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Billboard: Art on the Road

Laura Steward Heon, Peggy Diggs, Lisa Dorin

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foreword by Joseph Thompson This book accompanies the exhibition of artists' billboards that opens the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art's (MASS MoCA's) inaugural season. The exhibition comprises a twenty-work retrospective of billboards designed by artists over the past three decades as well as five newly commissioned ones. The retrospective includes works by, among others, John Baldessari, Geneviève Cadieux, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Gran Fury, Group Material, the Guerrilla Girls, Jenny Holzer, Joseph Kosuth, and Barbara Kruger. The new works, made in cooperation with the communities where they will be installed, are by Julie Ault and Martin Beck, Lothar Baumgarten, Sue Coe, Leon Golub, and Gary Simmons.In addition to the descriptions and color images of the historic and new billboards, the book contains almost three hundred short entries, offering the first broad survey of the medium. More than half of these entries include a small color image.The book also contains three essays. In "Disturbances in the Field of Mammon: Toward a History of Artists' Billboards," Harriet Senie finds precursors for contemporary billboards in European art posters (Toulouse-Lautrec), modern political posters (Rodchenko), and war billboards ("Uncle Sam Wants You"). She looks at the subject matter of contemporary artists' billboards--racism, feminism, environmental issues, war and peace, consumerism, and AIDS--and at artists' strategies and site choices. Public artist Peggy Diggs discusses the process through which billboards are made and the problems encountered by billboard artists, and curator Laura Heon writes about works in the exhibition, in particular the (often conceptual) billboards that do not "sell" any political message.Copublished with the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art.

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