



1935 Stout Scarab. Photo: Michael Furman

## *Curves of Steel: Streamlined Automobile Design at Phoenix Art Museum*

*Cars, Curves, Cockpits*

by David M. Brown

If Marilyn Monroe were a car, she'd be a 1934 Chrysler Imperial Airflow or a 1935 Auburn 851 Speedster or a 1939 Lincoln Zephyr.

Brigitte Bardot would fit well as a 1938 Delage D8-120 S Pourtout Aréo Coupé, a 1937 Dubonnet Hispano-Suiza H-6c Xenia by Saoutchik or a crimson-hot 1939 Delahaye 165 Cabriolet by Figoni et Falaschi.

Gina Lollabridgida: She's a 1957 Ferrari 625/250 Testa Rossa TRC, for sure.

While the Phoenix Art Museum, 1625 N. Central Ave., can't produce the human art forms, it has assembled the first-of-its-kind "Curves of Steel: Streamlined Automobile Design," through June 3 in the Steele Gallery.

Make sure you get a seat for this sexy exhibition. Featuring 22 classic and rare automobiles exemplifying streamlining and the science of aerodynamics, the show celebrates 70 years of design innovation from the 1930s through the end of the 20th century, when the water drop became chassis form, airflow generated design and aircraft morphed into automobile.

"This is the first exhibition an art museum to explore streamlined automobile design, and we have been fortunate to have gathered together, through the generosity of

North America's most discerning collectors, some of the rarest and finest classic automobiles ever to appear in one exhibition," says Jim Ballinger, director of Phoenix Art Museum. "It gives us an opportunity to see the car truly as a piece of fine sculpture."

North American collectors have offered their spectacularly crafted vehicles merging grace and form. Other vehicles include a 1937 Delahaye 145 — "Million Franc Prize" Grand Prix race car; 1936 Bugatti Type 57SC Atlantic coupe; a 1936 Peugeot 402 Darl'mat coupe; a 1937 Cord 812 Sportsman; 1936 Bugatti Type 57SC Atlantic coupe; 1938 Embiricos Bentley; a 1948 Tucker; a 1952 SoCal Belly Tank; and a 1994 McLaren F1.

With the advent of the air age in the 1920s, European designers began to apply the principles of airflow from aircraft to the automobile. Incorporating Art Deco and Moderne influences in the next decade, American designers began streamlining vehicles such as Auburn, Cord and Lincoln-Zephyr, and, for Chrysler, the Newport and Thunderbolt in experimental designs. In Europe, the French applied these to the Bugatti Atlantic Coupe, and Delage and Delahaye automobiles also featured aerodynamically inspired designs.

Other manufacturers focused on function rather than aesthetics. Tatra's modestly-powered vehicles attained high speeds with the proper curves, and William Stout's vehicles, such as his 1935 Scarab, the forerunner of the minivan, were similarly principled.

In addition drawings, photographs and posters put the cars in their historical and cultural context. The museum also is presenting a wide-ranging line-up of public programs and events surrounding the show. A 192-page accompanying book is available in The Museum

Store; it is guided and written by a team of automotive historians, writers and designers, including more than 200 photographs by automotive photographer Michael Furman.

For more information, visit online at PhxArt.org or call the 24-hour recorded information line, 602.257.1222. Exhibition hours are Tuesday, 11:30 a.m.–9 p.m. (last entry 7:30 p.m.); Wednesday–Friday, 11:30 a.m.–5 p.m. (last entry 3:30 p.m.); and Saturday and Sunday, 10 a.m.–5 p.m. (last entry 3:30 p.m.).



1936 Peugeot 402 Darl'mat Coupe. Photo: Michael Furman



1938 Darracq-Talbot Lago T-150 c by Figoni et Falaschi. Photo: Michael Furman



1939 Delahaye 165 Cabriolet by Figoni et Falaschi. Photo: Michael Furman