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HIGH PREMIERES THE ALLURE OF THE AUTOMOBILE

*First Exhibition to Correlate Auto Design with Major Design Movements;
Showcases 18 of the World's Finest Cars from the Golden Age of Automobile Design*

ATLANTA, March 3, 2010—"The Allure of the Automobile," the first exhibition to consider the stylistic development of automobiles in the context of prominent design movements such as Art Moderne and Postwar Modernity, will premiere at the High Museum of Art in March 2010. The exhibition will present 18 of the world's rarest and most brilliantly conceived cars ranging from the 1930s to the mid-1960s, including masterpieces by Bugatti, Duesenberg, Jaguar, Mercedes-Benz, Porsche and Ferrari. These cars combine state-of-the-art engineering, meticulous craftsmanship and groundbreaking design to create works of "rolling sculpture." The exhibition, made possible by lead sponsor Porsche Cars North America, Inc. will be on view from March 21 through June 20, 2010.

"Our visitors will be surprised to find that today's vehicles come from a legacy of beauty and innovation comparable to the finest decorative arts that may be found in museum collections," said Michael E. Shapiro, Nancy and Holcombe T. Green, Jr. Director of the High Museum of Art. "This exhibition will showcase the greatest feats of engineering and luxury design from 1930 to 1965, when cars became synonymous with success, power and wealth. Created for the privileged few, these luxurious, custom-built automobiles embodied speed, style and elegance, and influenced art, architecture, fashion and design."



The 18 automobiles on view at the High will include one-of-a-kind, custom-built designs that incorporate remarkable advances in automotive styling and engineering. The sections of the exhibition will trace the evolution of the motorcar, examining the contrasts between European and American design, the influence of decorative arts and design and the significant changes in automotive styling and engineering both before and after World War II. The featured automobiles have also won awards at prestigious world events such as the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance, broken records on racetracks and were previously owned by noted car enthusiasts such as Hollywood legends Clark Gable and Steve McQueen.

Pre-World War II Design: Opulence and Luxury

During the first quarter of the twentieth century, the primary goal of automotive development had been to make cars reliable and easier to use. Then-contemporary body-on-frame automobile construction allowed for the rise of specialized automotive coachbuilders who produced custom bodywork for wealthy clientele. At the time, France was producing some of the finest car designs, along with leading the world in high fashion and decorative arts. Just as the Paris Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Moderne of 1925 influenced the decorative arts worldwide and inspired the Art Deco movement, Paris became the center of the aesthetic automotive universe, drawing hundreds of

extraordinary designers from other countries. French custom coachwork adorned American Duesenbergs and Packards in addition to French Bugattis, Delages, Delahayes and Hispano-Suizas.

Pre-war American

- 1933 Pierce-Arrow Silver Arrow
- 1934 Packard Twelve Runabout Speedster, formerly owned by Clark Gable
- 1935 Duesenberg JN Roadster, formerly owned by Clark Gable

Pre-war European

- 1937 Mercedes-Benz 540 K Special Roadster
- 1937 Bugatti Type 57S Atalante Coupe
- 1937 Delage D8-120S, formerly owned by Louis Delage
- 1937 Hispano-Suiza H-6C “Xenia” Coupe
- 1938 Alfa Romeo 8C2900B Touring Berlinetta
- 1938/39 Porsche Type 64 (body shell)

“Until World War I, most cars had been utilitarian objects with one principal goal: transportation,” said Ken Gross, guest curator of the exhibition. “But as tastes and wealth coincided, designers could create and/or customize an automobile’s body, dramatically altering its silhouette and decoration and producing artful, one-of-a-kind objects. Lavish and often beautifully trimmed with aluminum, chrome, inlaid wood and lacquer, the streamlined silhouettes of the finest mid-century cars represent prime examples of Art Moderne design.”



Post-World War II Design: Speed and Style

The second half of the exhibition will study how World War II and the ensuing postwar years brought about radical changes in the automotive aesthetic of the coachbuilder’s world. The war forced many automobile companies, both American and European, into rapid military material development and production, accelerating their understanding and postwar use of lightweight materials, stressed bodywork, fuel injection, specialized production methods and advanced aerodynamics.



The industry shifted away from the expansive, opulent one-of-a-kind cars of the pre-war period toward smaller, faster sports cars. In France, social hostility towards the wealthy and, by extension, the luxury car manufacturers, forced Bugatti, Delage, Delahaye and Hispano-Suiza out of business, signaling the demise of the extravagantly detailed one-off automobile. In Italy, the government infrastructure supported small-volume manufacturers, helping to create an export industry of innovative and high-quality but expensive products in many fields that lifted the country from economic devastation, and came to be known as “The Italian Miracle.” The 1950s and 1960s saw the rise of fast and luxurious sport cars designed by talented engineers and brilliant coachbuilders, launching an era of Italian supremacy in car design into the second half of the century. In Germany, companies like Mercedes-Benz, BMW and Porsche rose from the ashes of conflict to present brilliantly conceived engineering triumphs.

Postwar European

- 1953 Porsche 550
- 1955 Mercedes-Benz 300 SLR
- 1957 Jaguar XK-SS Roadster, formerly owned by Steve McQueen
- 1961 Aston Martin DB4GT Zagato
- 1961 Ferrari 250 GT Comp./61 Short-wheelbase Berlinetta

Postwar American

- 1948 Tucker Model 48 Torpedo
- 1954 Dodge Firearrow III Concept Coupe
- 1957 Cadillac Eldorado Brougham
- 1959 Chevrolet Corvette Sting Ray

The American auto industry geared up for mass production in the booming economic years following World War II. Like the French, many of America's luxury car manufacturers shut down. Those that survived used lessons they had learned from the war, such as the use of new lightweight materials, aerodynamics and safety features to produce cars that were more practical for both the consumer and manufacturer. America's prosperity in the 1950s brought about a period of exuberance that manifested itself in stylish concept cars, which often became production models.

Exhibition Organization and Support

"The Allure of the Automobile" is organized by the High Museum of Art. The exhibition is made possible by its Lead Corporate Sponsor, Porsche Cars North America, Inc. Additional support provided by AkzoNobel, AutoTrader Classics, Manheim, NAPA, The Allure of the Automobile Society, Alfred and Adele Davis Exhibition Endowment, Eleanor McDonald Storza Exhibition Endowment, and Howell Exhibition Endowment Fund. Project Partner, W Atlanta Midtown. The exhibition's guest curator is Ken Gross, writer, automotive historian and former executive director of the Petersen Automotive Museum in Los Angeles. Ron Labaco, the High's curator of decorative arts and design, is the managing curator. The exhibition will be accompanied by a full-color catalogue.

High Museum of Art

The High Museum of Art, founded in 1905 as the Atlanta Art Association, is the leading art museum in the southeastern United States. With more than 12,000 works of art in its permanent collection, the High Museum of Art has an extensive anthology of 19th- and 20th-century American and decorative art; significant holdings of European paintings; a growing collection of African American art; and burgeoning collections of modern and contemporary art, photography and African art. The High is also dedicated to supporting and collecting works by Southern artists and is distinguished as the only major museum in North America to have a curatorial department specifically devoted to the field of folk and self-taught art. The High's Media Arts department produces acclaimed annual film series and festivals of foreign, independent and classic cinema. In November 2005 the High opened three new buildings by architect Renzo Piano that more than doubled the Museum's size, creating a vibrant "village for the arts" at the Woodruff Arts Center in midtown Atlanta. *For more information about the High, please visit www.High.org.*

The Woodruff Arts Center

The Woodruff Arts Center is ranked among the top four arts centers in the nation. The Woodruff is unique in that it combines four visual and performing arts divisions on one campus as one not-for-profit organization. Opened in 1968, the Woodruff Arts Center is home to the Alliance Theatre, the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, the High Museum of Art and Young Audiences. *To learn more about the Woodruff Arts Center, please visit www.woodruffcenter.org.*

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