



A GUIDE TO THE EXHIBIT FOR EDUCATORS

The exhibit *Metal Monsters: Jim Roark's Rusted Automobile Relics* includes 31 miniature vehicles all in a state of dilapidation: three mid-19th century wagons, two European vehicles, and twenty six American automobiles dating from 1911 through 1975. The exhibit and this guide explore issues such as the history of the American automobile and its impact on the American way of life, as well as America's "love affair" with the automobile. This guide addresses language arts and writing standards, as well as social studies strands for American history, geography and economics.

To arrange a visit to The Mini Time Machine Museum contact Education Director, Lisa Hastreiter-Lamb lisahl@theminitimemachine.org, or 520- 881-0606, ext 105.

EXHIBIT OVERVIEW

Jim Roark's *Metal Monsters* are full of nostalgia for the glory days of the automobile. His miniature American and European classic cars are not your typical miniature collector cars; instead they are representations of vehicles that have been abandoned, left to rust, and fall apart. How did these metal monsters which once ruled the road end up abandoned in a field? Could it be that a newer model caught the attention of the owner who eagerly replaced his or her worn out car? Were they so loved that their owners drove them until they could "go no more"? Were some parked in a back lot with the good intention that they would one day be restored to their former beauty? All these narratives are a possibility. If these vehicles could come to life like those in Disney's animated film *Cars*, surely they would have similar tales to tell of high speed chases, romantic trips along Route 66, and a variety of adventures by young and old drivers alike. Looking at these aged autos one can't help but be curious about their past.



Presented past their prime with layers of rust and decay, Roark's vehicles draw our imagination into play, causing us to try and picture the vehicles' bygone days. The majority of the vehicles in the exhibit date to the mid-twentieth century when American automobiles ruled the roads. Those were the days when seat belts were optional, and no one considered the environmental impact of burning gasoline emissions. In 1946, the tune (*Get Your Kicks On) Route 66* sung by Nat King Cole debuted. The song, written by American song writer Bobby Troup, highlighted the major stops along the route from Chicago, Illinois to San Bernardino, California and celebrated the freedom and romance of the open road. It is one of many songs written in the 20th century that reflect America's "love affair" with the automobile. From the 1950s into the 1970s American automobile companies focused on big engines that could take a car from zero to sixty mph in record time, until the oil embargo of 1973 hit. The price of gasoline spiked and the crisis instigated the establishment of a maximum speed limit of 55 mph, along with a temporary rationing of gasoline. Asian automakers were ready to fill the bill when smaller more fuel efficient engines became desirable, and America auto makers and their models fell from the top.

Jim Roark loves cars. He has had a passion for American made vehicles since his youth. While in high school he purchased a 1930 Cadillac 4-door sedan. He restored the full size Caddie to showroom perfection over the course of two years with the help of two buddies. Since that time, Roark has pursued his interest in restoring classic cars by building them from model kits. The reason Roark got involved with model building had to do with both cost and skill. Restoring a classic car can be very expensive; Roark found model building to be more economical. Restoring a classic car requires an individual with a specialized skill set; since Roark has an abundance of artistic knowledge and skill, but little mechanical understanding, model building suited him better.

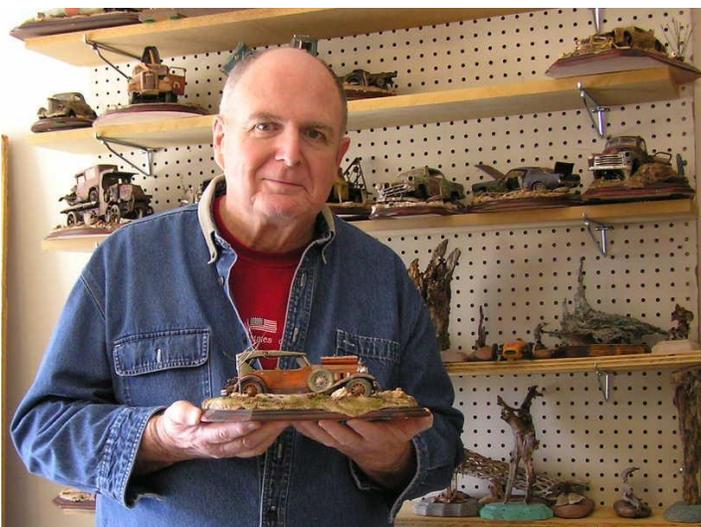
It was during the 1980s after years of recreating classic vehicles from kits, that Roark pondered, "What would this car look like if it had been abandoned in the desert for the past 30 years, full of grease, dirt, dust, rust, broken windows, flat tires and lots of dents?" The question begged an answer so Roark decided to approach his next model with a new twist and his rusted relics were born. He describes his process as building the kit backward, "planning all the way to destroy it and see how it would look all bright, shiny and new and then make it dirty, abused and distressed." Roark figures that "to some they may be just a

junk pile, but to those of us who appreciate the American automobile, they are a thing of beauty and elegance!”

Roark continues to work with 1:24 scale plastic model kits, aging the contents so that they appear abandoned and forgotten. Recently, he has added 1:32 scale die-cast model cars to his miniature junk pile, literally tearing them apart and antiquing them with paint and an assortment of other materials until the vehicles are in a dilapidated state. The vehicles are presented in fragments of landscape sculpted by Roark such as a desert wash, an overgrown forest, a vacant lot or an abandoned farm. They are just the sort of places you might stumble upon a rusted automobile relic.

HOW ARE THESE MINIATURE VEHICLES CREATED?

The foundation of *Roark's Rusted Automobile Relics* are either 1:24 scale (one foot in the real world equal 1/2" in the miniature world) plastic model kits or 1:32 scale (one foot in the real world equals 3/8" in the miniature world) die cast cars. To this base he adds a variety of items including wood, cardboard, string, wire, plastic strips, mud, dirt, rocks, and - as Roark puts it- “any piece of junk I find that I might convert into a useful looking accessory on the car.” He casts tires and other parts in resin so that he has plenty of parts to work with. Windows are created from clear plastic, and pliers are used to crack car windows so they appear broken. Paint is mixed and layered to create the illusion of rust, dirt and dust. He smashes head lights, and tears vehicles apart but saves the extra parts for future use. Roark also builds truck beds for some of the vehicles. This is done with balsa wood and a special weathering stain. Some unusual materials that he finds useful are soft water salt, which he uses to represent broken glass; old dirty oil used to represent oil; and paper towel soaked in glue and then shaped, dried and painted.



WHO IS JIM ROARK?

Jim Roark was introduced to model building as a youth by his father who built old-time model ships. Even before he could read the plans, the young Roark built his own model cars, trucks, ships and military miniatures. He had an aptitude for art and was encouraged to pursue a career in the field.

Roark earned a BPA (Bachelor of Professional Arts) in Advertising Design at The Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, CA in 1963. His studies included fine art, architecture, graphic design and offset printing. He worked professionally as a graphic designer, printer, engineer and creative designer for 30 years.

Throughout his adult life Roark continued to build miniature model vehicles and began creating his rusted automobile relics in the 1980s. Though sculpting vehicles is his passion, he also paints and dabbles in photography. Since retiring in 1992, Roark spends hundreds of hours perfecting the detail of his decaying vehicles so to present an authentic, albeit smaller version, of what were once elegant machines. Roark resides in Tucson, Arizona.

VOCABULARY

automobile	classic	coupe	die-cast	dilapidate	diorama
distress	fuel	miniature	nostalgia	pickup	roadster
scale	sedan	vehicle	V-8 engine	1:24 scale	1:32 scale

SUGGESTIONS FOR DISCUSSING AND INTERPRETING THE EXHIBIT

Discussion Topics

- The exhibit includes three mid-19th century wagons. Discuss the movement away from horse drawn wagons to automobiles: Did everyone embrace the horseless carriage? Are there communities who still use wagons today? Where can you find and learn about 19th century wagons? Why is the engine power of a car stated as horse-power?
- Consider the impact of technological developments in transportation on the American lifestyle: How did the introduction of the car affect daily life in America? How did owning your own vehicle affect population density and the growth of urban sprawl?
- American's love affair with the automobile: How do these vehicles reflect our "love affair"? Why do Americans think of having a driver's license and owning a car as a right- though it is a privilege?
- Compare 20th century vehicles to 21st century vehicles: How has the American automobile changed in the last one hundred years and what has influenced the changes? How might it change in the future? (Consider the economy, safety, and environment impacts).
- Nostalgia for the past: Why do people build and collect model cars? Do Roark's vehicles conjure up feelings of nostalgia? How so and for whom?
- Discuss how often students see dilapidated vehicles such as those in the exhibit, in their community? Do they think rundown vehicles will be a more common or less common sight in the future?

Lessons for interpreting the exhibit

- Ask your students to take notes when they visit the exhibit and to collect the exhibit gallery guides. Have your students write a review of the exhibit.
- Have students select a vehicle in the exhibit and then write a story describing how the vehicle ended up in its dilapidated state.
- Select a car whose model is still being made today such as the Ford Mustang, Chevy Camaro, or Chrysler 300. Research and write a report on how the vehicle has changed over the years. Imagine how it might improve in the future.
- Research and listen to songs that glorify the automobile. Discuss the key ideas expressed in the songs with your students. Have your students choose one of the songs, next have them identify a contemporary automobile. Have students write lyrics about the automobile of their choice to the rhythm of the song they chose.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

WEB SOURCES

<http://www.yourdiscovery.com/cars/index.shtml>

Excellent source of information about automobiles including a timeline, brief biographies of inventors, exploration of types of cars, cars in pop culture, also includes some on-line games.

<http://www.ausbcomp.com/~bbott/cars/carhist.htm>

Written for young people and includes an article that discusses the impact of the automobile on urban development and the vanishing horse and carriage.

<http://www.greatachievements.org/?id=2950>

This site includes a timeline, history of the early years of the automobile and the assembly line, it addresses continuing developments, and includes an essay by former President and Chairman CEO of the Ford Motor Company Donald E. Petersen.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1973_oil_crisis

Offers a good overview of the 1973 oil crisis with links to relevant related pages and sites.

BOOKS AND PERIODICALS (AGES 9 +)

Banting, Erinn. *Inventing the Automobile (Breakthrough Inventions)*, Crabtree Publishing Company; 1 edition, March 2006.

Cunningham, Kevin. *The History of the Automobile (Our Changing World–The Timeline Library (Series))*, Children's World Publishing, 2004.

Price, Sean. *Route 66: America's Road (Raintree Fusion: American History Through Primary Sources)*, Raintree Press, October 2007.