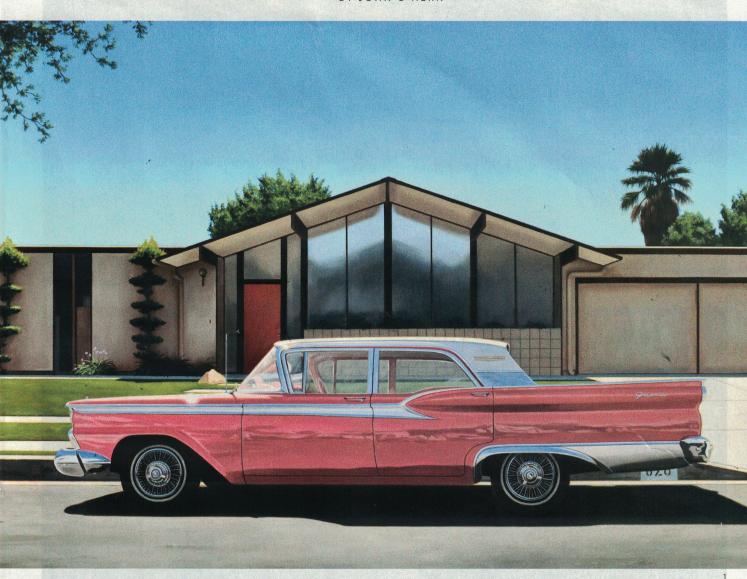
HITtheROAD

BY JOHN O'HERN



hen Claude Monet (1840-1926) painted La Gare Saint-Lazare in 1877, Paris had only recently been rebuilt from medieval chaos to broad, apartment-lined boulevards. One of the new buildings can be seen through the smoke and steam in the station. Monet painted the station on a sunny day with the light animating the atmosphere, lighting the distant buildings and casting shadows throughout the station, an

Impressionistic view of modern Paris.

Also in 1877, the Southern Pacific Railroad completed its line through the desert to the ocean. Part of the land it passed through had been occupied by the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians for thousands of years. An oasis the Cahuilla called Se-Khi (boiling water), later became Palm Springs, California. Beginning in the 1920s, visionary architects began building sleek, modern homes and other buildings in Palm Springs. The area became a mecca

for midcentury modern design.

Today, Danny Heller combines architecture and automobiles in his paintings that celebrate midcentury Palm Springs and the area. He says, "Working in a photorealistic fashion, I highlight various elements of midcentury modernism—walls of intricate breeze block patterns, dynamic rooflines of tract homes, fins of a 1958 Cadillac, kidneyshaped swimming pools—and how they combine with the surrounding environment to create an idealized setting. What's







1. George Billis Gallery, Eichler with Galaxie, oil on canvas, 30 x 44", by Danny Heller. 2. Somerville Manning Gallery, No Plan (Part 2), oil over watercolor and gouache on panel, 15 x 37", by Francis DiFronzo. 3. Cher Pruys, Fall Splendor, acrylic, 10 x 13¾" 4. Miles McEnery Gallery, The King, oil on canvas, 84 x 78", by Julio Larraz.

important for me is not just a respectful reproduction of these touchstones of design, but communicating their optimism and continued relevance in our daily lives. In doing so, I'm helping people value the past, aid in its preservation and learn from it in order to build the future."

Joseph Eichler was a real estate developer who brought modern design to the masses, building 11,000 homes across California—but not in Palm Springs. A company is now rectifying that by working with designs by the architects who worked for Eichler to create homes for the 21st century called Desert Eichlers.

Heller's Eichler with Galaxie features a '59 Ford Galaxie sitting proudly in front of an Eichler home in Orange County. The bright southern California sunshine, the colorful paint on the Galaxie and the

confident modernism of the building speak of an optimism we need to be reminded of.

Francis DiFronzo's 1955 Chevy Bel Air Nomad sits neglected in the desert, someone's optimistic dream come to naught. DiFronzo remembers his grandfather's Nomad sitting unused in his garage and the distortions he saw through the innovative curved glass at the rear of the vehicle.

His family took frequent road trips when he was a boy and he grew up experiencing America through the windows of their '75 Oldsmobile. Now he takes road trips with his daughter who is seeing the country through the windows of their Subaru. "My paintings are more about loss and decomposition," he explains. "The cars are like dinosaurs. I'm sort of harkening back to my childhood. The paintings are almost a farewell to those times."

The Nomad's taillights in No Plan (Part 2) are missing—perhaps salvaged to restore a car that is now cruising the streets of Palm Springs. DiFronzo's paintings connect past, present and future—the ritual of road trips passed from his parents to him to his daughter as well as a future in which we may travel to find safer havens and scarce resources.

A Middle Eastern potentate with immense financial resources from plundered natural resources stands with his glimmering jet in *The King* by **Julio Larraz**. The heat of the desert sun shimmers off the metal surfaces of the plane, obliterating them as if they are about to evaporate like a forgotten dream or mirages on the horizon. Exiled from Cuba with his family in 1961, Larraz moved to Miami. He later made his living drawing political caricatures

COLLECTOR'S FOCUS PLANES, TRAINS AND AUTOMOBILES









5. Claude Monet (1840-1926), La Gare Saint-Lazare, 1877, oil on canvas, 29½ x 41³/₀". Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France. 6. CityFolk Gallery, The Wounded Ace, pencil, colored pencil and watermedia collage, 17 x 14", by Robert A. Nelson. 7. CityFolk Gallery, The Motorcycle, pencil, colored pencil and watermedia collage, 40 x 32", by Robert A. Nelson. 8. Hockaday Museum of Art, Heavy Metal Thunder, oil, 30 x 40", by David Tutwiler. 9. Jarrod Wilson, Goddess of Speed, transparent watercolor, 15 x 19" 10. CityFolk Gallery, Neighborhood Gathers to See the New Car, pencil, colored pencil and watermedia collage, 15 x 21", by Robert A. Nelson.

published in the country's most important newspapers and magazines. The influence of David Levine, painter and caricaturist, and, later, Burt Silverman and Aaron Shikler who created master character studies, allowed him to begin concentrating on painting. He calls his paintings "narratives," but narratives that allow the viewer to read into them what

they want

In the pages of this special collector's focus, readers will find more examples of the art of the automobile, as well as trains and aircraft—creations born out of the Anthropocene that are both utilitarian and beautiful in their own rights.

The highly imaginative artwork of Robert A. Nelson can be found

at CityFolk Gallery in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. "Robert Nelson is considered the Last Draughtsman. His identifiable style and drawing skills are unparalleled," says Karen Anderer, owner and curator at CityFolk Gallery. "Born in 1925, Robert Nelson is the epitome of a dedicated life. Part of the pop culture scene in New York, Bob made a choice





to continue teaching when he had the is the origin of Gallery Row in the city opportunity for real acclaim. He has worked in nearly every medium but always returns to drawing. Considered the last draughtsman, with a steadfast group of collectors and new collectors discovering him all the time, he really is still very much a hidden gem."

CityFolk Gallery, established in 2004,

of Lancaster, a thriving arts destination. The gallery represents some of the finest national and international artists with a focus on the narrative, both the overt and the hidden.

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