

The Museum of Modern Art

11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019 Tel. 956-6100 Cable: Modernart

April 1976

No. 30

To: Automotive Editors
From: Elizabeth Shaw and Linda Gordon
Re: The Taxi Project:
Realistic Solutions for Today

The attached fact sheet provides a summary of one of the most ambitious projects undertaken by The Museum of Modern Art since it first presented industrial design in the context of an art museum in the early 30s.

The first competition for a motor-driven taxi took place in Paris in 1898. The most recent, begun in 1974, was organized by The Museum of Modern Art in New York:

At the Museum's invitation, two American and two European car manufacturers are producing four new working prototypes of taxicabs, based on specifications developed by the Museum. The American manufacturers, American Machine and Foundry and Steam Power Systems, both of California, are working under a contract from the U. S. Department of Transportation. The European companies are Volvo and Volkswagen. The vehicles will be shown publicly for the first time on June 18th at the Museum and will be tested after the exhibition closes September 7th.

All major manufacturers of vehicles and motors in the United States were formally invited several years ago. As they declined to participate, the Department of Transportation made funds available for two American companies who were willing to submit a vehicle answering to the Museum's Design Manual specifications. In addition, the Museum invited European manufacturers with production facilities in the U. S.

The Museum devised two methods of approach for the design and development of a new taxi. The first approach, ex novo, entailed developing vehicles designed and built completely from scratch. The second represents the other end of the spectrum -- utilizing off-the-shelf components. The prototypes developed by Volvo, American Machine and Foundry, and Steam Power Systems correspond to the first approach. The taxi design presented by Volkswagen answers to the premises of the second.

The Museum of Modern Art has exhibited automobiles since 1951 when it presented a show called "Eight Automobiles." This was followed two years later by "Ten Automobiles." In 1966 an exhibition of racing cars, "Toward a Rational Automobile," was shown, and in 1972 the Cisitalia GT 1946 was acquired for the Museum's Design Collection.

Note: Exhibition made possible by grants from Mobil Oil Corporation and Urban Mass Transportation Administration of the U. S. Department of Transportation.

Additional information available from Elizabeth Shaw, Director, or Linda Gordon, Associate Director, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53 St., New York, NY 10019. Phone: (212) 956-7501; 2648.

