

Art of the Automobile

Ken Scaglia's artwork is on exhibit in Westport

Growing up in Indiana surrounded by farmland, Weston artist Ken Scaglia was raised on the excitement of the Indy 500 and a dragster housed in a local gas station. Many of the classic cars collected today filled the streets of his childhood, and, as a child, he began endlessly drawing Ford, Chevy, and Plymouth muscle cars.

Mr. Scaglia eventually got degrees in illustration technology and visual communication from Purdue University and a master's of fine arts in graphic design from Yale, but after years of working in graphic design, decorative painting, and teaching, he rediscovered his love of painting cars in 2005 when starting to paint again for himself.

An exhibit of Scaglia's photorealistic paintings, "Art of the Automobile," celebrates the elegant lines and polished surfaces of classic cars. It will be in The Great Hall of The Westport Library through Jan. 8, 2014.

An opening reception for the artist was held Friday, Oct. 4, in The Great Hall.

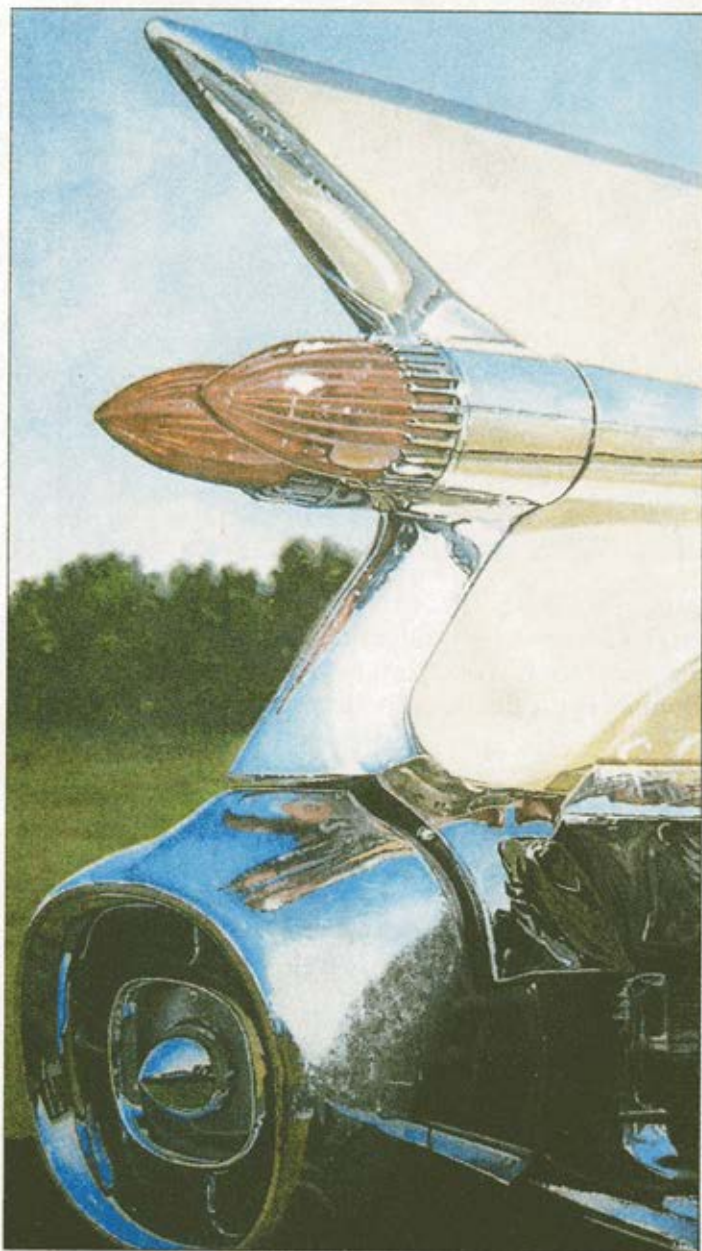
Mr. Scaglia's favorite cars to paint are pre-1970 models, whose chrome, deep clear-coated paint, and sculptural bodywork seize his attention.

His challenges as a painter arise from a private bet he has with himself about whether he can render a piece of chrome, smooth paint color, or reflection using his self-restricting painting methods: He uses only acrylic paint, water, and brushes—no airbrushes, drying extenders, or glazes. He achieves color depth with thin layers of paint, making smooth transitions with a brush and considerable anxiety that the paint will dry too fast. He says, however, that the entire process helps him focus, commit, and get ready to work on a painting for weeks.

Mr. Scaglia works both as a realist artist and also a trompe l'oeil painter, and his work is found in private collections in Connecticut and around the country. He has lived in Weston with his family for more than 20 years.

For more information, call 203-291-4800, or visit westportlibrary.org.

"Yellow Fin" is one of the works by Weston artist Ken Scaglia on exhibit at the Westport Public Library through Jan. 8, 2014. —Ken Scaglia photo



Kings and queens of the road showcased in library exhibit

By Mike Lauterborn

Whether a car buff or admirer of fine visuals, the Westport Library's new exhibit, "Art of the Automobile," is worth more than a drive-by.

The exhibit of photo-realistic works by Ken Scaglia opened last Friday evening at the library, and among the attendees were Ann Sheffler, wife of race car enthusiast Bill Scheffler; area artists like Leonard Everett Fisher and Roe Halper, and a young racer from Stamford named Sarah Edwards.

Edwards drives a 1,000-horsepower dragster called Queen Bee, which Scaglia features in a painting in the exhibit. Edwards drives on the National Hot Rod Association circuit.

Scaglia has lived with his family in Weston more than 20 years, but he grew up in Indiana farmland. He was influenced by the excitement surrounding the Indianapolis 500 race, as well as a local gas station that housed a dragster. The streets of his childhood were filled by many of the classic cars collected today, and as a kid he endlessly drew muscle cars of every make.

"As a kid, I had a ride in a dune buggy, and it was great," he said Friday.

Regarding his initial paintings, Scaglia said, "I first copied the style of the artists I admired. Then I thought, 'I can do this.'"

Scaglia's first work depicted a motorcycle — a 1938 Harley Davidson. "It struck a chord," he said. "I started looking at cars and engines in a different way — their design, craftsmanship. I was amazed at all the parts that move a car forward. I like the details and, if my work gets others, that's the gravy."

The artist favors cars made prior to 1970. "They have curves and chrome," he said. "After 1970, they got too smoothed out."

Asked about his own



Mike Lauterborn/For the Westport News
Painter Ken Scaglia talks about his work at the opening of "Art of the Automobile," showcasing his paintings, last Friday at the Westport Library. Among the paintings on display are, at right, "Dreaming in Italian" and, below, "Kaiser Darrin" and "Black Imperial."

current "ride," Scaglia chuckled. "I drive a fuel-efficient Honda CRV," he said, adding quickly, "but I used to drive a Triumph TR-6."

Scaglia also owned a 1971 Karmann Ghia, which he described as "pristine," but had to sell to be able to attend college.

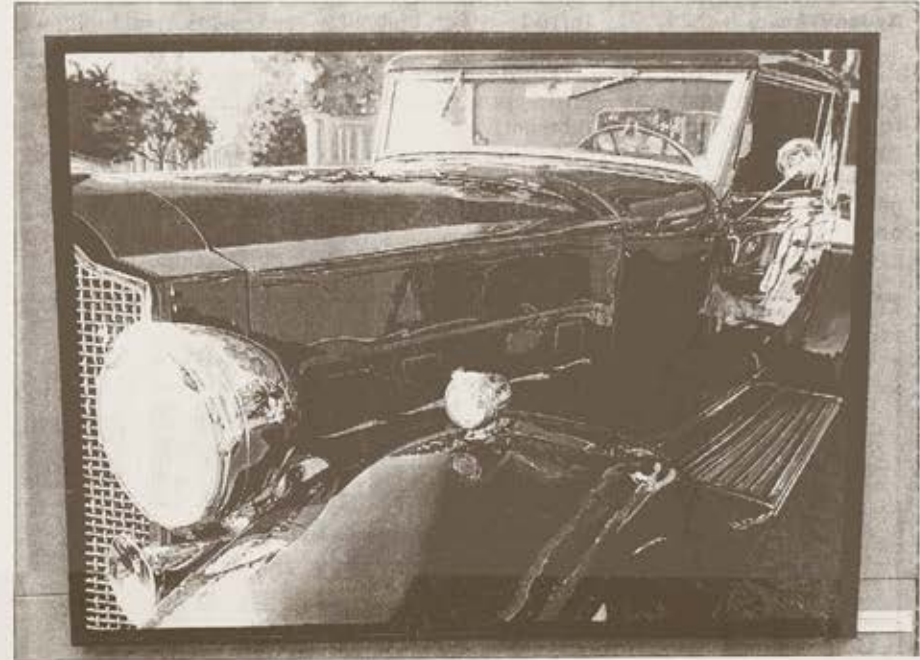
The artist described his approach to art: "I love acrylic because it dries fast. I also hate acrylic because it dries fast," he said.

He begins with a photo and then creates a composition, which he builds on. Each painting takes a minimum of 15 hours to create, with some taking as long as 80 hours. "The more details and reflections, the more time it takes," he said.

Scaglia's wife, Jan, a graphic designer who met Ken in grad school, said, "He does most of his paint-

ing in the summer, often morning to night," she said. "Despite that, we are very proud of him."

Scaglia says he keeps finding new cars that inspire him to paint. "I go to the Caffeine & Carburetors Sunday meet in New Canaan," he said. "I saw a Corvette there that has interest."



"Art of the Automobile" runs through Jan. 8 in the Great Hall of the Westport Library. For information, visit <http://bit.ly/1gegZXm>.

