



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. ▶

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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. 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

