

# THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 WEST 53 STREET, NEW YORK 19, N. Y.

TELEPHONE: CIRCLE 5-8900

530909-62

arch & design  
nat'l general  
English, Italian, French press  
auto list

PRESS PREVIEW: TUESDAY  
Sept. 15, 2-5 p.m.

FOR RELEASE: WEDNESDAY  
Sept. 16, 1953

## 10 AUTOMOBILES TO GO ON VIEW IN MUSEUM OF MODERN ART GARDEN

Ten postwar American and European automobiles, selected primarily for their excellence as works of art, will be on view in the garden of the Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, from September 16 through October 4 in the Museum's second exhibition of cars in the past two years.

The automobiles on view were designed for mass production; none of them is custom-built or experimental, but all reveal influences of Italian design. Two cars, the Lancia and the Siata, were both designed and manufactured in Italy. The Cunningham and Nash-Healey, both manufactured in the United States, have Italian coachwork as does the English MG. The 1953 Studebaker, designed by Raymond Loewy Associates, is the only American-designed and manufactured automobile in the show. Other cars include the English Aston-Martin, the rear engine German Porsche, the French Simca and the Comete, the Ford Motor Company's French Ford.

In the illustrated 24-page catalog which accompanies the exhibition, Arthur Drexler, Curator of the Museum's Department of Architecture and Design, defines two basic types of automobile design, the box and the envelope, and takes issue with generally accepted ideas of the relation of comfort to automobile design, saying:

The requirements of comfort are usually cited to excuse an obviously ungainly design, but it is more likely that a vulgar sense of design, like a sophisticated one, produces its appropriate rationale; the glorification of comfort is one example.... The interiors of American cars are often designed to duplicate in domestic comfort the living room of the driver's home.... Sometimes safety precautions are neglected in favor of comfort; a car that does not hold tightly to the road because its center of gravity is too high is technically imperfect, even though its extra height makes it easier for passengers to get in and out.... The error lies not in seeking comfort, but rather in defining comfort as the absence of all sensation. Thus if the motorist were to distinguish between the comfort appropriate to his living room couch and the comfort appropriate to a seat suspended between four swiftly moving wheels, he would doubtless resent the padded, sensationless limbo recommended in our advertising as the highest form of motoring pleasure.... A well designed automobile, besides being beautiful, would restore the motorist to the road."

In discussing the criteria for judging automobile design, Mr. Drexler points out that, like the exterior wall of a house, the metal shell of an automobile takes its shape from the space it encloses. The details on the surface of this shell, like the details on the facade of a house, he says, can suggest by their shape and location the nature of the space enclosed. But, he adds, unlike a house, an automobile moves and we expect an indication from its shape as to the direction its passengers face and the location of its wheels.

The box shape of an automobile, he says, requires the addition of separate parts - fenders, bumpers, headlights - to provide scale and to indicate direction. The intersections of the planes of the box are therefore extremely important to the design. When the body of a car is treated like an envelope and modeled so that the separate planes of roof, sides, front and rear flow into each other in one continuous surface, scale and direction are usually obtained by cutting holes in the envelope, rather than by adding parts to it.

The automobiles in the exhibition illustrate these two basic classifications with various modifications. In describing the 1952 Cunningham (model C-4) manufactured in the United States with coachwork designed in Italy, Mr. Drexler says, "Many of the characteristics usually associated with small Italian sports cars are here adapted to the large scale of American touring cars." The 1953 Studebaker Commander V-8 Starliner Coupe, manufactured in this country and designed by the American firm Raymond Loewy Associates, is characterized as "the first American mass-produced car to adapt the design characteristics of European automobiles." The 1951 Lancia Gran Turismo, designed by the famous Italian Pinin Farina and manufactured in Italy, is shown as one of the most maneuverable mass-produced cars made. The other Italian car, the Siata, is described as "one of the most beautiful touring cars produced." The Comete, the 1952 Ford manufactured in France, has proportions comparable to many American cars, Mr. Drexler points out, but the success of its design depends on the consistent use of moderately curved contours rather than on size or applied decoration.

The English Aston-Martin, intended for touring as well as racing, which retains the details and accessories of passenger cars, is on

view with the popular English MG. The Mg shown is the 1950 model TD manufactured in England but with coachwork by Carrozzeria G. Bertone of Italy. The standard chassis and engine of the MG has here been equipped with Italian coachwork to produce a car which, unlike its famous predecessor, has full weather protection and ample luggage space. Its wire wheels are virtually the only decoration.

The Nash-Healey, manufactured by Nash in Detroit and the Donald Healey Motor Company of England, has coachwork by Pinin Farina of Italy. In this car the American engine and many American stock mechanical components are utilized. The German Porsche, with the motor located at the rear and spare tire stored in front, is an adaptation of the famous pre-war Volkswagen. Some of its contours were determined by wind tunnel experiments.

John Wheelock Freeman acted as consultant for the exhibition.

NOTE: Photographs are available on request.