

## ESCAPE ROADS

# Light fantastic

Automotive artist Barry Rowe

The elegant Minerva glows in the golden light, light that also reflects off the water in the background and dapples the lawn. Such is the scene depicted on the cover of the program for the 48th annual Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance.

Few automotive artists have the chance to paint the cover art for this top concours. Fewer still get the opportunity two years running. It's all the more remarkable for Englishman Barry Rowe, who has been a full-time automotive artist only since 1994. Although a relative newcomer to the field, he's been preparing all his life for this career.

Having grown up in Coventry as the son of a Jaguar employee, Rowe has been "mad about cars" for as long as he can remember. The first car he ever sketched was a Jaguar XK-120 he drew from photos his father brought home.

When he was 13, Rowe's artistic aptitude earned him a scholarship to Coventry Art School. Within two years, he was having his cartoons published three times a week. Whenever he could, though, Rowe bicycled off to see the races at Silverstone.

Rowe left school to join the art staff of a Birmingham advertising agency. At first he was considered fit for making tea and sweeping up, but he watched and learned and became an art director in his own right. Soon, his automotive obsession and day job intersected as he worked on projects for Coventry Climax, India Tyres and others.

Thanks to motoring photographer Edward Eves, by the time Rowe was 20 he was receiving regular commissions to do the covers of *Sporting Motorist* magazine. In 1964, Rowe took a position that combined the illustration and art direction of materials for automakers, including Austin, Ford, Rover and Triumph. Two years later, on the day his second child was born, Rowe bravely launched his career as a full-time freelance illustrator.

For almost 30 years, illustration for a variety of clients was enough to raise three children. But the turning point came in 1994 when he entered a portrait of Juan Manuel



**BARRY ROWE BRINGS** a lifetime of automotive passion to his vocation as full-time automotive artist.

Fangio in a Sotheby's/Transport Trust competition. To Rowe and wife Sandra's surprise, this early work on canvas won a £10,000 prize and gave him the boost needed to launch a career as a painter.

In the six years that Rowe has focused on his painting, he has built a fine reputation in automotive circles and became a member of the Automotive Fine Arts Society.

His style combines the strokes and underpainted colors of impressionism with art deco influences. But the most striking characteristic of his work is the deft manner in which he captures the golden light of dawn and dusk. It's no surprise that Rowe treasures the early morning and late afternoon walks with the family dogs—they give him a chance to unwind and study the best light of the day.

Although automotive art—acrylic on canvas—dominates Rowe's work these days, he accepts commissions from several clients, like Royal Caribbean Lines, Louis Vuitton and the Royal Mail. But Rowe takes his greatest pleasure in depicting the days when racing cars smelled of castor oil and fans were properly attired.

—Jonathan A. Stein

## THE FUTURE

June 1-4, 2000

**Midwest Fiero Regionals  
Wisconsin Dells, Wis.**

Ninth annual gathering of Fiero clubs from Wisconsin, Minnesota, Illinois and Michigan for tech sessions, car show, rally and more. For information, call (414) 282-3577 and ask for Tom.

June 11, 2000

**Concours d'Elegance at Ault Park  
Cincinnati**

This year's featured marque is BMW. The event, which includes an art show, raises money for arthritis research. Call Kathleen Hilsinger at (513) 471-4545 for details.

## THE MARKET

**KEITH McCORMICK AUCTION,  
PALM SPRINGS, CALIFORNIA**

Date: Feb. 26-27, 2000

Car: 1969 Plymouth Road Runner. Bright red with black stripes, tan bench seat interior. Functional "Air Grabber" hood induction system. No power steering or brakes. Red-line tires. 383-cid V8 with four-speed manual. Freshly restored to a very high standard, with excellent panel fit, good chrome and a highly detailed engine compartment. In far better condition than when it left the factory as new. Results: Sold at \$24,675



At the recent Barrett-Jackson auction, muscle cars were the flavor of the month, and the question was whether the high prices of Arizona would be sustained in the real world. This sale says they will be. Just a year ago, a Road Runner with a 383-cid engine, restored to this standard, would have been a \$15,000-to-\$18,000 car. Today, it's a \$22,000-to-\$25,000 car at any auction in the United States. If equipped with bucket seats and a 440-cid, four-barrel engine, it could have brought in the mid-\$30,000s. Throw in a 426-cid Hemi and you're looking at a \$50,000 car. Muscle car prices, for nicely restored cars, are going nowhere but up. —Keith Martin