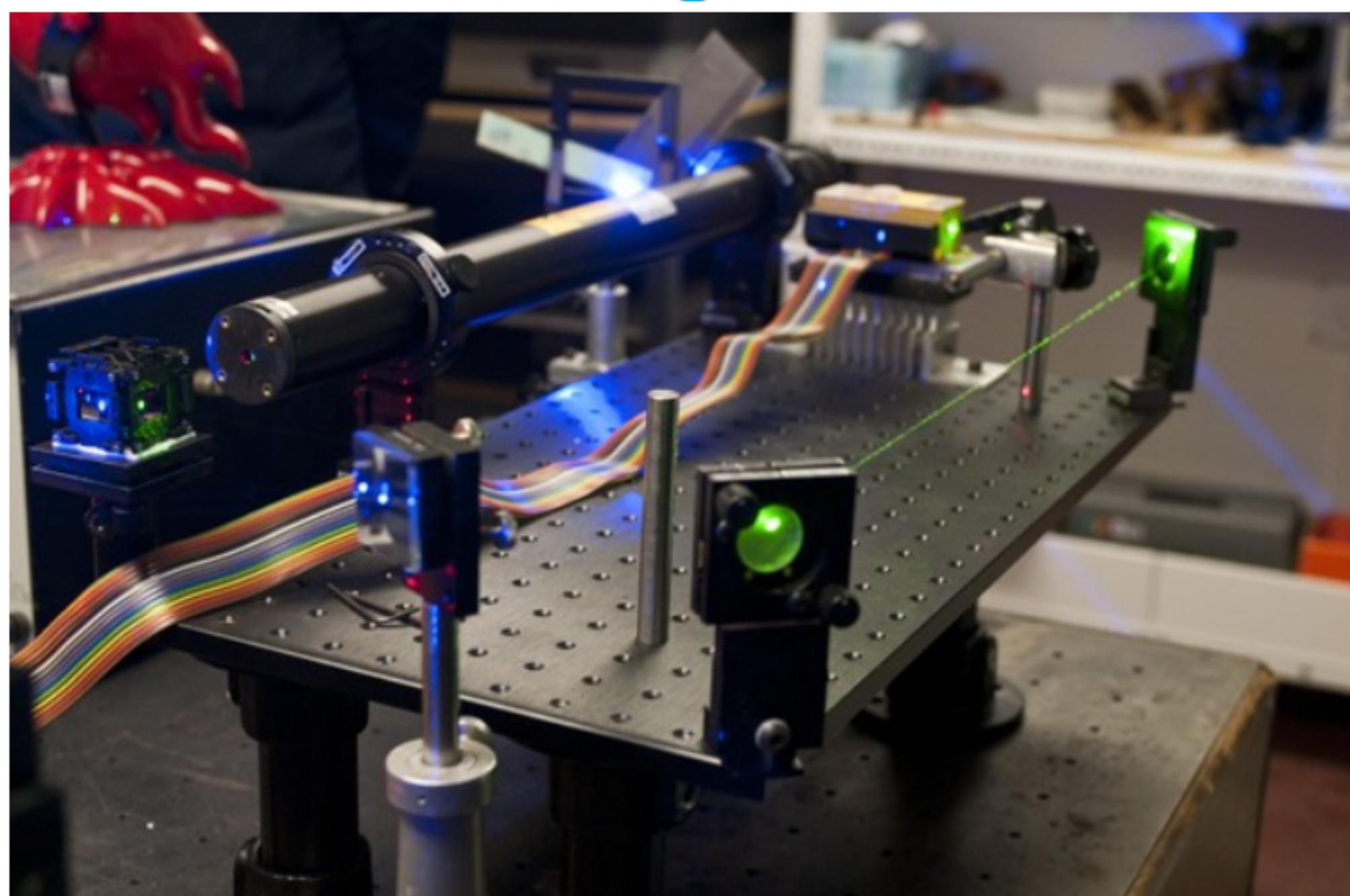


Show us your . . . collection of vintage lasers

It was nearly four decades ago that Ed Wesly saw his first hologram created by lasers—and he's been addicted ever since.

By Luca Cimarusti [@LucaCimarusti](#)

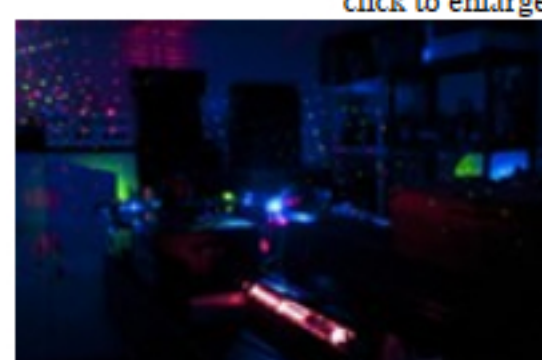


Up-close looks at the guts of Wesly's lasers

ANDREA BAUER

"It was the day that changed my life," jokes Ed Wesly.

In 1978, at a conference for photography teachers, Wesly—now a professor in the digital photography program at Harrington College of Design—saw someone create a hologram with lasers, and was wowed. He bought his first laser shortly thereafter and has amassed nearly three dozen since.



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Andrea Bauer

He purchased some and was given others. The biggest score came in 2008 when a friend at Lake Forest College unloaded the school's pricey laser collection on him for free, including what he considers his crown jewel: a ruby laser with a refrigerator-sized power supply that sold for as much as \$60,000 in 1986.

Wesly uses and works on all of the lasers, in their various states of repair, in his studio—a garage space that's been converted into the only remaining holography lab in the city.

"These reject lasers find their home in the reject holography studio," he explains as he lists off the oddball prizes he's collected over the years (a white-beam laser imported from China, a handful of multicolored machines donated by a student who worked at American Science & Surplus).

Wesly uses his collection to create his own holograms, and many of his lasers wind up in his classroom. "You can see a picture in a textbook," he says, "but to see an actual beam going through lenses is pretty cool. It's a lot more engaging."

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