



## 2026 EKPHRASTIC POETRY WINNERS – THE WITTE MUSEUM

Artwork: *1916 Ford Motor Company Model T*, Gift of Albert Steves Sr.

### Adult Winning Poems (in no particular order)

#### Generational Road Trip

Tell me again, Daddy, about Granddaddy's *rustbucket!*  
Son, Let's take a trip down memory lane—such an expedition it was:

    Motoring  
        Cruising  
            Joyrides  
                Tooling along

Grasp hold of the woodgrain dash  
Freedom: Accept the windowless windy trek  
Brass visions of an open road.

Verbal souvenirs pressed into the diamond-shaped stitching.  
Road Warriors approaching new horizons  
Taking detours to memories.

Daddy, can we take our Sunday drive?  
Of course, son.  
    Scenic route ahead.

*Anne Best*

## Assembling the Future

*ecstatic!* —

as we surge and rumble over the streets in the black-mawed thing  
i think of prometheus bringing fire home from the gods and wonder if this is what it felt like  
to know you are carrying a piece of the future, a spark of divine inspiration,  
gilt and warm and alive, breathing, simply begging you to look at its face  
and dream of a tomorrow you had never imagined before.

mr. ford has mastered something, the papers call it mass production and speak of lines but  
i think maybe he has figured out how to  
break the fabric of the  
known and coax it into  
gleaming unreality.

& there is no eagle here to rend my liver from my flesh, so maybe tonight  
i will ask mama for liver and onions instead  
to commemorate the triumph of man. maybe of woman, too, someday soon.  
i fall asleep wondering when it will be my turn to bear the flame.

*Estrella Hernandez*

## Horseless Carriage

I walk through the door  
To every head bowed  
In a diode's glowing embrace.

Now—  
Are we *sure* we didn't want a faster horse?

*Charles G. Kels*

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## Youth Winning Poems (in no particular order; age 13 and older)

### **The Hands That Built Me**

I began as noise.  
Hammer-strike gospel,  
a cathedral of gears.

Men with surnames the factory mispronounced  
tightened my spine into place,  
building their tomorrows  
one bolt at a time.

The line carried me forward  
before I knew what forward meant,  
their rent, their children, their hope  
hidden in my frame.

Now I idle behind velvet rope,  
engine hushed by a century.  
The hands that shaped me are dust  
but I am still here.

*Elliott Stead*

### **sonder**

wheels that once ran in 1916 sunday light  
turned corners and went on summer trips  
started becoming grimy every day and night  
like how our hand wrinkles and skin dips

turned corners and went on summer trips  
each owner fades but the car remains the same  
like how our hand wrinkles and skin dips  
the ford motor sits in its rust, climbing over its name

each owner fades but the car remains the same  
the relic rests carrying the imprint of one  
the ford motor sits in its rust, climbing over its name  
unspoken secrets linger from years gone by

and we gaze at hundreds of unknown stories  
of love, fear, and fun  
yet, we know only one; the rest is *sonder*

*Rishika Bommana*

## **Gild**

it's not what it used to be  
universal  
for everyone

it's not what it used to be

it can't be re united  
the idea has been cancelled

if we state the facts  
it's stuck in the past

we tried to ignore  
but we preserved the damage

sorry, Tin Lizzie  
you are outdated

and to America  
we say the same

*Malia Pope*

## **Youth Winning Poems (to age 12)**

### **The Witte's Unique Ford**

In halls of the museum, so bright and black,  
Is a car that can teleport a century back.  
Before there were highways and lanes,

The Model T-Ford traveled to the modern rains.  
Its wheels are like wagons with rods made of wood,  
With a secret of power tucked under the hood.

No radio playing, no heater or cooler inside,  
Just a rough and bumpy ride. The metal on the radiator  
Shines like a star, to show how special

And unique you are. The Witte Museum, they call it,  
the most affordable place, with a pedal for starting a race.  
So look out the window and touch the glass,

To honor this sculpture of the brass.  
And write down a story of how this has been,  
Before the giant engines and tires began.

*Amarachi Mbaka*