



## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **Toledo Museum of Art presents first exhibition to focus on car culture with emphasis on the Midwest**

#### ***Life Is a Highway: Art and American Car Culture opens next spring***

TOLEDO, Ohio – The rise of the automobile as a popular visual symbol of American culture will be explored in *Life Is a Highway: Art and American Car Culture*. The exhibition will feature approximately 125 works of art in a wide variety of media – including painting, sculpture, photography, prints and drawings – drawn from the collection of the Toledo Museum of Art (TMA) along with important loans from many other North American institutions. The exhibition will be on view June 15-Sept. 15, 2019, at TMA, the exclusive U.S. venue.

This project is the first U.S. exhibition to provide an inclusive, historical overview of artists inspired by American car culture with an emphasis on the Midwest region. Mapped across four thematic focal points, *Life is a Highway* brings together a diverse selection of 20<sup>th</sup>-century artists who chronicle the automobile's role in reshaping the American landscape and cultural attitudes of self-expression.

*Life Is a Highway* is curated by Robin Reisenfeld, Ph.D., TMA's works on paper curator.

“Located in one of the nation's and the Midwest's leading manufacturing centers, The Toledo Museum of Art is uniquely positioned to organize this groundbreaking look at the impact and iconography of the automobile in American visual culture,” said Brian Kennedy, TMA's Edward Drummond and Florence Scott Libbey director. “TMA also serves as the arts centerpiece of Toledo's thriving cultural community, and *Life Is A Highway* continues the Museum's sustained commitment to engaging our visitors in new and creative ways through our exhibitions and educational offerings.”

As a key element of the 20th-century boom economy, the automobile quickly became the postwar symbol of freedom, renewal, individualism and independence. Its mythic status will be examined across social, aesthetic, environmental and industrial dimensions with images that both celebrate and critique its legacy.

*Life is a Highway: Art and American Car Culture* will present the multifaceted approaches visual artists have taken towards car culture. Each generation has experienced a changing dynamic with cars, with visual artists uniquely positioned to capture and examine that evolving relationship.

Presenting works spanning from its early depiction by the American Scene artists and Farm Security Administration (FSA) photographers Thomas Hart Benton, Walker Evans, John Sloan, and Margaret Bourke-White to the more familiar Pop and photorealists Robert Bechtle, Jim Dine, James Rosenquist, Ed Ruscha, and Andy Warhol among others, the exhibition will feature both a variety of media and diversity of artists and perspectives. Thematic groupings that address the emergence of car culture, the on-the road experience as well as automobility and its byproducts' environmental and psychological imprint will be considered in a number of modern and contemporary paintings and installations by John Baeder, Roger Brown, John Chamberlain, Judy Chicago, Kerry James Marshall, George Segal, and Richard Prince among others. The work of performance artist and automotive designer Liz Cohen will be on view together with photography, early video and works on paper by Robert Frank, William Gedney, Alfred Leslie, Mary Ellen Mark, Catherine Opie, Gordon Parks, Oscar Fernando Gómez Rodríguez and Meridel Rubenstein.

Car culture is an inextricable part of the Midwest's identity, closely associated with livelihood, labor, and community. A significant portion of Toledo's economy has been related to the automotive industry since the beginning of the 20th century. It is the home of two production facilities known as the Toledo Complex, an automobile factory that began assembling Willys-Overland vehicles as early as 1910. Since 1940, Jeeps have been assembled in the plant, which is now owned by Fiat Chrysler Automobiles. Powertrain Toledo, a General Motors (GM) transmission factory, was founded in 1916 and has been the production site for many of GM's transmissions.

*Life Is a Highway* will be accompanied by an illustrated catalogue with two essays, one by curator Robin Reisenfeld and one by guest author Eleanor Heartney. A broad slate of public programming that will appeal to visitors across generations – art and car enthusiasts alike – will be organized in conjunction with the exhibition.

“The rich spectrum of artists and media in the exhibition represents the intensity of our experiences with automobiles over time and our evolving relationship to it as a symbol of social change. As an immersive treatment of the visual culture of automobiles, this display ensures that there will be something for everyone to discover and enjoy in the galleries,” said Reisenfeld.

*Life is a Highway: Art and American Car Culture* is presented by BP America with additional support from 2019 Exhibition Program Sponsor ProMedica.

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The Toledo Museum of Art is a nonprofit arts institution funded through individual donations, foundation grants, corporate sponsorships and investments. The Ohio Arts Council helps fund programs at the Toledo Museum of Art through a sustainability grant program that encourages economic growth, educational excellence and cultural enrichment for all Ohioans. Glass Pavilion® and Toledo Museum of Art Glass Pavilion® are registered service marks.

Admission to the Museum is free. The Museum is open Tuesday and Wednesday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.; Thursday and Friday, 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.; Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Sunday, Noon to 5 p.m.; and is closed Monday and major holidays. Thursday evening hours are sponsored by Huntington Private Client Group. Friday evening hours are made possible by Fifth Third Bank.

The Museum is located at 2445 Monroe Street at Scottwood Avenue, just west of the downtown business district and one block off I-75 with exit designations posted. For general information, visitors can call 419-255-8000 or 800-644-6862, or visit [toledomuseum.org](http://toledomuseum.org).