

VENUS

MANHATTAN LOS ANGELES

Nunes, Andrew, "Cars: Cultural Icons—and Artistic Mediums?" *The Creators Project*,
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The Creators Project

Cars: Cultural Icons—and Artistic Mediums?

Walking into VENUS, the year-old Los Angeles outpost of NY's Venus Over Manhattan, you'll probably feel like you're at an auto trade show rather than an art gallery. That's because the 14,500 square foot warehouse space has been filled with Alfa Romeos, Mustangs, and Harley Davidson motorcycles for an ongoing exhibition titled *Piston Head II*.



But these aren't your average sports cars and tough-guy motorcycles; they are a Land Rover emblazoned with Keith Haring illustrations, a 1970 Dodge Challenger painted by Richard Prince, Sterling Ruby's dilapidated 40-foot bus equipped with light fixtures and faded graffiti, and 12 more vehicles-turned-artworks by some of the biggest names in contemporary art history.

Piston Head II is a new iteration of an exhibition *Venus Over Manhattan* put on in 2013. Hosted at Art Basel Miami, the original *Piston Head* included cars and motorcycles by Tom Sachs, Franz West, and Damien Hirst, among others. “Most of my group show concepts I see as movies and not simply group shows,” VENUS founder Adam Lindemann tells The Creators Project. “The concept is powerful enough that we can produce several iterations and they are like sequels—the same story but different—and I think we can also improve the show in time.”

The automobile is no longer the status symbol it once was. In some ways, *Piston Head II* and its trade show-esque qualities can be seen as a memorial to car culture. Lindemann says, “Yes, the exhibition deals with the car as a lasting symbol of power, but also an aging hulk of overweight metal that is totally pointless. In my view, we should all get around in small two-cylinder lightweight cars—they are cheap and efficient.”

He adds, “We are presenting the works as if at an auto show of consumer products, while in fact these objects are works of art, devoid of function. It adds a whole other eccentric element to the concept.”