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AUTOSTRADA

FORUM

THE PASSION, HISTORY & JOURNEY

JAY KOKA

ICONIC CANADIAN AUTOMOTIVE ARTIST

Jay Koka Studio released an attractive art book called 30:30 last year to mark the 30th anniversary of its founding and Jay Koka's career as a professional artist. The core concept of the book is that the artist selected an image from each of the 30 years that was especially important and representative of his work that year.

Even a cursory examination of the 30 year gallery shows an exceptional range of work and perhaps even more importantly, the maturation of style and technique. These aren't words that are too often applied to automotive themed art but Koka's work is much, much

more than that. Koka says "Although I'm a lifelong motorhead, my interest in automotive fine art is in the context in which the automobile exists rather than the depiction of the automobile itself. The interplay of the vehicle and its environment and its human operators is to me the most worthwhile pursuit of fine art..."

Look at "918 on Ocean" and "Breathless in Shanghai" the award winning works from 2016. Although the "car" occupies a focal point in the painting, the painting isn't really about the car in either case. In 2015, Koka surprised everyone at the

annual Automotive Fine Art Society's premiere exhibition at the famed Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance by featuring a major work set in the Chinese Quarter of Hanoi, Vietnam. The cluttered Quarter of "Old Propaganda Posters" presents a surprising, perhaps even disconcerting background for the gorgeous LaFerrari.

Initially known for a highly realistic style and a technical approach to his automotive-themed art, half way through his career, Koka replaced the small and tightly rendered gouache works with very large format canvases with a notable disregard for detail and an



emphasis on explorations in texture, form and color. Always creatively restless and endlessly experimenting in the style of his work, Koka today alternates between these two style extremes realism and impressionism exist side by side in Koka's body of work. And it may surprise you to know that this world-class, internationally collected automotive themed artist lives right here in Canada...in Kitchener.

Koka has been featured artist and poster artist for many international automotive events including twice for the famed Pebble Beach Concours and three times for the Meadow Brook Concours/St John's Concours. In addition, he has been selected to produce the event art thirteen times for the Ferrari Club of America Annual Meets (including the 50th Anniversary) and for six years, the Cavallino Ferrari Classic of Palm Beach.

Among other high profile events, Koka has been commissioned twice to produce the featured art for the Barrett-Jackson Auction in Scottsdale Arizona (USA) as well as the iconic Daytona 500 and 24 Hours of Daytona and, most recently, the North American International Auto Show in Detroit. When Nissan celebrated the 35th anniversary of their iconic "Z", Koka created the art for the worldwide launch at the SEMA show in Las Vegas. And when the Chrysler Corporation opened their new tech centre and headquarters in Rochester Michigan, Koka created "Metamorphosis", a huge 108 sq ft work for the lobby.

A 28 year member of the Automotive Fine Arts Society, his work has been extensively reproduced and he has received numerous awards including the prestigious Peter Helck Award (for "Savannah No5"), multiple Athena's at Pebble Beach (most recently a sixth), the Lincoln Awards at Pebble Beach, multiple Awards of Excellence and The Stanley Wanlass Awards twice at Meadow Brook and "Best of Shows" at numerous other events. In 2007, Koka was featured in a three-and-a-half month long one man show... a retrospective spanning 20 years... titled "The Art of Jay Koka" at the National Automobile Museum in Reno Nevada (USA). Later that year, most of the exhibit's paintings moved on to the Petersen Museum in Los Angeles for a 5 month showing.





Although known for subjects ranging from sports to classics, Ferrari simply makes up a very large part of his body of work. Six times poster artist for the Cavallino Ferrari Classic and thirteen times for the Ferrari Club of America International Meets... more than any other single artist. Why? Koka captures the essence, the very feel of the car and the passion of the owner. Look at "Sunday Drive" for simple exuberance at the wheel... look at "High Rollers" for the juxtaposition of three all-out performance cars in the middle of a classic architectural setting. "Louis' Garage" is another well-known example. Not only was the print edition sold out quickly but the Ferrari Club of Italy even used it for a Christmas card and it along with two other works were invited for exhibition at the Centario Ferrari in Italy. John Barnes of Cavallino Magazine wrote of Koka's work: "It is the uniqueness of each Ferrari that captivates us most often and we

appreciate an artist who can capture particular and often hidden features - opening our eyes to it in his art."

One much appreciated aspect of Koka's work is that he never does the same painting twice. There is an artistic integrity to each new work... even when of similar subject matter and concept. An excellent example of this are the two "Drift" paintings. "Drift No1" is a D-type Jaguar at high speed. It is impossible to focus on any part of the painting yet it is still very high realism executed in gouache on board. "Drift No2" is a Porsche Carrera GT at speed. Same concept but the exact opposite in style... carefully considered smooth color devoid of significant detail in an acrylic on canvas.

Koka enjoyed a successful corporate career in marketing prior to the formation of his Studio in 1985. He is a computer "geek" and an internet "pioneer" being

one of the first artists to fully embrace the concept of a virtual gallery. Koka is also an avid superbike rider...his last ride a Ducati 999... and a lifelong automotive enthusiast most recently driving a Porsche 987 Cayman S and a Mercedes-Benz CLS63 AMG. He has two sons, Michael, a graduate in art and design and James, a telecommunications director. Koka has his home and studio in Kitchener with his wife Catherine.

Today, Koka divides his time between painting and extensive long-distance travel with Cathy. Always to exotic locales, the travel has inspired a series of well-known and well-celebrated paintings.

Koka accepts a small number of private and corporate commissions for original art each year. The Studio also publishes a wide range of fine art reproductions. There is an extensive site at www.jaykokastudio.com and an archive site at www.k20.com