

Alioto, Daisy. "Car culture: New York's Leila Heller assembles 'Shrines to Speed'." *Wallpaper*. (May 25, 2016).

Wallpaper*
*THE STUFF THAT REFINES YOU

Car culture: New York's Leila Heller assembles 'Shrines to Speed'

ART / 25 MAY 2016 / BY DAISY ALIOTO



Leila Heller's 'Shrines to Speed' mixes artists overtly associated with cars with less expected takes on the theme

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Most curators start with a wishlist of works they want to include in a show—not Alexander Heller and Vivian Brodie. The co-curators of Leila Heller's 'Shrines to Speed' chose instead to take a winding journey toward their final catalogue. The resulting exhibit firmly places their show in the lane of minimalists that 'inject meaning into an object' and so joins the great American drive toward metaphor.

Proof that cars have become the country's chosen vehicle of symbolism is everywhere: literature, photographs, music. Brodie –co-founder of nonprofit Y&S, and a gifted show organizer– and Heller– Leila Heller gallery director– have had the vision to bring these disparate media together in a display that, if chaotic, is deliberately so.

Highlights include Ed Ruscha's rare publication *Every Building on the Sunset Strip* and Ron Arad's *Pressed Flower Petrol Blue*, 2013. Exhibited for the first time is a work by Bay Area painter Richard Diebenkorn, known for his contributions to abstract expressionism. There are artists overtly associated with cars: John Chamberlain and, in recent years, Arad— as well as less expected additions, like the photography of Ruth Orkin.

You can't talk about cars in American culture without talking about pure existential fear, perhaps best expressed in the anonymity of being pinned behind one of John Baldessari's dots— also included in the show. Walking through the gallery, one is chauffeured toward the conclusion that the car will free you; the car will destroy you... but all will be fine, as long as you keep moving.

Heller and Brodie reference this oblivion as a key theme in the show. They find the literary equivalent in Bret Easton Ellis' *Less Than Zero* when narrator Clay becomes deeply unsettled by a billboard proclaiming 'Disappear Here.' Clay, of course, responds by gunning his car away.

'Shrines to Speed' calls to mind two distinctly different types of trauma. There's the physical event of Sylvie Fleury's bubble gum pink wreck, rending apart the machine. But there is also the slow, gasoline-leak like seeping of the American dream out of the individual.

Or, as Brodie puts it, 'the loneliness of chasing a dream.'



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The show addresses two distinct types of trauma associated with cars in Americana: the physical and the mental. Pictured: Sylvie Fleury, *Skin Crime 6*, 1997

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Pictured: Ron Arad, Pressed Flower Petrol Blue, 2013

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Pictured: Bruce Davidson, Brooklyn Gang (Couple necking in car), 1959

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Pictured left: Blair Thurman, Goth rocket, 2014; Pictured right: Jack Pierson, Slow, 2009

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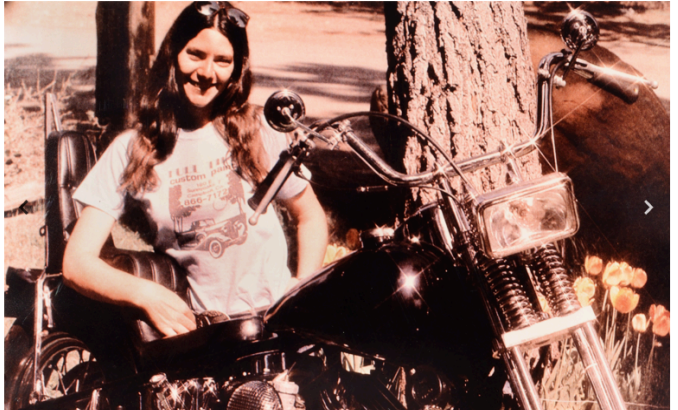
Pictured: John Baldessari, National City (2), 1996/2009

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Pictured: Richard Diebenkorn, Untitled (Car), c. 1957-66

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Pictured: Richard Prince, Girlfriend, From Cowboys and Girlfriends, 1992

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Pictured: Ruth Orkin, Couple in MG, Florence, Italy, 1951

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