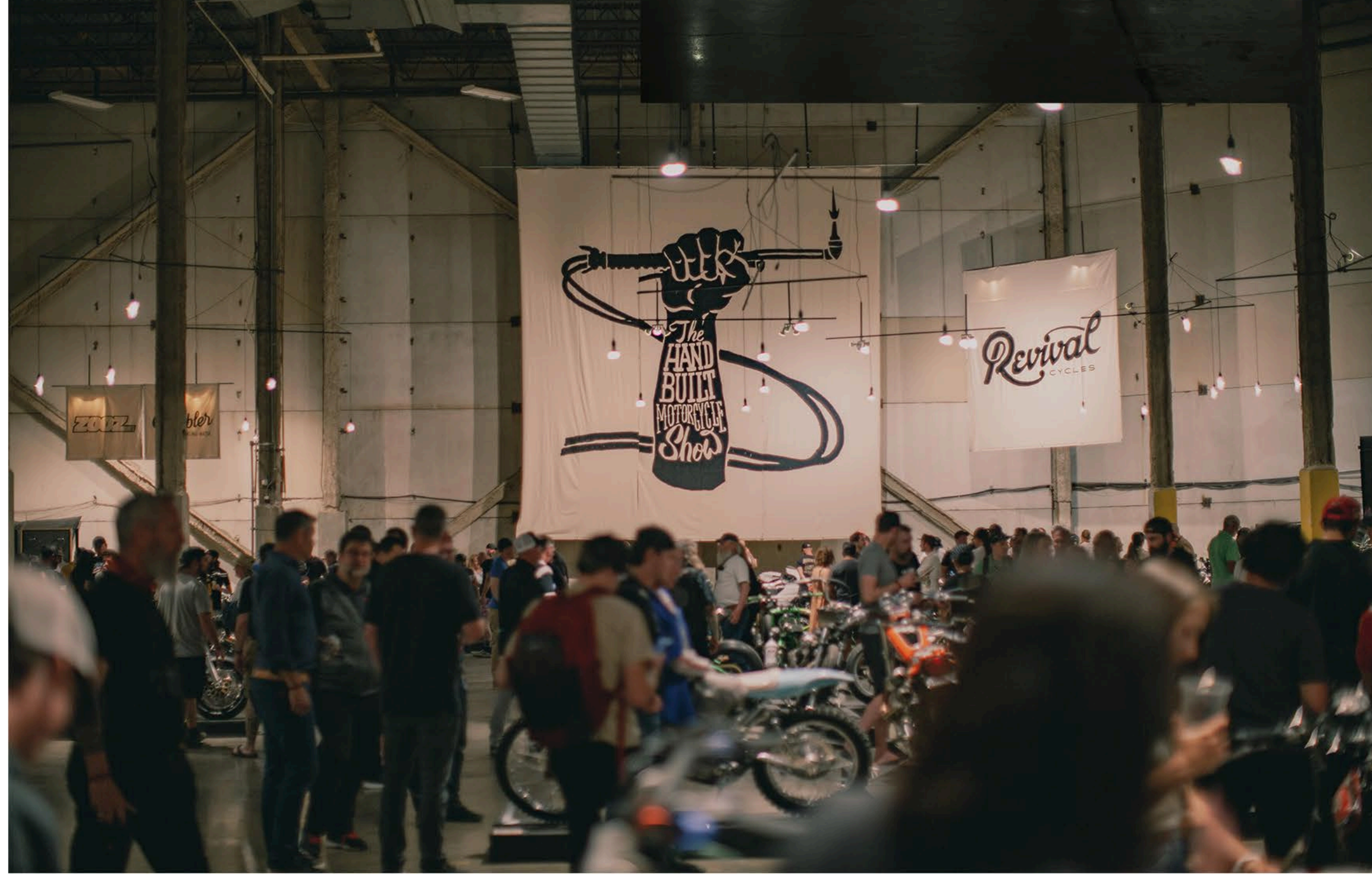
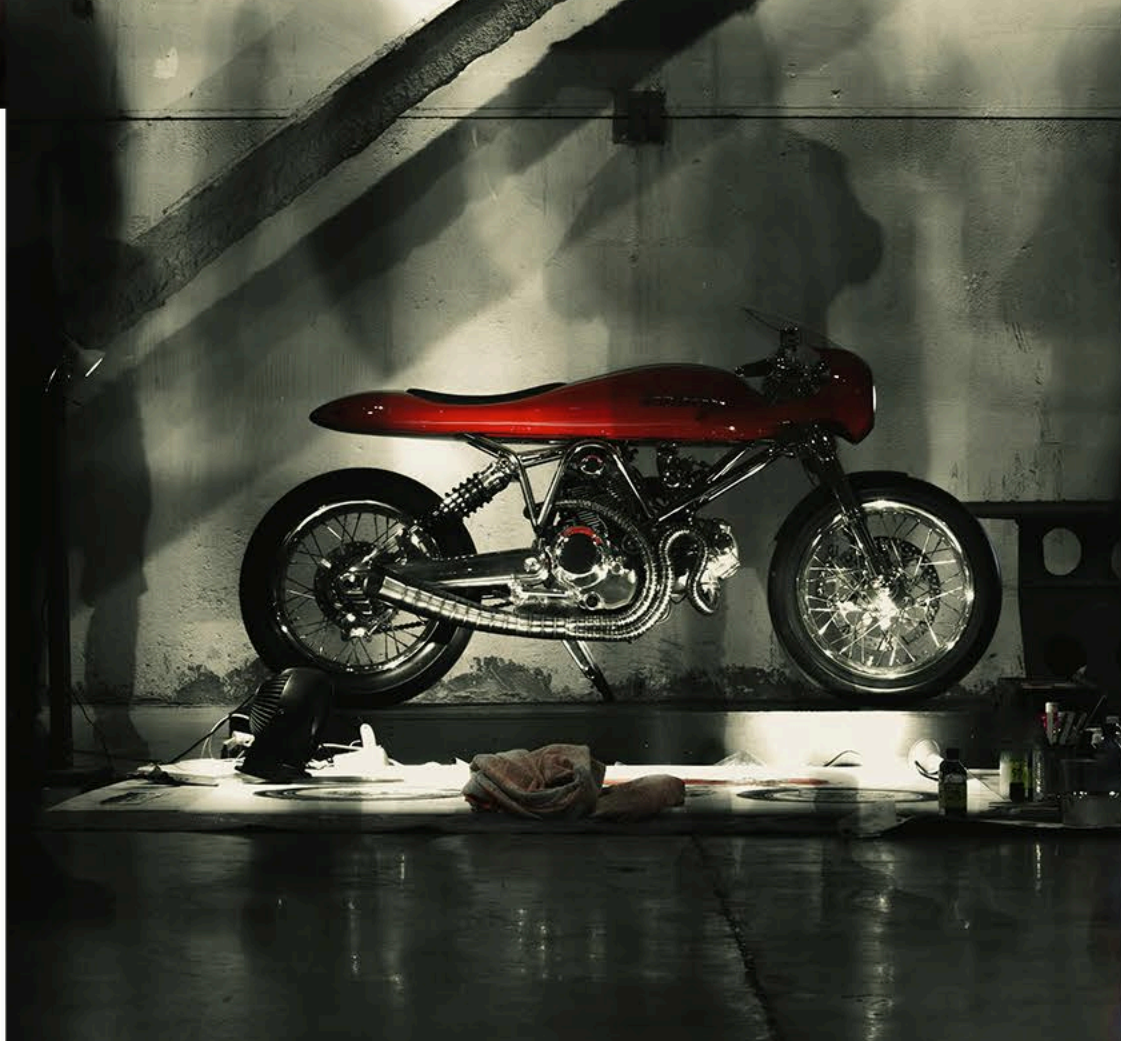
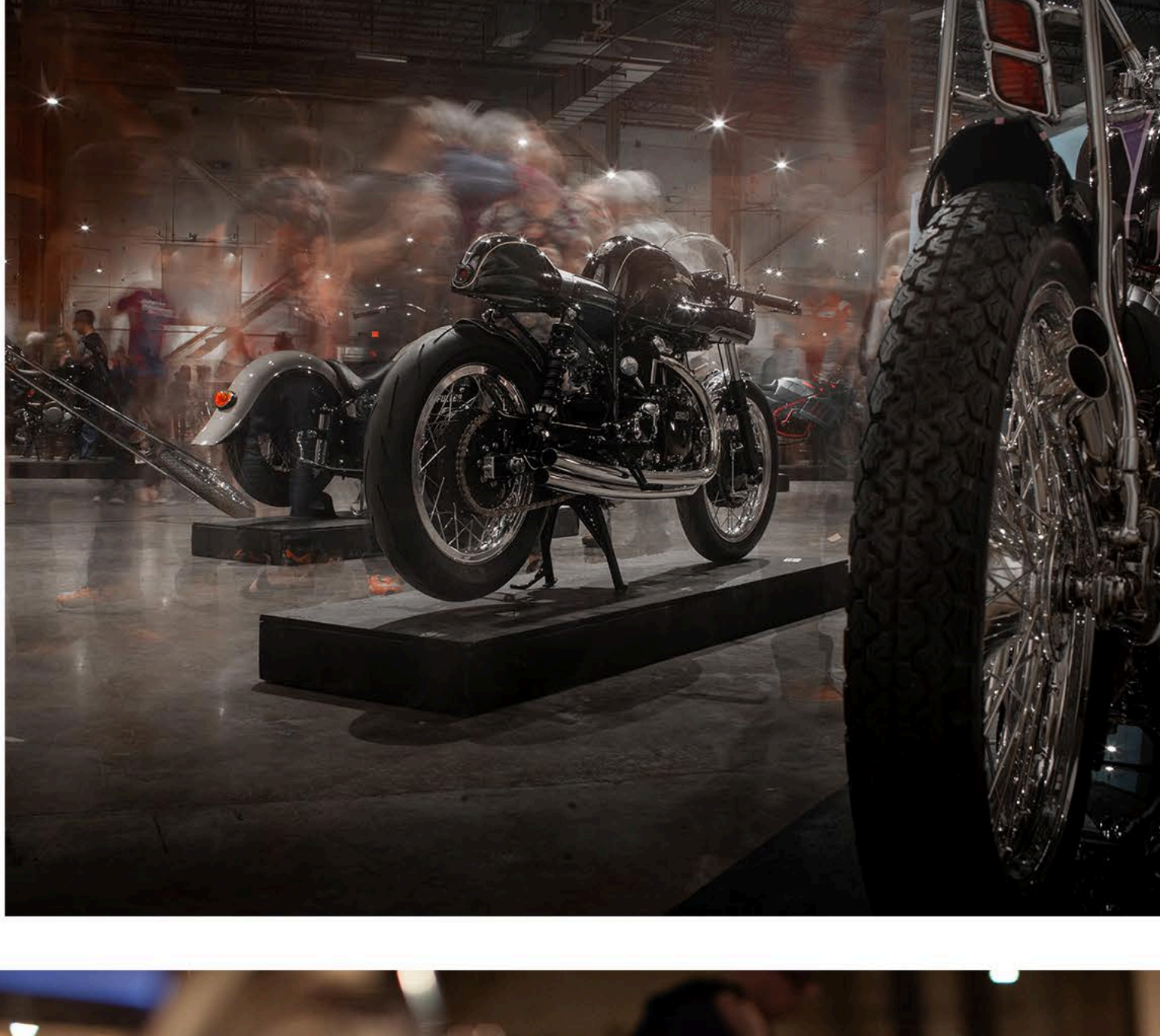


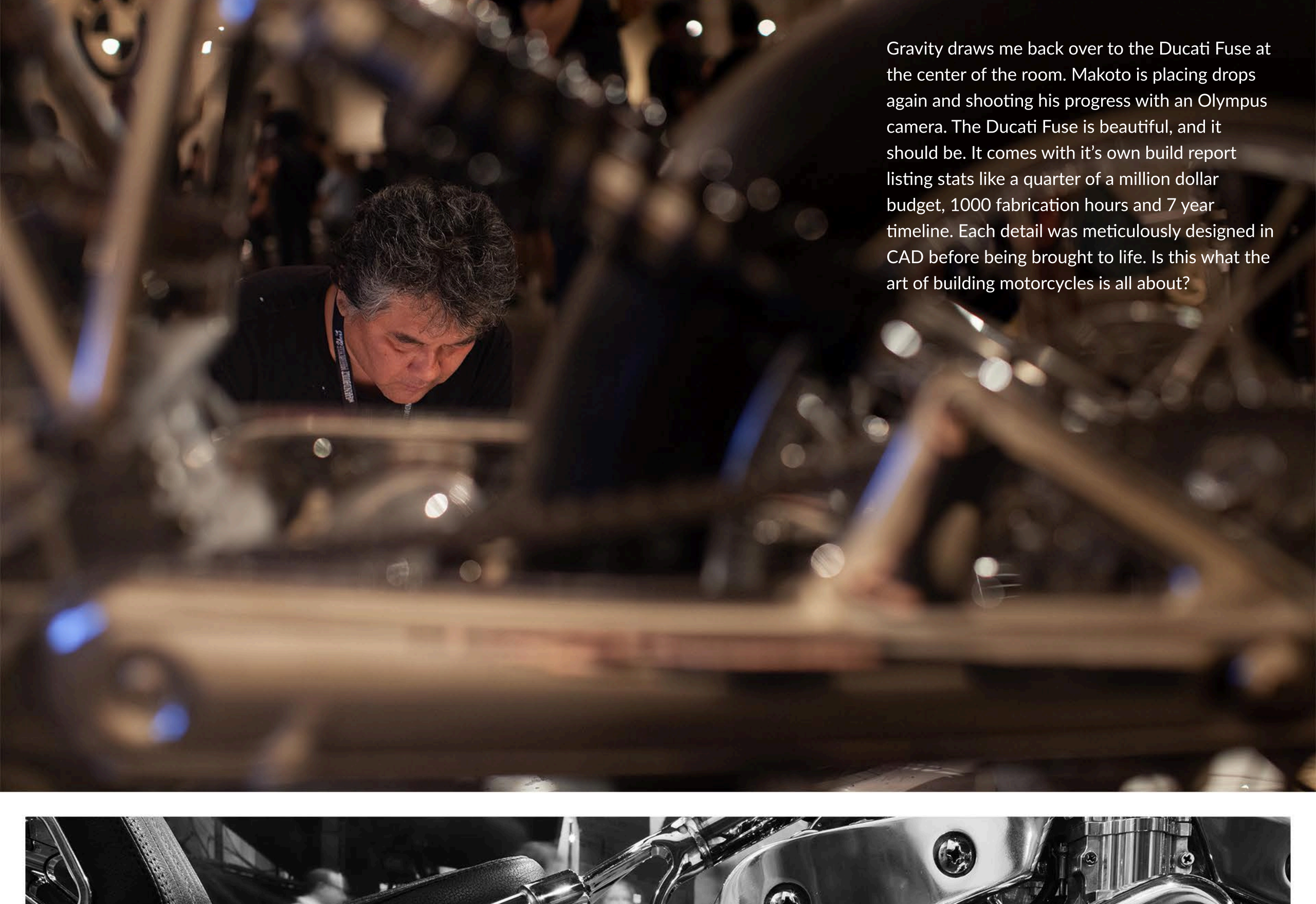
At the center of the Austin Statesmen convention center, Makoto Endo sits on the floor. He is motionless for several minutes as he stares intensely at a canvas on the floor. He dips a chopstick into a cup of paint in his hand, then lets a few drops fly. Makoto gets up. I watch him as he leans against a wall for 30 minutes and again comes forward, dripping some more paint on his canvas. There's no telling how long he's been at this or how long he might continue. He's creating a painting of the "Ducati Fuse", the latest creation of Austin custom motorcycle builder Revival Cycles.



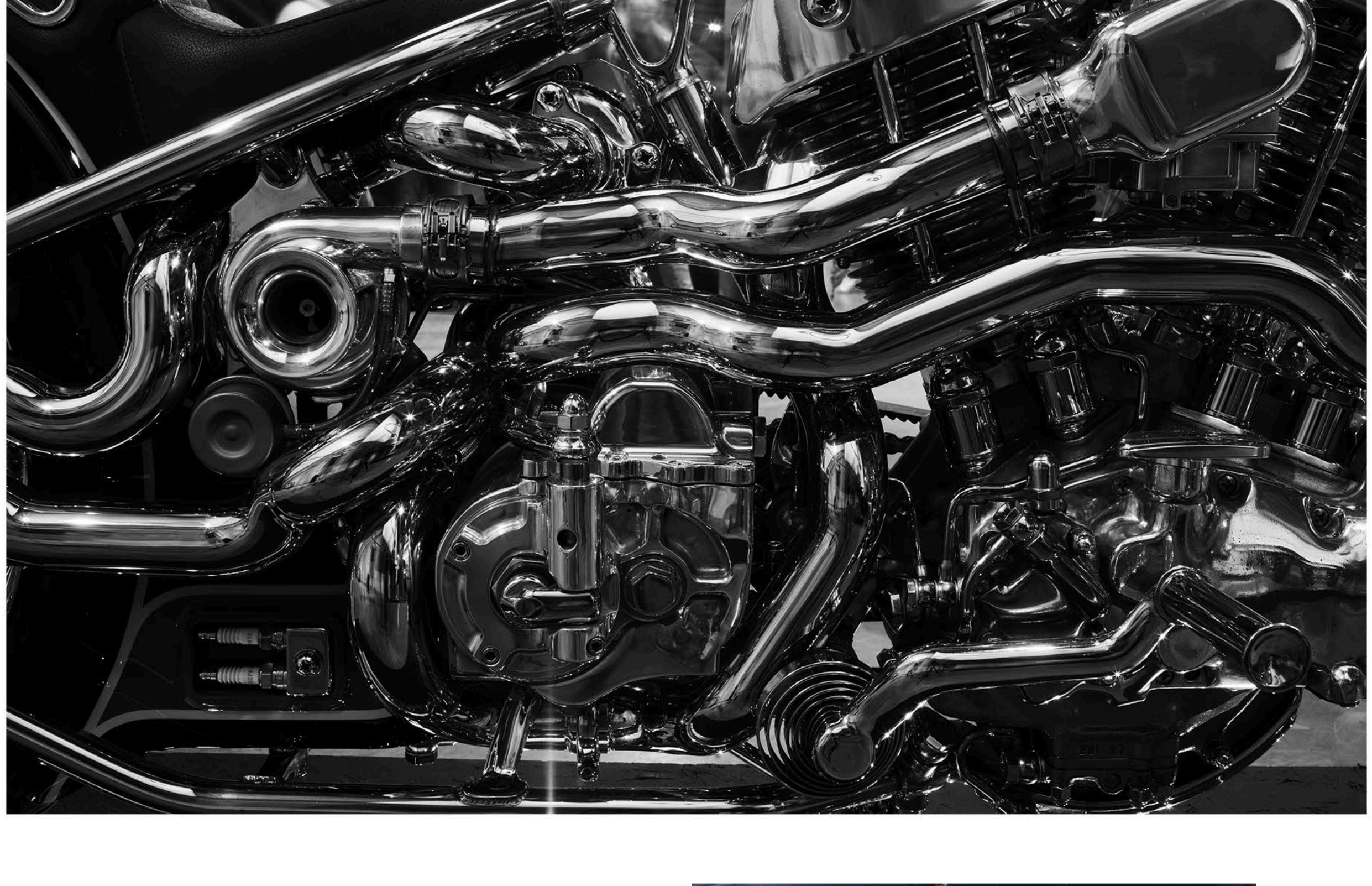
Revival has been building jaw dropping custom motorcycles in their workshop in Austin since 2008. For the first time in 2 years, the team is hosting the Handbuilt Show, an exhibition of the greatest custom motorcycles in the world. It's one part warehouse party, one part art exhibition, and one part motorcycle rally. Everyone I talk to at the show is warm-hearted and friendly. One man, with his 2 children, explains that, "my whole family, we live and breathe this." He shouts to his daughter, "Tell him the name of your dog." She flashes a smile missing several baby teeth, then between giggles answers, "Bark Barquez."



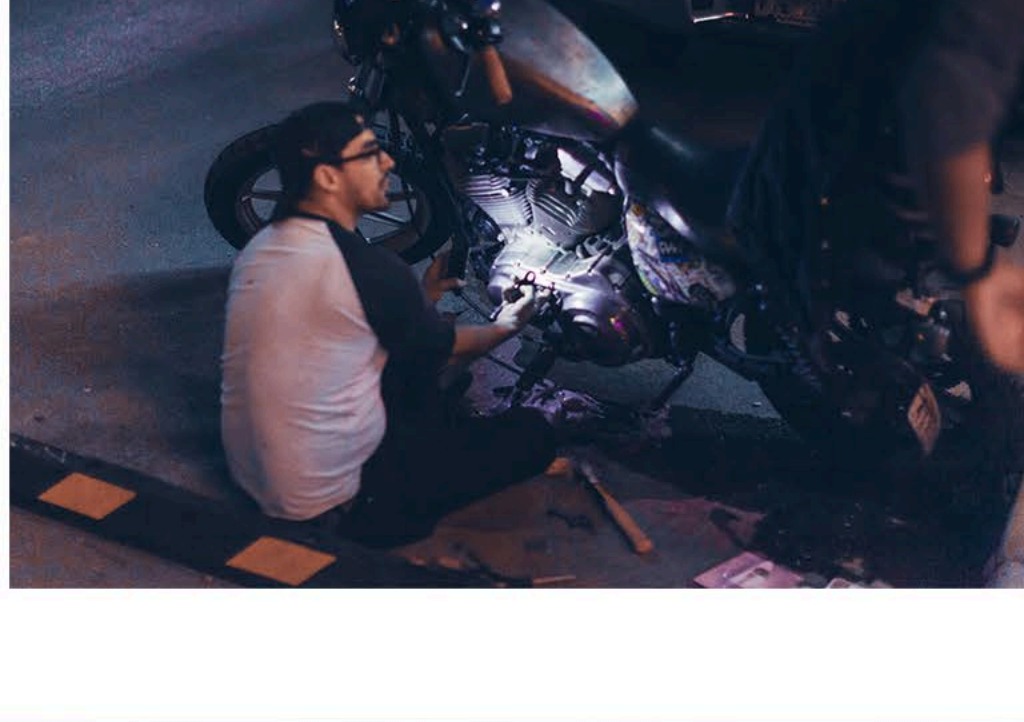
On my trip to Austin, I'm searching for a little piece of Hunter, and I find him in a mostly ignored corner of The Statesmen. It smells like palo santo and is reserved for the Vincent Black Shadow, Hunter S. Thompson is said to have made this bike famous, but in reality, the Black Shadow made itself famous as "the fastest production motorcycle" in 1948. I've never seen one in-person, and before I realize what I'm looking at, my mind wonders, "what the fuck is that?" The engine is a messy V-Twin and the bike somehow looks like it's going fast even when it's motionless. All the romance around the bike is deserved. This is the bike the devil would ride. My hands are sweating, and I'm dreaming of testing the claimed top speed of 125 mph.



Gravity draws me back over to the Ducati Fuse at the center of the room. Makoto is placing drops again and shooting his progress with an Olympus camera. The Ducati Fuse is beautiful, and it should be. It comes with it's own build report listing stats like a quarter of a million dollar budget, 1000 fabrication hours and 7 year timeline. Each detail was meticulously designed in CAD before being brought to life. Is this what the art of building motorcycles is all about?



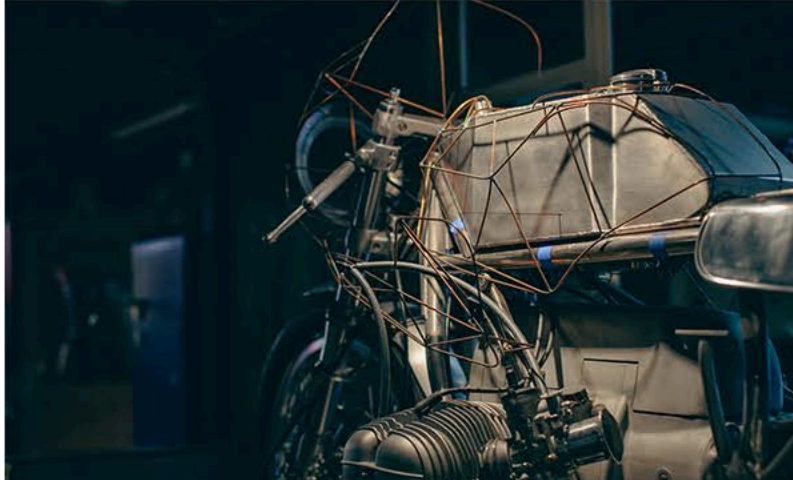
The question lingers in my head as I take a walk back to the place I've rented. It's midnight, and I find a man working on a half disassembled motorcycle parked on the street in front of a busy East Austin bar. His name is Gil, and he's ridden his rat bobber 200 miles from Dallas to attend the MotoGP race. He's sitting in a puddle of oil and now has the transmission in pieces. He finds the source of his woes. "The clutch is toast."



The day after the close of the show, I drop by uninvited to Revival's workshop. This is where Alan Stulberg and his team build these motorcycles. I find Alan in the parking lot working to move his fleet of custom bikes off a trailer. It's hot, and his face is covered in droplets of sweat. He rolls one of the Vincent Black Shadows off the trailer, and the chain explodes in a shower of links and pins. I hint that I'd love to ride the other pristine Black Shadow, but he stops me. "That bike won't run. It's missing a clutch. It's actually really typical for these show bikes."



Alan gives me free rein to walk around the workshop, even giving me the code to the front door "in case I get locked out." This is not a normal garage. There is no smell of gas or oil. No greasy rags laying about. Every inch of the workshop is filled with wild dreams, specialized jigs and of course binfuls of motorcycle parts. It's obvious that Alan and his team are not hobbyists or playing around. This is the work space of a dialed in artist at the top of his field. "There's no money in this," Alan explains. He has just moved the BMW Birdcage bike into his garage. This bike made massive waves several years ago and is considered a priceless work of art to motorcycle collectors.



The trailer is unloaded, and the bikes are safely tucked back into every corner of the workshop. Makoto's latest work is laying across a big drafting table in the main room. It's surrounded by his other framed paintings of bikes from previous Handbuilt Shows. Revival and Alan are taking the rest of the day off. Come Tuesday, the welding sparks will again fly from the shop's next masterpiece. The chopstick paint drips of their peculiar art.