Abstract
This dissertation explores the theme of the automobile in American visual art in the first half of the twentieth century, specifically as it appears in painting and printmaking. During the period under consideration, the automobile evolved from a technological novelty owned and operated by wealthy individuals to become a ubiquitous part of American society that stretched across the nation and touched all economic classes. When present in art, the automobile serves as a pregnant image of modernity. The freedom of motion and the velocity provided by the motorcar suggests a horizontal and accelerated perception of modern life. The influence of the automobile on society is found not only in images with motorcars, but also in compositions depicting the many support systems that developed to keep the nation mobile. The greater sense of automobility includes the newly built roadways and bridges, automotive factories, garages, gasoline pumps, auto-camps and eventual motels, roadside restaurants that aimed to serve and accommodate a populace on the move. Artists working in the United States responded to the expanding presence of motor vehicles in multiple and varied ways that reflect not only individual artistic tastes and styles, but also the artists' personal experiences and associations as automobile drivers and passengers. Several artists utilized the motor vehicle as a mobile studio, with works being created on location, within the confines of the vehicle itself. My analysis explores various ways in which artists responded to the automobile and developed auto-related iconography. Depictions of the automobile's use in urban areas demonstrate its gradual acceptance and eventual dominance of city streets, while in rural areas the automobile offered opportunities for social engagement, shopping and entertainment. During the Great Depression, the motorcar served artists as a modern-day metaphor regarding the ship of state, with broken down and discarded vehicles used to address the nation's economic troubles. The study includes consideration of several artists' use of automobiles as well as depictions made of and from the road. This dissertation concludes with a brief look at artistic responses to the automotive theme that followed the period under this study.

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History of Early American Automobile Industry 1891-1929. Chapter 5. 1900. The New Century had arrived and the automobile industry was bursting at the seams with all of its activity. With so many different models that were being made either by an individual or a well known company, it is impossible to give an estimate on how many there were. All of the several automotive magazines were filled with advertisements for everything from bolts to a finished car.