

March 15, 2006

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**RYAN HUMPHREY'S CUSTOMIZED CAR CREATIONS TAKE A TRIP DOWN
MEMORY LANE WITH BURNING FLAMES AND A BOOMIN' SOUNDTRACK**

Ryan Humphrey: Empty Thoughts, Lame Excuses, and Decorative Lies
on view April 7–July 2 at Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art

KANSAS CITY, MO—The act of customizing—restructuring and reworking different parts of something so that a new idea can take shape—has resulted in some of the most dynamic moments in America's cultural history. Skateboarding, the birth of music genres like hip hop and house, and hot rodding are just a few examples of how people have mixed and matched bits of culture to suit their needs and express their creativity.



Velocity of Transparent Aspiration, 2005–06; BMW hood, automotive paint, clear coat, mixed media, 56 x 59 x 4 inches; photo: Kevin Ryan Photography

With his first solo museum exhibition, *Ryan Humphrey: Empty Thoughts, Lame Excuses, and Decorative Lies*, on view April 7–July 2, 2006 at the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Humphrey uses customization to comment on what he perceives to be a safe and static art world by bringing the gritty, gearhead culture of cars into the pristine gallery space. His multimedia works shake up connotations of class and kitsch, and rescript unrealized dreams of his adolescent past into personal triumphs.

Ryan Humphrey: Empty Thoughts, Lame Excuses, and Decorative Lies opens with a free, public reception 5:30–7:30 p.m., Friday, April 7, with an artist discussion 6:30–7:00 p.m. Museum admission and parking are free, and seating is first come, first served.

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Humphrey is a visiting artist at the Museum. For a complete list of educational activities, see page 3.

While his works acknowledge several figures, movements, and iconic objects in art history, Humphrey also pays homage to key musical influences that made up the soundtrack of his youth and continue to inspire him today: guitar rock star Eddie Van Halen and pioneer rap artists from the 1980s and 1990s. The result is an evocative aesthetic that taps into a boyhood nostalgia and juxtaposes high and low culture in a customized, multisensory mix of sound, color, and design.

For example, in *Velocity of Transparent Aspiration* (2005–06), Humphrey tricks out the hood of a BMW, a high-end vehicle, with an emblem of everyman rock—the bold black and white stripes on a red background reminiscent of Eddie Van Halen’s guitar. By emblazoning the hood of a luxury car with the iconic Van Halen pattern, Humphrey invites questions about how we classify culture and acknowledges Van Halen’s omnipotence as a creative artist who customized music and guitars to create new expressions.

Humphrey’s car creations also excavate and archive lost opportunities from his adolescence, through hand-crafted “auto”-biography. Each work reflects an important experience or cultural reference from his past, including an unrealized dream to restore an old van rusting in his front yard and the possibility of taking a roadtrip in the 1964 Lincoln Continental he always wanted. By revamping automobile parts and imagery into Readymade memories and statements of autonomy, Humphrey proves that customization is a timeless art that helps us navigate our cultural crossroads.

Born in 1971 in Ashtabula, Ohio, Ryan Humphrey currently lives and works in New York. He received his BFA from Ohio University, Athens, in 1996 and his MFA from Hunter College, New York, in 1999. He is finishing postgraduate studies at the Whitney Independent Study Program in New York. His work has been included in group exhibitions at Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh; and the Whitney Museum of American Art in Altria and the New Museum of Contemporary Art, both in New York.

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FREE EDUCATIONAL EVENTS

Wednesday–Friday, April 5–7, 9:30 a.m.–2:30 p.m.

Workshops with visiting artist Ryan Humphrey

Artist Ryan Humphrey works with various classes from schools around the metropolitan area in two-hour, hands-on workshops. These sessions are full, but educators may call 816-457-6134 to learn about upcoming visiting artist workshops. The media may call 816-457-6132 to inquire about photo and filming opportunities.

Sunday, April 7, 5:30–7:30 p.m.

Opening Reception: *Ryan Humphrey: Empty Thoughts, Lame Excuses, and Decorative Lies*

Ryan Humphrey's work embraces popular culture, in particular car culture. You won't want to miss this exhibition that features the side of a 1971 conversion van, a BMW car hood, and images of a 1964 Lincoln Continental convertible. Like all our openings, it's free and open to all. Join us in the Museum meeting room at 6:30 p.m. to hear Humphrey speak about his work. Seating is first come, first served.

Saturday, May 6, 2:00–3:00 p.m.

Meet me at the Museum: *Ryan Humphrey: Empty Thoughts, Lame Excuses, and Decorative Lies*

A Kemper Museum docent will discuss *Ryan Humphrey: Empty Thoughts, Lame Excuses, and Decorative Lies*. Gather at the visitor services desk at 2:00 p.m. for this interactive tour. No reservation is required for this free event.

Sunday, June 18, 1:00–4:00 p.m.

Car As Canvas: Custom Car Show

Bring your dad to the Kemper Museum parking lot to check out some of Kansas City's finest "souped-up" street rods, cruisers, and other customized vehicles. In the spirit of Ryan Humphrey's work, make comparisons between Humphrey's works—some of which incorporate a 1970s BMW 7-series hood, the side of a 1971 Chevy C-10 van, and images of a 1964 Lincoln Continental convertible—and Kansas City car culture artistry. This event is free and open to the public.

Thank You

Special thanks to Sally Kemper Wood for underwriting the exhibition reception.

The Kemper Museum acknowledges the generous support of Bank of America for the 2006 Visiting Artists Program. Financial assistance has been provided by the Arvin Gottlieb Charitable Foundation, UMB Bank, n.a., Trustee; the Hallmark Corporate Foundation; the Muriel McBrien Kauffman Foundation; the David Woods Kemper

Memorial Foundation; and Missouri Arts Council, a state agency. Generous in-kind support is provided by *The Kansas City Star*, Midwest Airlines, and The Raphael Hotel.

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About the Kemper Museum

Kansas City's acclaimed, free contemporary art museum, the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art opened in 1994 and draws more than 130,000 visitors each year. The Museum boasts a rapidly growing permanent collection of modern and contemporary works of artists from around the world. The Museum hosts temporary exhibitions, installations, performance work, film and video series, lectures, concerts, children's workshops, and other creative programs designed to both entertain and challenge. For more information, visit www.kemperart.org.

The Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art is open 10:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m., Tuesday–Thursday; 10:00 a.m.–9:00 p.m., Friday–Saturday; and 11:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Sunday. The galleries at Kemper East (200 E. 44th Street) are open 10:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m., Tuesday–Thursday. The Museum's popular Café Sebastienne serves lunch 11:00 a.m.–2:30 p.m., Tuesday–Saturday; dinner 5:30–9:30 p.m., Friday–Saturday; and brunch 11:00 a.m.–2:30 p.m., Sunday. The Museum and Café are closed on Mondays.

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