The automobile has profoundly reshaped how we live, work, and move since it first hit the road in the 1890s. From its origin as a plaything of the wealthy to its establishment as a utilitarian necessity of modern life, the car has left a lasting imprint on our built environment, connecting us across great distances at ever greater speeds—and altering ideas about personal mobility in the process. But this transformation has come at a cost. Automania 2000—the 1963 animated film from which this project takes its name—suggests that while the technological innovation and mass production of cars has brought about undreamt-of standards of living, cars also lead to gridlocked immobility and, ultimately, the extinction of civilization.

MoMA held its first car exhibition, 8 Automobiles, in 1951, which featured models selected for "their excellence as works of art." Since then, the Museum has amassed a small

collection of automobiles, around which this current presentation is organized. In addition to several of these cars (and one Airstream Travel Trailer), Automania presents car-themed architectural renderings, films, photographs, drawings, paintings, posters, and sculptures. These works explore automobiles as physical extensions of the human body, technological marvels, and expressions of identity, and examine the conflicted feelings—compulsion, fixation, desire, and rage—that developed in response to the car over the course of the twentieth century.

Today, a new chapter in automotive history is being written. Increased awareness of the social, environmental, and ethical dilemmas posed by the proliferation of cars globally is galvanizing public and governmental attention toward the urgent need for creative strategies that will chart the future of personal transportation.

Organized by Juliet Kinchin, Curator, Paul Galloway, Collection Specialist, and Andrew Gardner, Curatorial Assistant, Department of Architecture and Design.



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Test drive our MoMA Audio playlist and listen to stories about cars and their impact on art and design.



Start your engines and explore the exciting world of cars in this MoMA Audio playlist for kids.