MoMA Audio: *Automania*
Kids Tour

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

Enter the number on http://moma.org/audio.

51. Introduction

Narrator: Welcome to *Automania*! This is an exhibition about cars.

Andrew Gardner: I think it's so mesmerizing to look at the different shapes and sizes of these cars.

Narrator: You'll see a car that looks like a bug. One that can fold up into a box. Race cars . . . and a tiny car that's about as powerful as a lawn mower. Each one was designed for a different purpose.

Paul Galloway: Which one would you most love to drive and how would you use it? Cars, of course, didn't always exist.

Narrator: And they have really changed our world. Highways, signs, parking lots, gas stations! Think about it: what would your city look like without cars and everything related to them?

Juliet Kinchin: Cars for better or worse have become part of our daily lives.

Narrator: This exhibition looks at cars and how they have changed our world.

Floor 1, Sculpture Garden

52. Flaminio Bertoni, André Lefèbvre, Paul Magès, Robert Opron, Citroen DS 23 sedan, designed 1954-1967 (this example 1973)

Why is this car so low to the ground while parked?

Narrator: Have you ever seen a car like this? How does this look different than cars *you've* ridden around in? Does it seem bigger? Smaller?

Here's Paul Galloway. He works at the museum.

Paul Galloway: If you go around to the front, you'll notice directional headlights, the first time this had ever been done on a car, as you turn the wheel and go around a corner, the headlights turn with you so that you get better visibility.

Of course, you notice that it's extremely low to the ground. But when your parent gets in there, turns the key, the car slowly raises up off the ground, quite high actually. And it

automatically adjusts for potholes in the road, it can even keep driving if it's got a flat tire. Those features made it a very safe automobile to be driving.

Narrator: Imagine you get to drive this car. How would it feel to drive around on a cloud of air?

53. Willys-Overland Motors, Inc., Jeep, designed 1952 (this example 1953)

Hear about the design features that allow this car to be folded up and shipped.

Narrator: Let's take a look at this Jeep for a minute. What do you notice about it?

It's color—camouflage green—might make you think of the military. Jeeps were first made for American soldiers to use during World War II. It has big tires, so the soldiers could plow through muddy roads without getting stuck, crisscross bumpy fields, and even drive across streams. Did you notice there are no doors? That's so the soldiers could hop in and out quickly.

Here's Andrew Gardner who works at MoMA:

Andrew Gardner: The thing that's most remarkable about the Jeep is that it can be folded into a flat box. First you remove the steering wheel. Next, fold the windscreen flat and then take off all the tires and put them into the cockpit. And you can throw it into a box and put them on a plane or onto a cargo ship.

Some called the Jeep "a sturdy sardine can on wheels," others have called it an intelligent dog, because it was very dependable and was always there when you needed it. What does this car look like to you?

54. Dante Giacosa, Fiat 500f city car, designed 1957 (this example 1968)

Why doesn't this car have a gas gauge?

Paul Galloway: As you approach the Fiat 500, known in Italian as Cinquecento, you'll notice that it's an extremely small car. You might be taller than this car. Now, picture yourself in the driver's seat. You probably could see over the windshield. How many of your friends do you think you could pile in here?

Fiat stripped everything unnecessary from the car. Anything that would have added cost was removed. And only the most basic and necessary parts were there. It's got a canvas fabric roof because they were trying to save on steel.

The engine is roughly the same as a lawnmower, so it's a slow car. It can park in very small parking spaces. It uses very little gasoline. It doesn't cost very much.

Imagine being in this minuscule, magnificent, little masterpiece of a car and driving around on small Italian roads, going to get some pizza and then eating it on a hillside, looking out over the sea. Imagine all the fun that you could have while driving in something like this.

Floor 3, Escalator Platform

75. Margaret Calvert and Jock Kinneir, Children-crossing and roadwork signs. Originally designed 1957–67, these versions 2021

Hear the designer on making a signage system that has stood the test of time.

Narrator: Take a look at these road signs. What do you think they are trying to communicate?

Before cars, we didn't need signs like these. But as the roads got more crowded, it got dangerous out there! Now there are stop signs, speed limit signs, even kangaroo crossing signs! Can you think of other reasons for road signs?

Margaret Calvert: The most important thing about road signs is that they save lives.

Narrator: That's a good reason! Margaret Calvert designed these signs for Great Britain more than 50 years ago.

Margaret Calvert: The most important thing is not to have too much information on a sign. It had to be very clear and very simple.

Narrator: Some of her signs are so simple, they don't even have words. You can understand their meaning just from the shape of the sign, the colors, and the pictures. For example, red, white and black triangular signs, like these, are warning signs. Calvert came up with the pictures herself.

Margaret Calvert: I felt that the children crossing should be as realistic as possible, simple but realistic. I actually based that on myself at that age, which would have been about eight. It was very important, I thought, to have a girl leading a small boy. I think it puts girls in the front line, so to speak.

Narrator: How would you design a children crossing sign for where you live?

Floor 3, Galleries

83. Ferdinand Porsche, Volkswagen Type 1 Sedan, designed 1938 (this example 1959)

Hear about a popular car design that remained unchanged for decades. Enter the number on moma.org/audio.

Narrator: Take a minute to check out this car from the front and sides. Now go around to the back. What are some words you would use to describe it?

It has a nickname you may have heard:

Andrew Gardner: The Type 1 sedan was called the "Beetle" because it looks just like a bug don't you think? It's this quirky, fun, tiny little friendly vehicle painted in a bright minty

green. It has big round eyes. And it almost looks like it's smiling. It reminds me of a ladybug or something like that.

The most amazing thing about this car is that its design has basically never changed. It was a car that was beloved around the world. And by 1972, the car had become the most successful and most widely sold vehicle of all time.

85. General Motors Corporation, "Oscar" design template, 1950s

What role did this "average human male" play in car design?

Juliet Kinchin: I'd like to introduce you to Oscar.

Narrator: That's Juliet Kinchin—and yes, this guy is known as Oscar. We've been looking mostly at the way cars look on the outside. But a lot of work goes into what a car looks like on the inside too.

Juliet Kinchin: Oscar was actually used to measure the distance to the brake pedals, for example, or to the steering wheel, or to the roof of the car. And his figure would be laid out over a life-size drawing of the car interior.

Narrator: You can see joints at Oscar's feet, knees, hips, and arms. Designers could bend him into different positions to test out and adjust their car interiors.

Juliet Kinchin: But that raises a few questions, I think: how big is your body compared to Oscars? Do you think you'd easily reach the brake pedals in a car designed using Oscar? Do you think your granny would easily sit in a seat designed using Oscar?

Narrator: And one more question: why is Oscar wearing a hat? Car designers used Oscar in the 1950s. Back then, they designed cars mainly for men. And many men used to wear hats every day! Now, car designers are much more aware that people come in all shapes and sizes.

87. Airstream, Inc., Airstream Bambi Travel Trailer, 1960

Hear about the animal that inspired the name Bambi.

Narrator: This shiny aluminum camper was manufactured by a company called Airstream. And they named this model after an animal. Talk a walk around it and be sure to peek inside.

Airstream called it the Bambi! That's not because of its shape, though. It's because of its size.

Andrew Gardner: Wally Byam, who founded Airstream, was traveling across the continent of Africa and encountered these miniature deer called OMA Bombi in the Ubuntu language. Inspired by this animal he decided to design a small version of his trailer that people could fit in their garages.

Think about all of the different ways you could actually live inside of this one little travel trailer. This is the same size as an everyday car and yet it has a kitchen inside of it, it has a bed inside of it, it has a place to eat, it has a place to go to the bathroom. It's pretty remarkable to think you can fit all of the stuff into one tiny little space.

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