

FRIDAY



Birmingham (Seaholm) High grad Paul Stookey of Peter, Paul & Mary performs at Pine Knob.

SATURDAY



Comedian Richard Lewis to play Chaplin's Comedy Club East.

SUNDAY



History comes to life at Greenfield Village during Summer Festival.



Hot tip: St. Andrew's Society of Detroit hosts the 146th annual Highland Games Saturday at the Edsel and Eleanor Ford House in Grosse Pointe Shores.

Arts & ENTERTAINMENT

KEELY WYQONIK, EDITOR • 313-953-2105

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Carbureted Inspiration

Classic cars spark artist's imagination

By Mary Klemic • Staff Writer

Surface patterns, plays of light. Details such as these spark inspiration for Farmington Hills artist Tom Hale.

"Things like that stimulate me," he said.

For Hale, the surface of a car becomes a magical blending of color and reflection. His paintings of classic automobiles take a familiar form of transportation and give it the mood and tone of a private dream touching each individual personally.

And for Hale, the detail of communicating with people is what gives him pleasure with his art.

Hale is poster artist for this year's Concours d'Elegance, the classic car show at Meadow Brook Hall at Oakland University in Rochester Hills Sunday, Aug. 6.

Prize poster

Hale's poster, available to the public Aug. 4, conveys a sense of fantasy. The featured car, a 1930 Mercedes-Benz "Count Trossi" SSK, is shown from the rear, its wings and tail almost cloak-like, wisps of smoke trailing up from the exhaust. Part of its shape is repeated under the vehicle like a light shadow. The ground and trees and distant hills surrounding the car are awash in green, yellow and violet. Meadow Brook Hall is a soft, misty structure in the background. The scene strikes the viewer the way the elegant mansion and rolling grounds impress the visitor to Meadow Brook. The feeling is one of entering a fairy-tale world.

"I wanted to capture this surreal quality of the event. I didn't want to paint every brick on Meadow Brook."

The car is presented from the rear because of its distinction. "I wanted the feeling that you could almost step right into the car."

Flowering art

Among Hale's popular works are his large, colorful paintings pairing autos and flowers. Their characteristics are seen in the Concours d'Elegance poster. In these paintings, the automobile takes on the flowing visual grace of the flower petals, chrome glazing on the vehicle as dew sparkles on a leaf. The car is more mystical than mechanical, its power still present but more subtle. The image is authentic in style and detail, but the surface looks almost liquid as it bears reflections taking abstract shapes.

"I've been doing automotive art a long time and am as interested in painting automotive as ... the surface of painting."

"(The car is) such a powerful subject we can all relate to."

Thirteen other artists from all over the world will exhibit pieces for the Concours d'Elegance. A preview of their works will be at the new Chrysler Tech Center in Auburn Hills.

Personal touch

Hale was commissioned for the Concours d'Elegance poster in December 1993. Through someone he knew in a restoration company he was able to get permission to use the \$5 million car, owned by Ralph Lauren, as the model for the poster. He was supported in his inclination to "take a risk, try something adventurous."

The artist photographed the car as part of his research. He made preliminary sketches on legal pads, adding notes. He wasn't going for a high level of realism. The painting for the poster was six by four feet.

The annual Concours d'Elegance, now in its 17th year, is known worldwide. "So I felt pretty good." While the commission was a little intimidating, Hale still thought, "What a wonderful assignment."

"I feel really good about it. I feel it's a good piece of art."



Special touch: Tom Hale combines authentic detailing with a surreal look in his paintings of classic automobiles.

The work has a deeper, special meaning for Hale. It was the last painting his wife of 32 years, Micki, was involved with, offering ideas and critiques. She died in December.

"There's a lot of her in that painting."

At work

Hale works at his home in a studio he built about four years ago. It's a warm, open place filled with light, with a view looking out at woods.

"Every day is a work day."

Hale's awards include the Gold Medal of Honor, the highest award of the American Watercolor Society. He has been honored with an artist-in-residence award by the Farmington Area Arts Commission.

"I never have a problem with (inspiration for) paintings. They take me so long, weeks and months."

"It's a challenge. I'm never short of ideas for paintings, just short of time."

Next on Hale's busy artistic agenda is the Pebble Beach Classic Car Show in California. He is making an art work of the Chrysler Viper. The artist is also working on a series of Southwest images.

"I like to do architectural things."

Attraction

Hale had a long fascination with cars.

"I wanted to be a car designer. That was all I wanted to do from the time I was 7 years old."

He worked as a styling designer for 20 years for General Motors, Chrysler and American Motors. In 1986 he and Micki talked about how much he enjoyed art. He decided to take up painting full time.

"I never looked back, not for a moment."

"Nobody could pay me for the freedom that I have."

Hale shows his work all over the world and has a major buyer in Japan. He took part again in last month's Ann Arbor Art Fair. This is the kind of show he especially enjoys, one that gives him a chance to talk with the viewers. Sometimes a person will buy one of his works simply because he or she likes the art.

"That's exciting. I like that kind of sale."

"I do things in painting that some people respond to."

A youngster wrote Hale a letter after seeing his work in a show. The boy told him he liked his pictures, asked how he made them shiny and enclosed a drawing of his own. Hale wrote back to the youngster, encouraging him to "draw every day."

"Everything about the art is exciting. I meet interesting people I would never have a reason to meet. Ordinary people. The art takes me to some amazing places."

Paintings capture flash of 'grease lightning'

By Mary Klemic

The sleek motorcars zipping along the race track flash in and out of view like lightning. But these instant images with artists who catch the beauty and power of the vehicles and transfer that appeal to paintings and sculpture.

"It's serious art," said Jack Juratovic of Lake Orion, a founding member of the Automotive Pine Arts Society.

One of Juratovic's paintings bears this out: a dramatic image of an elegant 1925 auto tearing ahead of a giant locomotive, each vehicle's angled look giving it an intensity, the blazing sky filled with exhaust and clouds.

Charles Maher of Bloomfield Hills is another artist serious about the subject. His paintings of race cars seem to vibrate with motion, showing vibrantly colored vehicles surrounded with streaks and spots of color, flecks apparently spinning from blurred wheels.

"That's one of the reasons I like (auto art) ... to get into the energy," Maher said.

Juratovic and Maher are among the 12 automotive artists featured in an invitational show that is

part of TDM Meadow Brook Historic Races XI, taking place Friday-Sunday, Aug. 4-6, at the Waterford Hills Race Track in Clarkston.

The art exhibit has grown to become the largest motorcar art show. The race event, in conjunction with the Concours d'Elegance at Meadow Brook at Oakland University in Rochester, includes an ice cream social, music and a silent auction. Charles Morgan, joint managing director of the Morgan Motor Co., is grand marshal.

"It's real casual and comfortable," Maher said. The Waterford Hills Race Track, a small, tight track, is "very visitor friendly," Juratovic said.

These events are more related to motorcars going back through the 1920s while the Concours d'Elegance is more related to classic cars, the artists said.

The art tent will be set up at the track both Saturday and Sunday. The wide price range for the works begins at around \$25.

Besides Juratovic and Maher, the other Michigan artists are Bill Couch Jr. of Dryden and Harvey Winn of Ferndale. The remaining painters and sculptors come from Canada and Great Britain as

well as California, Indiana, Missouri, New York, North Carolina, Ohio and Pennsylvania.

Couch grew up with Hot Wheels toy race cars and watching actual races.

"My generation grew up watching that," he said. "... Live it all over again. There's some sort of bond there. I enjoy that aspect."

"There's some sort of allure, some connection there."

Maher is attracted by the bold graphics and colors on NASCAR vehicles.

"It's all just an instant thing," he said. "Two seconds later, it's gone."

Juratovic favors the motorcars from the '30s to '60s.

"I just happen to like the cars from that era. (They were) heroic. Things were evolving ... quickly back then," he said.

Admission is free Friday (practice day) and \$10 each day. The track opens 10 a.m. and official racing begins 3 p.m. each day. To get to the race track, take the Southview (Rice Knob) exit to Felton. Call (810) 650-5888 for information.



Auto Art: Paintings of race cars by Charles Maher of Bloomfield Hills seem to vibrate with motion, showing vibrantly colored vehicles surrounded with streaks and spots of color, flecks apparently spinning from blurred wheels.