaced first by the adaptability of other parts and eventually by parts reproduction—demand for restored motorcycles would be, by the early twenty-first century, great enough to reward the investment.

As an example, the distinctive-looking mechanical brake-light switch that Indian used from 1934 to approximately 1940 also fit many automobiles of the period. By the 1950s, however, hydraulic brake systems had supplanted the need for mechanical switches and the parts were no longer available new. Stocks of old ones depleted, and by the 1970s no one could find, or had even seen, an available original Indian brake-light switch. So “universal” switches (that fit many models of cars and motorcycles) were commonly used—they were not “correct” but they worked. It was not until 2005 that an exacting reproduction brake-light switch was made. As Indian enthusiasm grew, capabilities for restoration grew as well, and tastes in the ethics and aesthetics of restoration altered accordingly.

Over time, the availability of skilled mechanics and makers, along with old stock and eventually reproduced parts, led to the current situation: Today very few parts are truly not available—with the advent of eBay (which, by the turn of the twenty-first century created a worldwide venue for used parts; R. M. Ellis and Haywood 2006; DeLyser and Greenstein 2015) and parts remanufacturers, it is now possible to build a completely new-made, but “old,” Indian motorcycle from parts. Across the United States and around the world, though, Indian enthusiasts continue to restore and ride original bikes. In the next section, we detail the restoration biographies of three Indians, showing how the material agency of the bikes and their parts is culturally situated in the biography of their restorer and the times, place, and community of enthusiasts in which he restored them. That, in turn, reveals the love and devotion that restoration commands.

Three Indians and Three Different Approaches to Restoration

A 1937 “Sport Scout”: Restoring a Complete Bike in the 1970s

The enthusiasm for restoration typically begins with an intimate geography, and an emotional–material bond. For some, it begins in the home, with a father’s car, or a father–son project (machine restoration is, and always has been, overwhelmingly gendered male; see Dannefer 1980; Haring 2007; Baime 2014; DeLyser and Greenstein 2015). For others, restoration is spark ignited; material intimacy can just as well occur in public. So it was with Paul.

In the late-1960s, Paul, then in junior high school, happened on Ekins’s shop and that collection of antique bikes. Allured, he started hanging out—being around things is a common way in to enthusiasms. One day in 1973 a customer came in riding a 1937 Indian Chief—Paul saw a streamlined bike with swooping fenders and rounded fuel tanks that looked like it would go. This was the first Indian he remembers seeing, and when the man kick-started the bike to leave, the combination of the ratcheting kick-starter sound and the spinning, whirring starter gears entranced him—for some people the very materiality of machinery is powerfully compelling. Paul was eighteen and decided immediately that he wanted a (then) thirty-five-year-old “antique” Indian. That was it. He had landed in a world of enthusiasts and makers, a community both local and beyond local, all of whom shared interests and many of whom were openly willing to help each other simply because of the machines (see Warren and Gibson 2011; Geoghegan 2013; Thomas, Harvey, and Hawkins 2013; DeLyser and Greenstein 2015).

To have an Indian, Paul knew that because of his limited means he would have to start at the bottom, with a nonrunning, unrestored bike he would have to learn to restore, ride, and maintain. He regularly checked the Los Angeles Times classifieds. Long before the Internet, local papers were the primary source for antique and vintage motor vehicle sales—except at the highest end (where money breeched distance through auction sales and vehicle locators)—the geographies of antique and vintage vehicles were then considerably more local. One Sunday Paul saw an ad for a 1937 Indian. As he arrived at the address, others were leaving: “Don’t bother!” they said. The bike must be sold, he thought, but asked why. “It’s a Scout,” they replied. Scouts were the smaller, sportier Indians. The larger Chiefs had always been more desirable. But the young Paul, inexperienced with Indians, was unaware of this distinction—budding restorers often do not know what they are getting themselves into. All he saw was the streamlined form he had admired so much in Ekins’s shop.

The bike, nearly complete, bore the marks of its travails: no paint (some parts were primered red,
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others just rusty), no seat, rotten tires, the floorboards were destroyed, and it had been in a fire. Having spent years as a “bobber,” it was missing its front fender and had only part of its rear fender. And it did not run. It was mostly together, though, assembled as a complete bike. The seller asked $450—significant money for a teenager in 1974, so Paul worked at a minimum-wage summer job to repay a loan from his younger brother: Motorcycle restoration, like other enthusiasms, involves a myriad of commitments; this financial sacrifice was Paul’s first—over time, commitment and sacrifice would build into devotion.

It was a bold acquisition, one disparaged by friends: “It’ll never run.” As is characteristic of enthusiasts, though, the insults of unbelievers serve not as setback but inspiration—a nascent devotion in itself. Paul set determinedly to work. Looking up the engine numbers revealed the bike to be a 1937 Sport Scout—the “boy racer” model of its day. Asking after parts, he learned of Young in Long Beach. The bike needed a front fender—this was the chopper era, when it was simply de rigueur to remove the front fender and build a chopper—but Young was ultimately able to supply a correct fender. Paul’s bike was becoming more complete, and more original, helped by period donor parts. Motorcycle restoration involves material sacrifices: For one motorcycle to live, others wind up forever parted out.

Young led Paul to Stark, whose Starklite Cycle (by then in Fullerton, California) restored Indians and supplied both new and old parts. The close connections among Indian enthusiasts also led Paul to Pierce, who had just sold his Indian shop lock, stock, and barrel—along with his enormous cache of NOS parts—to Charlie Mathre.11 From all of these fellow enthusiasts Paul acquired the needed parts and began to learn the skills required in motorcycle restoration.

It took about one year for Paul to restore the Sport Scout, albeit not to a condition that would today warrant the label restored. The bike had been radically altered in the 1950s, “bobbing” the motorcycle by removing the front fender and rear fender tip which Paul changed but also changing the cylinders to later, better cooling military-surplus cylinders and narrowing the handlebars for a racier look—two modifications Paul left intact as part of the bike’s biography: Although restoration favors “stock” condition, restorers, in decisions both aesthetic and ethical, may seek instead to draw forward period material adaptations.

The bike now also had new tires (reproduction), and new fenders (old parts), along with new paint and pinstripe—its black color and gold stripe Paul based on the little original paint left, another common practice in restoration (Dannefer 1980). Because restorers seek to return things as close to their original states as possible, changing the color can constitute aesthetic and ethical violations of material integrity.

There were many other parts Paul merely sanitized: He rechromed some parts but was able to simply polish others, achieving a look not of showroom newness but of beloved ridden-ness. As a novice, he made some mistakes: The oil pump should have been unpolished nickel plate but, not knowing that, Paul had it chromed and polished—restoration, as a learned practice, involves errors. These can be expensive and embarrassing, but in the 1970s few appreciated such details, even within antique-motorcycle circles: In 1976 Paul won an award for “best unrestored” motorcycle at a local show—despite the mistakes, and although the bike had many parts recently added and several others that were nonstock, his careful efforts gained the bike the appearance of a very original, well-ridden motorcycle.

As with many antique vehicles (DeLyser and Greenstein 2015), the Sport Scout came with paperwork, in this case the original California title from 1943 and a registration card from 1951. These revealed that the bike had first been registered in Minnesota, then traded in to a Los Angeles dealer, and purchased, in 1943, by one of the mechanics, Julian Doty. Restorers are typically interested in the histories of their vehicles (Dannefer 1980; DeLyser and Greenstein 2015), so Paul tracked Doty to an automobile repair shop in West Hollywood and rode there. Two men appeared and the younger one, seeing the bike said, “Hey, look, it’s an Indian motorcycle!” to which the older man replied, “That’s my Indian motorcycle”—instantly recognizing the very bike he’d bought in 1943 and ridden for fifteen years. From that moment until Doty’s death more than thirty years later, Paul and Doty remained in contact—enthusiasms like Indian motorcycle restoration foster strong community–material bonds.

Doty revealed some of the Sport Scout’s intriguing secrets. The side stand, for example, typically cast with the letters I-N-D-I-A-N, on this bike read simply “India.” That, Doty explained, was from an accident: The side stand had been run over and broken; when Doty welded it back together, the N disappeared. Although side stands were one of the first Indian parts to be reproduced, it remains that way to this day: Even injuries can be considered historically or culturally significant and therefore worthy of retaining. Restorers
are often sensitive to the histories of the machines they restore—beyond technical accuracy, they validate the materials’ life experiences.

Not everyone appreciated Paul’s efforts, however. In the aesthetics of Indian restoration in the late 1970s it was wrong to do it right—because Paul had not chromed the wheel rims, front end, or handlebars but had painted them black, as on original bikes, some said of his Scout with disdain, “You ought to see that guy’s bike: It’s all black!” Partly this was because Indian, owned by DuPont, offered custom paint and plating—by paying extra you could buy an Indian in any color(s) imaginable and with many different plating options and, although few paid that extra money during the Depression, when the bikes were restored in the 1970s, restorers indulged their contemporary tastes of what an antique motorcycle should or could look like. In the 1960s and 1970s, the shiny-bright syndrome dominated—restorers commonly added chrome highlights and used shiny (rather than drab) olive paint on military bikes to “upgrade” them, making them more attention getting—and most Indian restorations were comparatively inauthentic. It took the patient, individual efforts of restorers to change the aesthetics (and ethics) of restoration.

Restoration, like other practices of making, has never been static; it is instead an embodied craft learned and polished, honed and shaped within the lifeworlds of makers themselves (Warren and Gibson 2014; Patchett 2015). Today, more than forty years after Paul bought and restored the Sport Scout, it shows even more scars of its life experiences. With its period adaptations, restoration mistakes, and decades of hard road miles, it would today not be seen as a meticulously restored bike—it remains an artifact of its time(s), and Paul still rides it (Figure 1).

A 1939 World’s Fair “Chief”: Building and Restoring a “Basket Case” in the 2000s

By the turn of the twenty-first century, Indian restoration had changed considerably: The vast inventories of NOS parts were mostly depleted, but with a stronger market for vintage motorcycles, parts remanufacturers had stepped into the void. Because more people were restoring Indians, bikes in what was by then termed “barn find” condition (unrestored but still together like the Sport Scout had been) were becoming vastly more expensive. At the same time, reproduced parts that could be used to complete a bike built from parts were becoming (although expensive) more readily available, and so “basket case” bikes that start their

Figure 1. 1937 Indian Sport Scout restored by Paul Greenstein in the 1970s. Photo by Dydia DeLyser. (Color figure available online.)
lives as a jumble of parts were more common and easier to complete.

Just such a basket case was Paul's 1939 Chief. It had begun in the mid-1990s as only a frame, the desired residue of a bout of buying, selling, and trading other motorcycles and parts. It was desired because by then Paul had already restored and kept two other Indians: The '39 would fill a gap in what was now becoming a collection—Paul's enthusiasm was growing with his restoration skills and, like the Indian enthusiasts who had inspired him (Ekins, Parti, Stark, and others), so was his collection.

Building a motorcycle from parts is neither cheap nor easy. Actually, it is generally more expensive and vastly more time consuming and requires much more intimate material expertise than buying a complete bike. For those (like devoted enthusiasts) able to stick with a project for many years, however, it can be more attainable because parts, labor, and expertise are acquired and paid for in hundreds of installments. For the '39, Paul spent a decade just accumulating the right parts, knowingly building a stash that would eventually make the Chief a viable project. Some parts were original: wheels, front fork, fuel tanks, glove box, handlebars, and the bulk of the engine and transmission. Others were reproduced: fenders, chain guard, front leaf spring, transmission internals, outer-primary case (covering the "primary chain" that drives the transmission and clutch), and expendables like tires.

Parts accumulation is itself a skilled undertaking: Because motorcycle companies were constantly innovating, different parts changed for different bikes at different times, and not all of that is documented (but see Hatfield 1995). For example, in 1939, Chiefs grew heavier, so Indian added more pieces to their leaf springs, and better suspension was advertised for that year. In 1939, Indian also changed to bakelite housings on their high-beam/low-beam switches—before and after that they used steel housings, something that they never advertised. Restorers, like other devoted enthusiasts, must become versed in all such details. As with many other forms of embodied and practiced knowledge, its acquisition is often unremarkable: Paul does not remember how he learned of the bakelite switch.

Restoration work, like other practices of making (Carr and Gibson 2016), is a form of skilled labor that grows with doing, with experience, and with interaction. By the time Paul built the '39 Chief, he was more skilled: On the Sport Scout he had to have someone else build the motor, but for the Chief he did nearly everything but the machining (for which he lacked the tooling) himself. These were skills initially acquired on other bikes and tested with skilled input from other restorers—in communities of enthusiasm skills can be shared among friends and graciously passed to younger generations (Warren and Gibson 2011).

By the early 1990s, the prices for Indians had increased dramatically, owing to purchases by high-profile buyers who, by their willingness to pay higher prices, raised market values. This, in turn, kicked an already-burgeoning parts reproduction market into high gear. For example, once original outer-primary cases (with Indian-script logo cast into the metal) became difficult to find at any price, and once the values of Indians had increased, it became worthwhile to reproduce expensive, nonrenewable parts like outer primaries.

Globalization was an extra stimulus: Lower labor costs in developing countries led to increased profits for parts reproducers and increased diversity of parts—absent the original U.S. factory, most reproduction Indian pistons are now made in Taiwan, and most cylinders are made in India. Outsourcing of manufacturing exists even in the comparatively tiny antique-parts-reproduction industry, and these foreign-made parts are today available to restore "American" motorcycles.

Even with reproduced parts, though, restoration demands patience. In restoration, even if everything goes smoothly, even if no problems or corrections arise, everything—absolutely everything—must be taken apart, put together in mock up, taken apart again, and reassembled again at least once. Restoration of a basket case means creating a bike from parts that had never been mated together before, and this introduces material challenges.

For example, on Paul's '39 Chief, at first assembly the front wheel was a quarter-inch off center. Dismayed, he assembled, disassembled, and reassembled it five times trying to make it line up; each time it got closer but eventually no room was left for improvement. Whether or not the wheel was that way originally, it will always be that way now. Indians, although made in a factory on an assembly line, were still basically handcrafted one by one; therefore, the parts for one will not always readily fit another. That problem is exacerbated with reproduction parts. With a basket case, still more problems arise, and restoration becomes even more challenging. The devotions of restoration include persistence through frustration; restoration of a basket-case bike calls for even more.
Some restoration decisions, however, are aesthetic—these require experience with historical styles and tastes. Motorcycle companies like Indian offered options in plating and paint and, when original paint and plating are not known (or not desired), restorers can decide for themselves (see also Dannefer 1980). For example, wheels could have the rims painted, cadmium plated, or chrome plated. Although many restorers have favored the blue-brightness of chrome, in the Depression most actual bikes would have had factory-standard wheels, so Paul opted for that—painted rims and cad-plated spokes. This was also an aesthetic choice: The black rims would look recessive, and the minor brightness of the cadmium could draw attention to the spokes, but they would not divert attention from the paint on the rest of the bike. In 1939, Indian (then still owned by DuPont) offered a one-year-only two-tone paint scheme (in any two colors) to commemorate the New York World’s Fair—because Paul’s original paint colors were not known, he chose the one-year paint job. The combination of an elegant paint scheme (in green and cream) with little bright work was intended to lend elegance to the streamlined forms of the bike’s tanks and fenders. These aesthetic choices were made just once but considered over decades of expertise and observation.

Restoring a motorcycle as an enthusiast (rather than for profit) is a labor of love and devotion. Labor costs are not recouped because they do not need to be. The extraordinary investment of time, energy, and skill is made for the love of the machine. For those financially at the lower end of the spectrum, enthusiasm-based restoration, rather than paid-professional restoration, might be the only way to own and ride antique motorcycles. The ’39 Chief, at this writing, is nearly finished, awaiting not skill but the money required to finish it: $100 for a primary chain, $300 for a clutch—materiality, even in odds and ends, can slow a restoration project’s completion, but devotion will see it through (Figure 2).

A 1910 Indian: Restoring a Bike to Look Unrestored

In 1998, the Guggenheim Museum’s exhibit “The Art of the Motorcycle” rocketed antique motorcycles from the world of riders and enthusiasts to that of wealthy, newly minted collectors—those who could afford to have their bikes restored and even over-restored. This fueled a cosmic pissing contest where motorcycles became more and more authentically, meticulously restored. Once such perfection was achieved, there was no farther to climb up but down,
and the collectible market opened up to include unrestored, original bikes.

Although in principle anything can be restored to look new, by the end of the twentieth century, more people began to appreciate the fact that a motorcycle (and anything else) can only be “original” once. Because complete, unmolested, original bikes in good condition are less obtainable than restored bikes, their very rarity stoked the market, escalating the prices and desirability of unrestored motorcycles. The final frontier and a sea change across the board.

That interest in unrestored motorcycles set the stage for a different kind of restoration. In the late 1990s, Paul acquired as a gift a pitted and thoroughly rusted early Indian frame and front end that had been found by another enthusiast in a desert-ghost-town trash dump. An early bike was just what Paul wanted, but how to restore a bike this early and this far gone? The gift itself was generous—parts so old are scarce and valuable—but the giver exacted a promise: a commitment to restore the bike that took money (restoration would cost thousands of dollars) and time (it took nearly ten years), along with skill and devotion. It was a project that would challenge and extend Paul’s knowledge and abilities in new ways—involving new forms of making and different kinds of interactions with materials.

Careful reconnaissance revealed the remnant of the bike to be from 1910, so Paul proceeded, as before, to accumulate appropriate parts. This was the era of Indian’s dominance, but it was also a time before “modern” motorcycles: 1910 Indians have pedal starters and no clutch. Because these bikes are today rare, and not very rideable in traffic, fewer parts are made for them. The scarce original parts are so rare that even continu-ual eBay searches (now so significant as to be routine; R. M. Ellis and Haywood 2006; DeLyser and Greenstein 2015) turned up little.

To source parts—like engine, transmission, and magneto but also wheels, fenders, and handlebars—Paul fell back on old-fashioned methods (see also R. M. Ellis and Haywood 2006): haunting antique-motorcycle swap meets. There he could talk to sellers of parts he did not need, asking after parts he did need—people with large parts stashes rarely list everything online, so swap meets bring about not only connections to parts but also connections to other enthusiasts and their parts. Parts acquisition, particularly for something this old and this rare, is a labor-intensive skilled effort that can still not be accomplished entirely online. It involves building connections to other enthusiasts and always simple good fortune.

As often befalls a restoration project (DeLyser and Greenstein 2015), though, not all parts could be found. Some, it seemed, were made from unobtainium. To devoted restorers this is no dead end, it just means that those parts will have to be painstakingly fabricated—in this case, by Paul just for this bike—like chain guard, tail stand, front wheel, rear fender, fender braces, and even rivets. In the case of the chain guard, none were for sale—either original or reproduction—nor was one available for Paul to borrow from another enthusiast and copy. Looking at old photographs and measuring existing parts, he realized that the part was made from regular geometric shapes and that by extrapolating from the photographs he could reproduce it himself from sheet steel. Still, material obduracy intervened: His first effort failed (too small because the engine, which he did not yet have, was not in the frame as a reference), the second was closer; the third finally fit and is today mated to the bike. Making parts without a pattern is a trial-and-error process that cannot be successfully completed without devotion.

Once Paul had accumulated a sizable number of parts, questions of just how to restore the bike emerged. The rust was, on the one hand, not desirable, but on the other, it gave the bike character that revealed its life history. By the early 2000s, that kind of “patina” was beginning to become a positive attribute, something not to be undone in restoration but instead carefully retained. Not every part would come with such a patina, however, so Paul considered leaving frame and front end rusted and painting parts bought new (like the fuel tank and rear fender). When other parts (like a rear wheel and a front fender) turned up in similarly rusted condition, though, Paul instead made a radical aesthetic and ethical decision to restore the entire bike as if it had been found in the desert, distressing or painting as distressed even parts newly made.

Except for the repro tires (a common exception even on unrestored bikes), the 1910, finished for its 100th birthday, today looks every bit its age: The original and restored wheels and fenders are indistinguishable in their rusty luster. In 2010 this was unusual in motorcycle restoration, but by 2017 such practices of antiquing had spurred interest in other areas. The aesthetics are those of our time as we witness the rise in value and popularity of unrestored, original antique vehicles (Keno and Keno 2010; Simeone and Collier 2012; Preston 2014).

The ethical questions arise when such interventions remain undisclosed—as in art forgery and other forms of fakery, ethical violation manifests not at point of
creation but at point of presentation or sale (Laurier 1998; Woodward 2015). For Paul the very artistry of his restoration efforts calls him to point to the distinctions—Can you tell which fender is original and which one Paul made? For him, the distressed appearance of the new materials marks not a forgery but an artistic achievement of his restoration craft—the interactions of materials with skill, knowledge, aesthetics, and emotion.

The 1910 also represents another transition experienced by enthusiasts: from rider (user) to collector. Because this clutchless (and nearly brakeless) motorcycle is challenging (dangerous) to ride in modern traffic, Paul restored the bike not primarily to ride, and never to sell, but just to have. Its life, through restoration, has a changed social value and a changed social role (see Gregson, Metcalfe, and Crewe 2009). As with other enthusiasts before him, Paul restored this bike in devotion to his enthusiasm—for the love of Indian Motorcycles (Figure 3).

**Conclusion: The Devotions of Restoration**

Restoring antique motorcycles will not save the world, nor was manufacturing them in the first place ever so intended (for a parallel with railways, see Revill 2012; with surfboards, see Warren and Gibson 2014). Nevertheless, the kinds of creative practices of making that restoration calls for, and the devotion that restoration by enthusiasts demands, play an important role. In Carr and Gibson’s (2016) words, “Rather than becoming increasingly marginalized and redundant, the ability to work with materials, and to make” and, we would add restore, “repair or repurpose physical things, are vital skills for a [volatile] future” (298). In the Anthropocene world of resource scarcity and environmental uncertainty, in a deskilling globalized economy and a throwaway society, enthusiasm-based motorcycle restoration cannot be outsourced, deskilled, automated, or even extinguished. It flourishes as a place-based, embodied, community-engaged, and material-driven practice that knowingly and lovingly takes pieces of junk and turns them back into running antique motorcycles. This is what material devotion can do.

Exploring motorcycle restoration as a practice of enthusiasm-driven making shows how material objects are not static but are instead continuously becoming and how their becoming in turn, enacts social relations (Gregson, Metcalfe, and Crewe 2009)—the materiality of the motorcycles drives the bonds between

![Figure 3. 1910 Indian restored by Paul Greenstein in time for its 100th birthday. Photo by Dydia DeLyser. (Color figure available online.)](image-url)
enthusiasts and between enthusiasts and bikes. Practices of making like motorcycle restoration enable “diverse social interactions, nurture skills, and quietly harness capacities for collaboration, adaptation, generosity, and sharing” (Warren and Gibson 2011, 2720)—they build community. The objects we have studied do something (Zhang and Crang 2015): The very materiality of these bikes has drawn around them a community of dedicated enthusiasts who ride and restore Indians. For Indian enthusiasts, this is a sensuous materialism (Zhang and Crang 2015)—these objects are loved (Geoghegan and Hess 2015).

Looking closely at motorcycle restoration dispels the false binary between a feminized, community-engaged emotional labor of crafting and a hypermasculine solo skilled labor of machine restoration (Warren and Gibson 2014; McRobbie 2016). Indian motorcycle restoration flourishes because of the community connections—support, instruction, and parts supply—and the emotions—love and devotion—that have fostered it from the beginning.

Craft making like motorcycle restoration is easy to romanticize—for its creativity; for its focus on the analogue in the era of the digital; for its use of old materials, tooling, and techniques; for the artisanal skill and even authenticity purportedly imbued in craft/made items; and for the very promise the practices of making portend for a future fraught with urban, environmental, and labor uncertainty (Crawford 2009; Charney 2011a; Gauntlett 2011; Miller 2011; C. Anderson 2012; Bond, DeSilvey, and Ryan 2013; Causey 2013; Ingold 2013; Luckman 2013, 2015; Gibson 2016; Carr 2017)—but this is not wrong. Making is romantic: As we have shown, making practices like motorcycle restoration reveal labors of love.

Love, however, can be fickle—it is not always sustained over time—so restoration commands more. In Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance, Pirsig (1974) insisted that motorcycle repair, beyond tools, takes gumption—a shrewd and spirited resourcefulness (see also Crawford 2009). But for motorcycles repair is ordinary. Motorcycle restoration, however, is extraordinary. It therefore exacts demands beyond gumption and even beyond love. Motorcycle restoration exacts devotion: love, care, loyalty, and attention, all sustained over time.

This means that enthusiasms like motorcycle restoration are more than mere “hobbies,” for the devotions of restoration by enthusiasts mobilize a politics of relating to things. As the politics, aesthetics, and geographies of restoration continue to change, and as restoration craft becomes more and more exacting, professionals promise those with proper financial means “forensic” efforts and even “unprecedented accuracy” (Cooper 2015). Such efforts will always be limited, though, by money, time, and the professional’s timely knowledge of each different and unique machine. Restoration by and for enthusiasts, on the other hand, faces entirely different limitations: Vastly smaller budgets slow progress, but lifetimes of accrued devotion remove limits on time and expand material knowledge and skill—effectively reversing globalized deskilling to favor place-based and community-engaged practices of making even, or perhaps especially, when facing an uncertain future (see Carr and Gibson 2016).

In a world of runaway resource consumption and throwaway production, the ability to turn junk back into valuable and usable machines should, perhaps, be cherished (Warren and Gibson 2014). More than sixty years after Indian stopped manufacturing motorcycles, thousands of antique Indians remain vibrant—and running—today. Looking at the practices of Indian motorcycle restoration reveals the power of devotion as devoted enthusiasts—loyal to their marque and its very materiality, skilled craftspeople with deep historical and material expertise, embedded in communities of enthusiasm even when laboring alone—can make anything, for restoration by enthusiasts is limited only by devotion. Restoration’s labors are both arduous and arduorous, but by harnessing its devotion, ultimately, you can ride.

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Notes

1. Scholars of making are careful to avoid a commonly misused binary where small-scale artisanal production is opposed to large-scale manufacturing.
2. See http://www.history.com/shows/american-restoration (last accessed 24 June 2016).
3. See also Kirsch and Mitchell (2004) for a Marxist critique of human–nature–technology relations—we here lack space to engage that discussion fully.
4. They drew the name "Indian" from an existing bicycle line. U.S. companies have long used American Indian names and terms for their brands and products, notably in automobiles: GM's Pontiac (1926–2009), Ford's Thunderbird (1955–2005), and Jeep's Cherokee (1974–2002, 2014–present). Although sports teams (professional and amateur) have faced derision and protest for practices seen as culturally insensitive and some teams have changed their names, others endure, projecting these names as symbols of a proud heritage (e.g., the Seattle Seahawks and Atlanta Braves). Whether the names endure (or should endure) is a different matter from the cultural context in which such names, Indian Motocycle included, originated. Cultural insensitivity and exploitation in naming practices was (and remains today) not unusual in the United States—in the 1920s the Jordan Motor Car Company made both the Playboy and the Tomboy, and in the 1920s and 1930s, Studebaker made the President, the Commander, and its cheapest model, the Dictator, with the last discontinued in 1937 for reasons obvious (see Collins 2013) — but it is beyond the scope of this article to fully engage the U.S. cultural politics surrounding use of Indigenous names.
5. See http://www.indianmotorcycle.com/en-us (last accessed 20 January 2017).
6. Today motorcycles feature left-hand-handlbar-mounted clutch, right-hand throttle, and foot shift—riding any antique bike requires discrete, learned and embodied practices.
7. See http://www.antiquemotorcycle.org/index.php?page=mission (last accessed 24 June 2016).
8. Renewable parts are those, like spark plugs, that require regular replacement.
9. It was Ekins, in the most famous motorcycle stunt in film history in 1963’s The Great Escape, who, posing as Steve McQueen’s character, attempts to jump a motorcycle over two barbed-wire fences to escape from the Nazis. See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6zwW7iWink (last accessed 24 June 2016); and Ekins describing the stunt at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5xB81vgi204 (last accessed 24 June 2016).
10. One company, Kiwi Indian, of Riverside, California, does so. See http://www.kiwiindian.com/#/replica-overflow/c1ius (last accessed 24 June 2016).
11. What Mathre acquired besides parts was simply sitting on the shop floor: Burt Munro’s streamlined record-setter, a modified 1920 Scout later famous as “the World’s Fastest Indian” (from the eponymous film). Even a unique period motorcycle with a rich history like the World’s Fastest Indian is often spelled “relic-ing” or “relic-ing.”
12. Whether the names endure (or should endure) is a different matter from the cultural context in which such names, Indian Motocycle included, originated. Cultural insensitivity and exploitation in naming practices was (and remains today) not unusual in the United States—in the 1920s the Jordan Motor Car Company made both the Playboy and the Tomboy, and in the 1920s and 1930s, Studebaker made the President, the Commander, and its cheapest model, the Dictator, with the last discontinued in 1937 for reasons obvious (see Collins 2013) — but it is beyond the scope of this article to fully engage the U.S. cultural politics surrounding use of Indigenous names.
13. For example, Sylvester Stallone’s late-1980s high-priced purchase of a restored postwar Chief doubled the asking price for those bikes overnight.
14. Some Indian restorers have railed against foreign-made parts; however, often there is no other option; at other times, restorers, who buy from third parties, are not aware of the sources of their parts.
15. Over-restoration is a commonly used term for things that have been restored to a higher-quality state than original—for example, when an affordable car, like a Model A Ford, is given a paint job so fine, or so fancy, that this would not have existed on the original, cheaply painted car (see Dannefer 1980).
16. In vintage guitar circles, for example, “relic-ing” refers to recent attempts by guitar enthusiasts to re-create an older-style guitar from a newer one (in form, function, or both) or even to specifically mimic the wear on the known guitar of a famous player in a different, newer guitar. See http://www.guitarrelic.com/#/about-relic-ing/c42f (last accessed 24 June 2016); online the word is often spelled “relic-ing” or “relic-ing.”

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