

## Cadillac Ranch

Travelling down Interstate 40 just outside of Amarillo on the Texas Panhandle, a traveler can look out over the dusty, flat wheat field and see a row of old graffiti-covered car bodies, stuck nose first into the dirt, looking like a row giant tilted Dominos. This is Cadillac Ranch, an American icon. The quirky construction is an artistic representation of the Golden Age of the American automobile.

In 1974, a San Francisco art collective called the Ant Farm approached eccentric millionaire Stanley Marsh 3—not III, which he finds pretentious—with an idea. They wanted to build a giant art piece on his land, along what was then the old Route 66. Marsh liked their concept and gave Chip Lord, Hudson Marquez, and Doug Michels the go-ahead.

The three artists scoured used car lots and junk yards all over Amarillo and within two weeks had what they were looking for: ten old Cadillacs and a spare made between 1949 and 1963. They paid about \$200 each for the dilapidated cars. Then they painted the Caddies a rainbow of bold colors—gold, sky blue, turquoise, and banana yellow.

With direction from the Ant Farm, a back hoe operator dug ten holes in the ground in one of Marsh's wheat fields and slipped a car into each hole. When complete, the cars were on end and in a line, noses buried down in the ground. They were placed to face west and were slanted in alignment with the angle of the pyramids in Egypt. The Cadillacs were placed according to the age of the model, leading off with a 1949 fastback Club Sedan and finishing with a 1963 Sedan de Ville.

In 1997, Marsh had Cadillac Ranch moved two miles west because he felt the encroaching city ruined the view of the art work. He told a reporter from USA Today, "We lost the horizon when the city moved out to it. It doesn't work unless the horizon's there." The placement and slant of the cars was perfectly replicated at its new location.

An icon in its own right, the Cadillac was selected for the art work because of its special place in American automotive history. Especially during the years represented, Cadillac was a symbol of status and affluence and was considered the world standard for engineering, dependability and style. By the time Cadillac Ranch was erected in 1974, the Caddie had lost some of its luster and gone out of favor.

Over the years, tourists have stripped the Cadillac Ranch cars down to their skeletons and the original paint is long gone under ever-growing layers of fresh graffiti. Cadillac Ranch was once painted pink in support of breast cancer research and another time,, when Ant Farm co-founder Doug Michels died, it was painted black.

Cadillac Ranch has become a legendary roadside attraction, given tribute by popular culture, including in a song by Bruce Springsteen called *Cadillac Ranch*, an episode of *King of the Hill*, the 2009 Brooks & Dunn music video for *Honky Ton Stomp*, Fortune and other magazines, and numerous television commercials throughout the world.