



**Justine Kurland**  
280 Coup  
2012  
COURTESY MITCHELL-INNES  
& NASH, NEW YORK

# ON THE

As a major photography exhibition celebrating images of the car opens in Paris, *Simon Schama* charts his own journey through motoring history, from a big black Wolseley to a tangerine Jag

# ROAD

**Man Ray**  
*A Francis Picabia en grande vitesse*  
 1924, Cannes

THE BLUFF COLLECTION  
 © MAN RAY TRUST/ADAGP, PARIS  
 AND DACS, LONDON 2017



**I first learnt to drive in a big black Wolseley sedan**

- though it would be more accurate to say on a cushion, perched on my father's lap, nine-year-old hands gripping the wheel as we slalomed through Richmond Park, scattering deer and scuffing the odd oak.

As my pa's fortunes declined, so did the choice of chariots. There was a string of white Fords, beginning with a mighty Consul and including an ignominious Prefect, but each with chrome hubcaps buffed to an eye-scalding gleam. The last was an Escort, bought when his sight wasn't too sharp and he was going pretty deaf. Occasionally, he would forget where he parked it. Returning from a trip to Paris and failing to find the Escort, he became convinced it had been pinched and rang the cops. They politely turned him round and walked him the 50-odd feet to where it was parked, a kindness he repaid by henceforth treating the police as a car-finding service whenever he couldn't remember his spot, yelling down the blower, "It's been nicked. NICKED."

I wanted that Escort, but all I could afford for a debut was a celery-coloured Austin 1100 that never warmed to me. The feelings were mutual. Halfway through my driving test in Cambridge, under a heavy downpour, the examiner said "turn left", so I did, after which he added mournfully, "No, I meant where there's a street." We found ourselves in a driveway, stuck in builder's sand and cement. The examiner had no choice but to get out and push.

Perhaps mortified by this humiliation Celery tried, on several occasions, to do away with its driver. ▶

*Continued p41*

**Alejandro Cartagena**  
*The Carpoolers series*  
 2011-2012  
 COURTESY PATRICIA CONDE GALERIA, MEXICO



**Miguel Rio Branco**  
*Talons aiguilles en papier*, Mexico, 1985  
 COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST

**John Divola**  
*Dogs Chasing My Car in the Desert series*  
 1996-2001  
 COURTESY LAURA BARTLETT GALLERY, LONDON



**Daido Moriyama**  
*Okinawa*, 1969  
 AKIO NAGASAWA COLLECTION, TOKYO



**Peter Lippmann**  
*Peugeot 201, Paradise Parking series*, 2012  
 COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST





**Luciano Rigolini**  
*Pure*, 2013  
 COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST



**William Eggleston**  
*Los Alamos series*  
 1965-1968  
 EGGLESTON ARTISTIC TRUST, MEMPHIS



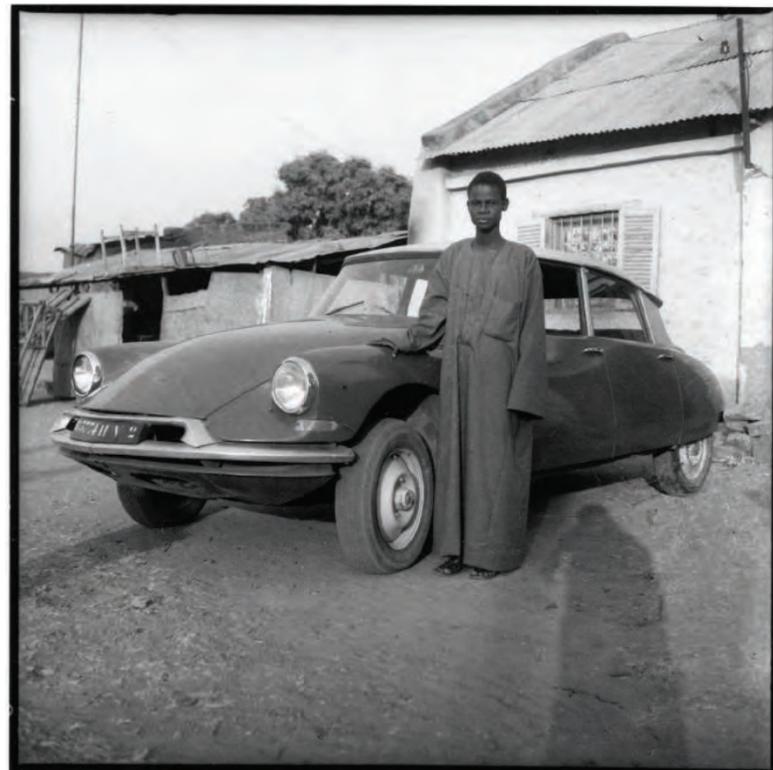
**Bernard Plossu**  
*Le Voyage mexicain series*  
 1966  
 (from top)  
*Chiapas, Mexique*  
*Juan et Roger, Mexique*  
*Sur la route de San Miguel, Mexique*  
 French photographer Bernard Plossu has travelled extensively throughout his life. These three photographs are part of a series called *Le Voyage mexicain* – the first photographs Plossu took, at the age of 20.  
 COURTESY OF THE ARTIST/  
 GALERIE CAMERA OBSCURA, PARIS



**Sory Sanlé**  
*Untitled*, c1970–1980  
 COURTESY GALERIE 127,  
 MARRAKECH

**Arwed Messmer**  
*Reenactment MfS Car #16*  
 2017  
 Arwed Messmer's photographs from the archives of the Ministry of State Security, the Stasi, show the re-enactment of escape attempts from East to West Germany during the period of the GDR. The actors often included failed escapees themselves.  
 COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST

**Unknown photographer**  
*Chinese Photostudios series*,  
 c1950  
 COLLECTION BEIJING SILVERMINE/  
 THOMAS SAUVIN, PARIS





**Ronni Campana**  
*Badly Repaired Cars*  
 series, 2016  
 COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST

◀ There was the altercation with a telegraph pole, when a retriever sauntered into the road amid the sprout fields of Bedfordshire; there was the bus cornering a tad too widely on the pass over the Alpes-Maritimes; and there was a brush with a truck on the ring road around Wolverhampton. These did little to improve car-driver relations; either it went or I did. Celery's successor was a scrappy little white Fiat 128, slung low to the road. Like its owner, it was a puppyish, unpredictable machine, eager and bounding so long as the weather was fine but inclined to stall at the slightest shower. A can of WD40 became an inseparable companion on any trip, but I was in my flighty twenties and the slow glide into the lay-by wasn't altogether amiss on late dates.

**Auto-love and auto-hate alternated. There was a** surly slate-blue Renault 18, which spent most of its life being fixed in the last remaining American Motors garage in greater Boston; and a succession of Audis that, notwithstanding the reputation for German reliability, never were.

But on the happiness side there was the cherry-red first-generation Acura Legend (upscale Honda to Brits who never got to know it), a dream on wheels, somehow smooth and snarly at the same time and done up in impractical tan upholstery, probably not a wise choice during the sticky-fingered years of my children's upbringing. It was front-wheel drive but that was of no avail when I hit a patch of sheet ice on a suburban hill in Arlington, Mass, sending Cherry into 360-degree revolutions. But some cars come with blessings, and somehow this one had barred traffic from making contact with its whirling carousel until I'd descended the hill - sideways - coming to rest, fairly gently, against a mailbox.

But the car my dad had yearned for was, of course, a Jag, and I inherited the craving. Some years back my wife caught me on the Jag website, wondering out loud if I shouldn't go for a solid sedan, the XF. "Oh, for God's sake," she said, "if you're going to have a mid-life crisis, have it properly and get the convertible." Readers, I did: in racing green but, courtesy of [Jaguar's] design genius Ian Callum, I found ultimate happiness with a tangerine F-Type, a cat that purrs, along with its driver, when the road is open, spring has sprung, its top is down and the system is screaming with Hendrix's wailing guitar. Yes, it's adolescent glee. Hey, you gotta problem with that? **FT**

*Simon Schama is an FT contributing editor. "Autophoto" runs from April 20 to September 24 at the Fondation Cartier pour L'Art Contemporain in Paris; [fondationcartier.com](http://fondationcartier.com). The accompanying catalogue is published by Editions Xavier Barral, Paris*



**Bernhard Fuchs**  
*Roter Ford-Bus, bei Freistadt*  
 AUTOS series, 1994  
 COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST

**Arnold Odermatt**  
*Stansstad, 1969*  
*Karambolage series, 1969*  
 COURTESY GALERIE SPRINGER  
 BERLIN

