

# MALCOLM COCHRAN > REQUIEM

*History Lessons*, 2011

Poplar, steel, polished stainless steel mirror, whitewash

Commissioned by the Bureau for Open Culture and Columbus College of Art & Design for the exhibition *Seventh Dream of Teenage Heaven*

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*History Lessons* was commissioned for a show that curator James Voorhies stated "...examine(d) relationships with time and its effects on the present and future conditions of our existence." It is a 16x enlargement of the rearview mirror from a 1957-era Chevrolet.

I found the mirror when I was emptying my father's workshop the summer following his death. It caught my attention because of a complex dialogue between form and function. Unlike today's rearview mirrors, held in boxy plastic housings concealing mechanisms to adjust the angle of the glass, this mirror is mounted on a chrome base that attached to the exterior of the car's front doors. The aerodynamic bracket aims forward, while the mirror exists to see what is behind.

The base of the bracket is reminiscent of the top of a sleek submarine, the stem or arm recalls the foil of an airplane wing, and the element to which the bowl-shaped mirror is attached is bullet-like. The assembly is all "full-speed-ahead" even as it exists to monitor what is going on behind or beside the moving vehicle.

Conceptually, I came to see it as a metaphor for this country's relentless optimism and scant historical memory—a device that aims always to the future, though its purpose is to provide a view back. Standing before the enlarged form, the viewer is both in the present and, simultaneously, receding in the distance. *History Lessons* is an object for literal and metaphorical reflection.

Malcolm Cochran