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For Immediate Release

ART GALLERY TO DISPLAY THE HISTORY OF THE AUTOMOBILE IN ART!

Kent, Ohio – The School of Art Galleries are pleased to announce our upcoming exhibition, **The Automobile in Art (ca. 1890 – 2009)** which will be on display in our School of Art Gallery located on the first floor of the Art building. This exhibition will run from October 29- November 20, 2009 and there will be a reception on October 29, 5-7 pm.

The Automobile in Art (ca. 1890 – 2009) has been curated by one of the School of Art's outstanding graduate students, **Michael Sanata**. Mr. Sanata is currently pursuing a Master of Arts degree in Art History and this exhibition is an excellent example of some of the important artistic research happening in the school.

Eighteen months ago, Mr. Sanata submitted a proposal to the gallery committee, which is in charge of programming for the School of Art galleries. His work was selected from a pool of over one hundred entries submitted that year. The following is his proposal to the committee.

“In this exhibition I intend to showcase the impact the automobile on society from the close of the nineteenth century through today, the twenty-first century. During this period, the auto revolutionized commerce and travel at the expense of the environment. With both of these aspects in mind, the vehicle has made an important contribution in the arts. Early on, fashion, architecture, the visual arts and literature were profoundly influenced by the newfound freedom that the automobile offered. As time passed, this view of the automobile shifted; the new interpretation was that of destruction, an ecologically negative creation.

The exhibit will provide viewers examples of how the automobile has changed the way we live and the its lasting effects on the environment. This will be accomplished through the use of multiple mediums including the combination of an actual automobile, along with paintings, prints, early posters, film, architectural drawings, automotive-gearred clothing, sculpture and literature. I plan to demonstrate how the automobile has pervaded almost every aspect of our lives.

Due to the austere layout and design of early automobiles, it was necessary that the fashion industry create attire to protect

passengers. This area of specialization can be traced back to the English clothing brand, Dunhill. The need for goggles, heavy coats and, for the spirited driver, binoculars to spot police speed traps were marketed under Dunhill's Motorities™ brand, which is still in existence today. While some companies were producing clothes to make travel more enjoyable, other designers were using the car as the ultimate accessory to their clothes. Sonia Delaunay, for example, had cars, most notably a Bugatti T35 and a Citroen 5CV, painted to match the clothes she created. This notion of "car as accessory" has carried into the present day with the mindset that the car is an extension of the driver.

With architecture, there came a need to design buildings for storing vehicles. Initially done for the wealthy, with the introduction of affordable automobiles, this became a requirement for everyone. The first cars were stored in stables, as horses and carriages had been housed previously. Le Corbusier and Frank Lloyd Wright are prime examples of architects tackling this new design consideration. Along with garage space in homes, the need for the storage of multiple vehicles in a limited space soon became apparent in cities. The invention of the parking garage even influenced Wright's design of The Guggenheim, in New York City, which takes cues from and has been criticized as resembling a multilevel garage.

In the visual arts, the impact of the automobile, along with related technologies such as the airplane and mass production, caused a shift away from the traditional still life objects and figures to images of speed and machines. This interest in mechanization was often taken to the extreme of referencing the automobile to a woman's body in terms of desire and use. Starting with the Futurists, who embraced the automobile wholeheartedly, the influence of the auto became an important theme in fine art. In their view the vehicle was the ultimate way to forget the past and embrace the future. Concepts of dynamism and velocity, produced by the vehicle's motion, formed the basis of their movement. Henry Ford's assembly line for Model T's, gave rise to the concept of mass produced artwork. Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain* can also be tied to the introduction of the assembly line.

While the auto was initially accepted as a symbol of freedom, starting in the mid-1960s, there was a shift in the auto's interpretation. At this time, environmental concerns began to work their way into the art world starting with Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, published in 1962, and later supported by the American oil crisis, first in 1973 and again in 2008. During this time, artists began to explore the obsolescence and environmental impact that the automobile was having on society and the earth. Artists such as César and Ant Farm began to focus on the planned obsolescence of the automobile. By using crushed cars, in the case of César, and partially buried cars, as was done by Ant Farm, these artists were creating an awareness of the

industries planned obsolescence resulting in conspicuous consumption.

Later, environmental artists and groups such as the Center for Land Use Interpretation and Dolores Hayden work primarily with researched text and banal images creating awareness to man's impact on society. This impact is directly related to the automobile, such as suburban sprawl and auto salvage yards. Not directly referencing the auto, these works focus on the social and environmental impact that the auto has created over the past one hundred years.

By combining these mediums in one exhibition, I hope to demonstrate the all-encompassing influence that the automobile had on the arts and society, along with its shift in perception over time. This anonymous quote from the early 20th century puts the influence of the automobile into perspective, "The world has changed more in the past 30 years than it has since the birth of Christ." With the availability of the affordable auto, starting with the Ford Model T, first available in 1908, the world changed overnight. No longer were people isolated, ideas traveled, when they had previously been unable to, and the world became a smaller place."

For more information about this exhibition or the School of Art Galleries contact Anderson Turner, Director of Galleries, (330) 672-1369, haturner@kent.edu

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