

GM Sculptor Brings Passion to 2013 Buick Enclave

DETROIT - In the design world, improving a successful product can be a bigger challenge than starting with a clean sheet. The Buick Enclave, the industry's top-selling three-row luxury crossover, also carries the weight of being the originator of the brand's current design philosophy.

For the new 2013 Enclave, designers evolved the vehicle's exterior by refining details while preserving the overall identity.

The 2013 Enclave delivers a high level of craftsmanship and comfort. The sculpted exterior design evolves the sophisticated elegance of the segment-leading crossover. The new exterior includes revised front and rear fascias, LED lighting, a new hood and black-chrome waterfall grille, integrated exhaust outlets, new wheel designs, and more monochromatic design elements than the current model.

Working with the nuances of a vehicle that had its best sales in its fifth year of existence fell to lead sculptor Nick Barkley and a design team. In addition to manipulating full-

scale clay models, much of Barkley's creative work is done in the digital space with three-dimensional modeling programs.

"Buicks have been some of the toughest work I've done because they are so sculptural," said Barkley, a General Motors designer for 12 years. "There are so many concave and convex forms. To make an organic, hand-shaped look show through the forms is both difficult and rewarding."

Asked to name the most-challenging element of the Enclave's design, Barkley immediately pointed to the traditional waterfall grille that went through countless iterations before a final form emerged that met both the design team's standards and manufacturing capabilities. The production part remains true to the earliest clay mockups.

Barkley is most proud of what he calls the "check mark" along the bottom of each headlamp and the recessed intersection in the fascia just below. "Designers start with two-dimensional sketches where surfaces aren't fully imagined. It's



General Motors lead sculptor Nick Barkley at his desk reviewing digital 3D modeling work for the 2013 Buick Enclave luxury crossover. Clay modeling is a professional skill at GM.

my job, and really my signature, to add surface quality and execute form and intersections in 3D. It's like completing a puzzle."

In his free time, Barkley uses his skills in a home studio to create life-size clay and wood sculptures inspired by works of iconic artists like Michelangelo and Bernini.

"My work at home is completely free of constraints and lets me work with my hands more, but I'd like to think my art benefits my work on car design," he said.

"Some cars I see seem to be designed around lines and the surfaces between them feel forced. Inspired by my art, I like to create vehicles that instead



2013 Buick Enclave lead sculptor Nick Barkley uses three-dimensional modeling programs and his hands at the General Motors Design studios to craft full-scale vehicle clay models. Meanwhile, at his home studio, pictured above, Barkley likes to create life-size clay and wood sculptures inspired by works of iconic artists.



At his home studio, pictured here, Barkley likes to create life-size clay and wood sculptures inspired by works of iconic artists like Michelangelo and Bernini. Clay modeling continues to be a professional skill used to develop future product at GM Design. Very often, sculptors like Barkley will create full-scale models out of clay for Design use.



Do-it-yourself home repair expert and "GMC Trade Secrets" celebrity Eric Stromer stands next to his 2012 GMC Sierra Hybrid pickup truck.

GMC Aims Products at 'Home Improvement' Market

DETROIT - Springtime is here, which means the hammers and shovels for do-it-yourself home improvement projects are coming out.

GMC officials point to home improvement as an ever-growing industry with an expected retail sales increase of nearly 4 percent in 2012 to \$269 billion, according to the Home Improvement Research Institute.

According to GMC officials, every GMC, from Terrain to Sierra HD, is capable of carrying the load - big or small - for a variety of home renovation projects.

"I've been a contractor forever so I wouldn't even consider a vehicle that can't fit plywood and other materials," said Eric Stromer, host of HGTV's "Over Your Head," do-it-yourself expert on "GMC Trade Secrets" and a GMC Sierra Hybrid driver.

"The crew cab is good for my kids, I can tow cement mixers and other equipment, and with it being a hybrid, it offers that capability with a lower carbon footprint."

With Sierra 1500 half-ton, 2500HD ¾-ton, and 3500HD 1-ton pickups, GMC offers a variety of cab layouts, bed lengths, engines, transmissions, and axle ratios.

Payload capacity is as much as 6,635 pounds and with the Duramax diesel's 765 lb-ft of torque, trailers weighing up to 23,000 pounds can be towed. According to the National Association of the Remodeling Industry, home addition projects that require heavy lumber, bulky insulation, and other materials are on the rise.

For the Acadia midsize crossover, which had its best

sales year ever in 2011 and will be significantly updated for 2013, do-it-yourself projects were part of the development process from the beginning.

At the core of the cargo area's development was the ability to accommodate a 4-foot-wide sheet of drywall or plywood. The second- and third-row seats fold forward to create a practical cargo space with a flat load floor for easy loading.

Healthy lifting movements were also considered when the load height was set at an average waist level. Inside, there's no deep well in the floor that would require excessive bending.

"I'm at the home improvement store all the time and I still haven't come across anything that won't fit in my Acadia," said Sue Eckel, vehicle chief engineer.

"I've slid the SmartSlide seats forward to fit small trees without tipping them over, and I've slid the second row rearward to put heavy pots securely on the floor. SmartSlide is all about that configurability."

SmartSlide is an industry-exclusive feature in GM crossovers, including Acadia, that allows one-handed adjustment of and access to the second- and third-row seats.

According to Eckel, "You can even slide the second row back enough to recline the front passenger seat fully to carry a ladder."

The Terrain small SUV, which gets a more powerful V6 and an upscale Denali model for 2013, offers similar versatility. Its Multiflex rear seats can be moved fore and aft nearly eight inches or folded flat in a 60/40 configuration to free up 63.9 cubic feet of cargo space.

For Yukon and Yukon XL

SUVs, the capability includes a third row of seats that's fully removable and a second row that tumbles forward with a single hand or push of a button with the available power fold-and-tumble second row seating.

An available power lift gate provides easy access to Yukon XL's segment-leading cargo volume of 137.4 cubic feet. The Yukon XL 3/4 ton, with its 6.0L Vortec V-8, can tow a trailer as heavy as 9,600 pounds.

And like Eric Stromer's Sierra, the fuel-efficient Yukon Two-Mode Hybrid is ideal for remodelers looking to lessen environmental impact through all phases of a project. It offers an EPA-estimated 20 mpg in city driving and 23 on the highway.

Years ago, GMC used to sponsor the home improvement show at Cobo Center in Detroit every spring, using GMC trucks as props and models.

Kettering Open House on May 19

FLINT - The technology being used in university laboratories will be on display at the spring open house at Kettering University on Saturday, May 19.

Lab tours are part of "Discover Kettering," an event that is free and open to the public from 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. that day.

Karen Full, Kettering's director of admissions, said the campus is ready to show high school and community college students and their families how to "learn more, experience more, and achieve more" with Kettering's experiential learning program.

"There is simply no substitute for experience in today's marketplace," she said.

"Kettering connects students to learning outside the classroom as early as their freshman year. And Kettering has some of the best engineering facilities available to undergraduates in the world and they'll be on display at Discover Kettering."

During lab tours, visitors will be able to see proton exchange membranes in the fuel cell lab; view life sciences and bio-engineering equipment; see a sensor in the signal analysis lab; and learn about robotics and more.

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