

1. Projects



The automobile: a 20th-century craze?

Finished research

Can the literature help us understand the driving forces behind and limits of our fascination with the automobile? What do philosophy and experts say about it? By comparing the imaginative thinking of writers with that of philosophers and experts in an original performance, the Forum questions the place of the car since the 20th century and the changes to come in its usage and the imaginary it conveys.

Research participants

The researchers

- Jean-Pierre Martin
- Bernard Emsellem
- Léa Lejeune
- Mathias Mégard
- Sophie Merceron
- Bernard Stiegler

We couldn't verify the security of your connection.

Access to this content has been restricted. Contact your internet service provider for help.

L'automobile désir du XXème siècle - Forum Vies Mobiles

Can the literature, with the help of philosophy and the expertise of specialists, help us understand the driving forces behind and limits of our fascination with the automobile? The Mobile Lives Forum was willing to take the leap and launch reflection on the automobile, based on 20th century literary texts from France and the United States. By comparing the imaginative thinking of writers with that of philosophers and experts, it questions the future of the automobile, its usage and its impact on our lives. What does literature on the relationship between the automobile and automobile imaginary in the 20th century tell us? What does it teach us that philosophy and expert reports cannot? Does it miss certain things? What does automobile passion look like today and will it be the same tomorrow, with the same addictions, alienation and enchantment? Can the car satisfy the travel needs of tomorrow? For whom? Is it only viable in the long term? Under what conditions? What will it look like then? Will it still be the object of desire that it was in the 20th century?

A performance combining literature, philosophy and forecasting, created by writer Jean-Pierre Martin, will address these questions and more on November 18, 2014 in Lyon. The work of Octave Mirbeau, Marcel Proust, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Francois Nourissier, Jack Kerouac, Julio Cortazar, J.G. Ballard and John Irving will be interpreted by two actors, commented on by Jean-Pierre Martin and put into perspective by a philosopher and two experts. The set design for the performance will be created by Amar Aoudia.

The event, which will be open to the public by reservation, will be filmed and put online in late 2014.

This performance follows a first part on social relationships during train travel, which brought together Jean-Pierre Martin, researchers and SNCF professionals in November 2012. Excerpts from this event, entitled L'excitation ferroviaire, are available at: <https://fr.forumviesmobiles.org/meeting/2013/08/22/fuir-jean-philippe-toussaint-1111>.

This first experiment in creating a dialogue between the social sciences and humanities, literature and practices helped us develop a new perspective on changes in train travel and to identify future challenges.

Practical information: The performance: Tuesday, 18 November 2014, 7:30 pm – 10 pm La Plateforme, 4 Quai Victor Augagneur, 69003 Lyon Free with reservation. Limited seating!

Associated Thematics :

Lifestyles

- Cars / motorcycles
- Aspirations
- Futures
- Representations

Theories

- Art & Science
- History
- Methods

To cite this publication :

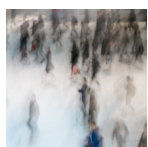
Jean-Pierre Martin et Bernard Emsellem (15 October 2014), « The automobile: a 20th-century craze? », Préparer la transition mobilitaire. Consulté le 09 May 2025, URL: <https://forumviesmobiles.org/en/project/2602/automobile-20th-century-craze>



Projects by Forum Vies Mobiles are licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 France License.

Permissions beyond the scope of this license may be available at [contact](#).

Other publications



History of the concept of mobility

Vincent Kaufmann

