

Shop Showcase
with Janet Cheney
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Class Auto Center: An Aptly Named First Class Operation

Class Auto Center in Long Beach, California is aptly named—truly a first class operation. This 15,000 square foot shop stands out like a beacon to L.A. traffic on the 405 Freeway. The facility was built from the ground up in 1990 by owner **Ray Neveau**.

Neveau's first shop was a very small two-bay shop in a dead end alley in Long Beach, however his impeccable reputation brought customers to his door. **Erik Sumen** was a 'surfer' kid who loved cars and knew of Neveau's reputation, being very much in awe of him. Erik was fixing jet skis at home in his garage, when he found Ray Neveau in his little shop in the alley. Erik eagerly went to work for Ray as the 'donut boy.' Neveau then built Class Auto Center and their relationship has built this business to where it stands tall today.



The aluminum room at Class Auto Center in Long Beach

The 15 trained technicians at Class Auto Center have the best manufacturer certified equipment available for them. They exclusively use Celette, the only fully authorized unibody and frame structure repair system for high end European motor cars. They use the new Wielander-Schill Inverter Spot Welder.

Two down draft paint booths are in a separate building in a corner of the pie shaped lot, just a few feet from the production building. Two prep stations are in the same building as production. Lead painter, Miguel, is a stickler for detail and expects very high quality from himself and his team of four. They use Spies Hecker exclusively, and recently updated their waterborne technology to the new Spies Hecker Permahyd Hi Tec.

Class Auto has again taken a step towards exceptional quality and built their aluminum room in a completely separate building.

"We all take pride in what we do," says Sumen, "we have long term employees and have built a culture of working together." You could hear the friendly sound of agreement when walking through this shop. Sumen continues, "We are family oriented and sort things out so we can keep things simple in our employees lives." Class Auto has a principled core that makes it easy for everyone to follow protocol. "We follow repair manufacturers recommendations and do the repair right the first time," Sumen states with confidence.

This year, Sumen and Neveau are tackling a new challenge. They have opened *Global Collision Center*, located at V.W. of Garden Grove. This existing shop needed the business model, experience and enthusiasm of this team. The major remodel of this facility has brought it to the Class standard, although Global will not be a Certified facility. It will work on all makes and models.

There will be no Direct Repair Relationships, at this time, at this store. The book of business will be built from customer referrals and dealership relationships. They will maintain their commitment of superior quality and customer service that will follow them from Class Auto Center.

Global Collision is well equipped with a Chief Ez Liner, down draft spray booth and updated welding equipment. They will also use Spies Hecker waterborne Permahyd Hi-Tec. Miguel, the lead painter from Class Auto Center will oversee the paint department in the new shop, as well. This facility has

great curb appeal on a main thoroughfare in Garden Grove.

Class Auto Center is an active member of the California Autobody Association, participating in the Glendale Foothills Chapter. Erik Sumen also participates on the Government Committee for the Collision Industry Conference (CIC). Class Auto keeps its fans apprised with a Facebook page.

and it looks like there will be more social media for these shops in the future.

Inspiring confidence with the customer, their business card reads: 'Specializing in collision repair and cosmetic care of World Class automobiles.'



Class Auto Center in Long Beach

This unique, upscale repair facility does all the estimating, bookkeeping and management of the operation upstairs. As you walk into the hi-tech waiting room, customers are welcomed by a customer service representative and seated in a quiet and clean environment, while the business of running this business is done up stairs. Even parts are managed upstairs and moved by a freight elevator that ascends to the parts room and descends into a corner of the production area.

There are no Direct Repair Relationships with insurance companies at Class Auto Center. They have strong relationships with their dealership partners and take excellent care of their mutual customers. This shop pays close attention to all details and they have a high customer return rate.

Class Auto Center proudly has earned Manufacturer Certification from Mercedes Benz, Audi, Porsche and a Special Certification for the Nissan GT-



Erik Sumen outside the new Global Collision Center at VW of Garden Grove, CA

Aluminum repair is a condition of most Manufacturer's Certification. All aluminum repairs must be isolated and completed in a no-contamination envi-



The team at Class Auto Center

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