

IMAGINE!

**Amazing Automobile Concept Art
From the 1930s to the 1980s**



DALTON WATSON FINE BOOKS

PATRICK G. KELLEY

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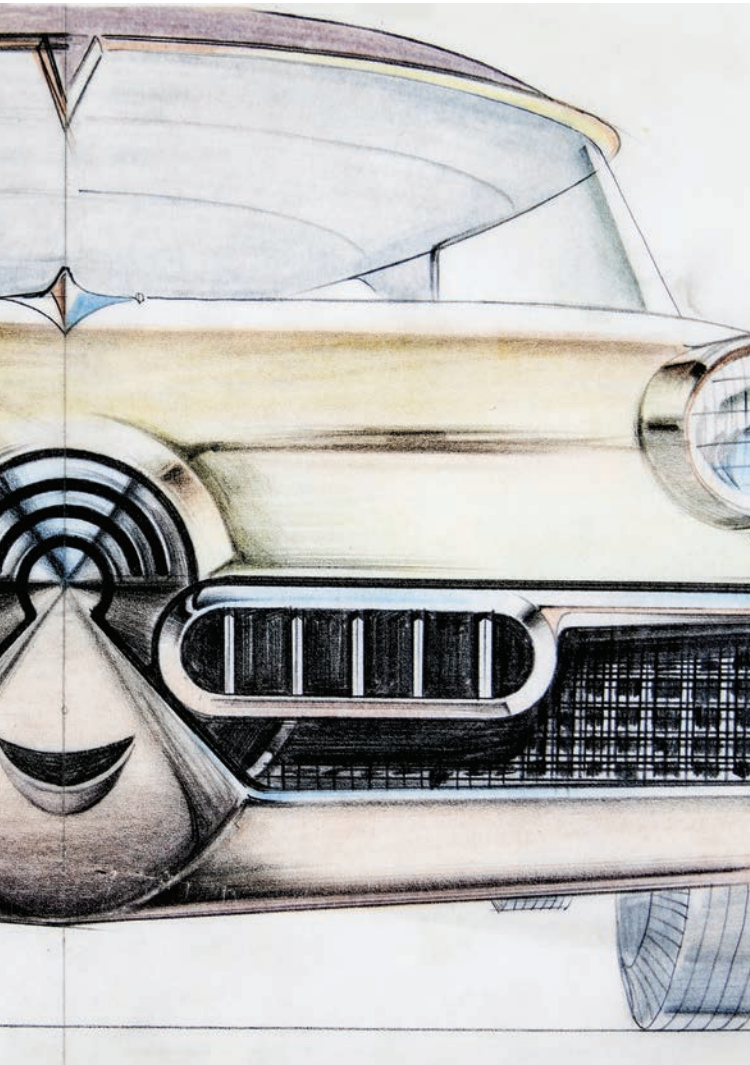
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PREFACE



Whenever I mention that I have a collection of automobile concept art, the usual response is 'Oh... that's nice' or similar feigned comments. But, nobody really knows what I am talking about. If I had a stamp collection or a hoard of baseball cards, then people might understand. But interest in my particular passion usually broadens after a viewing and brief introduction and explanation. Questions are asked and requests to see other images will usually follow. When it is explained what was involved to get a 'mind's eye' automobile concept onto paper and how many ladders the artists had to climb for them to be seen, and when my visitors realize how little of this type of artwork still exists (perhaps as much as 98% of all concept art work was destroyed), then I have them interested. What a fascinating story this is, with so many layers, twists and turns, involving individuals with creative minds. The "Big Three" automakers, GM, Ford and Chrysler in Detroit, and their competitors were each trying to out-do, out-create and ultimately out-sell each other while the automotive artists were competing amongst themselves, all while staying within very specific guidelines.

I have always been interested in cars... and like most boys, I clearly remember the first one that 'got me hooked': a 1964 E-type Jaguar. A black coupe with wide whitewall tires and red leather interior belonging to the mother of a friend of mine. It seemed so out of character for Fresno, California where I grew up. What was she doing in this stunning creation? What was this car and where did it come from? When she came

home from work, I always lingered nearby to size up the car. It was really unlike anything I had ever seen before: the lines, the aerodynamic nature of the body, the bright chrome wire wheels and those whitewall tires. The Jaguar made me think about design, even back then. Why was this car built in this striking fashion and who was it built for? My friend's mother had money and class. She dressed tastefully and furnished her home accordingly.

Fresno was a small town but rich with racing history. My father took me wherever the racing was happening, to the 'hardtops' at Kearney Bowl and Clovis Speedway, or the NASCAR track in Hanford and the Drag Strip in Raisin City. The Vukovich family's racing accomplishments put Fresno on the map with Indy driver Billy's exploits and his tragic death. The big Fresno 'Autorama' came through town every year. It was like a circus for car enthusiasts. The young men who forged this 'Kustom Kar Kraze' were as talented as any designer and they all came to Fresno. I would go from car to car, looking at these wild concepts and wondering about the fellows who created them. I was lucky enough to meet George Barris, Gene Winfield, Daryl Starbird and the wild Ed 'Big Daddy' Roth at the show as I marveled at their creations. Roth would be painting an image of you on the back of a T-shirt for very little money - albeit out of my pay grade. Barris and Winfield would be chatting with Fresno's own legendary Blackie Gegian and I was more than eager to go and shake their hands.

At one point in my early auto appreciation days,

I took a job that was advertised as 'delivery driver for a local pharmacy'. I found that it did involve some delivery, but most of my time was spent washing, waxing and detailing the pharmacist's fine collection of automobiles. Everyday a new car would appear and I was instructed as to the finer points of how certain cars were to be cared for. Pharmacist Ben had a collection of early Thunderbirds, early 1970s Cadillacs and Lincolns, and a vast array of Chrysler 300s, complete with 'hemi' power plants. He also had a 1932 Chrysler Imperial and a 1956 Continental. As different as these cars were, they each had unique qualities that I started to appreciate. Although they were massive in size, the 300s could scorch the pavement with their horsepower and I swear if they had wings, they would fly. The Continental had so many interesting design elements, that it soon became my favorite. It still is on my 'short list' and a constant source of fascination. I was starting to take more interest in design and styling, what these cars revealed and about the people who owned them.

Every design had to be drawn, but they first had to be imagined. Many of the examples in this book were 'student' work - prepared for portfolios or for presentations to the 'Big Three' and affiliated studios with the objective of finding gainful employment. Young artists at the design factories and studios would start work on one small part, and if that showed promise, they moved on to design other more significant pieces. From the smallest components to the largest full car renderings, from the horn button

to the entire rear end, and finally to completed automobile models, one can only imagine the wild and amazing drawings that must have been discarded because they might have been 'too far out', not ready for the buying public or not technically feasible. The only way the images in this collection physically left the design centers or factories was if the designer took them home. Many designs and drawings were lost when they were damaged by time, rodents or were just considered old junk to be tossed out. Michigan experiences fierce winter weather and pipes break and basements flood. Dad or grandpa's old car drawings might have just been floating in the mess downstairs and been summarily burned or thrown away without any consideration that they might be of value.

I first became interested in automobile concept art about 15 years ago. I have been a collector with different interests over the years and frequently attended the San Francisco Art Deco Show of antiques and collectibles, where I invariably found many interesting items. On this particular day, I came upon a small booth with a sole proprietor who was selling some art work that I thought was simply incredible. This was original illustration art - the art work seen on the covers of dime novels, men's magazines or original illustrations for magazine articles. The images that I was most interested in were usually the wildest, for example, from 'True Detective' or 'Astounding Stories' or other vintage magazine covers which have since become collectible and very valuable. There might be an image of a handsome man holding his woman

tight around her waist - her face full of terror - her blouse torn in various places. He would be swinging from a tree vine, all the time firing his gun behind him at a horde of blood-thirsty natives that were ready to kill our hero and his girl in a most gruesome way. Impressive images to say the least, but the possibility of any of these paintings adorning my walls were less than zero. How would I possibly explain an image like this to my wife or company?

As I chatted with the owner, I noticed that there were a few drawings of cars on another wall, and was equally taken by this 'automobile concept art'. He told me the story of the 'Golden Age of Automobile Design' and that these were quite rare due to the small number that survived. I decided to purchase one piece for a modest price. It was a very simple line drawing in black and white from the 1930s and was signed and dated by the artist. Interesting, I thought, and much easier to take home and put on the wall. I saw this fellow again the next time the show came to San Francisco and we talked more about the concept art. I bought a few more pieces and was slowly appreciating how compelling this work was with its interesting back story. Thanks to my pal and co-conspirator, Leo, I have since collected a large quantity of this artwork. I recently decided that I wanted to share these images with others as I believe that this is an American story now almost lost. A period when the automobile companies were kings of American industry, when imagination and creativity were driven and encouraged, and where innovative artists were

“*The art pieces shown here call back to another time when the artist had to keep an open mind and eye to the future.*”

highly valued for their work. I want people to know this story. If this work had been totally destroyed, the story may have never been told, remembered or honored.

This is a sampling of some of the pieces that I have collected. Some you may like — others disdain. It is not important that you like them all. But, please do take the time to see what they express and what the artist was hoping to achieve at that moment. These men and women were first and foremost designers and many of the artists shown here prospered in and out of the automotive industry. However, some never drew again or were lost to wars, changing economics or the inability to change with the times. But what they represent to me is a lost art form and a lost story of America.

Detroit's factories and subsequent smaller support companies are now but a shadow of things past. Today's young designers, while certainly multi-talented, are designing via CAD/CAM (computer-aided design) and using new advanced design software and often end up in Europe where they tend to have a freer hand. One thing, that they all have in common, is a strong tie to the past that still incorporates 'old school' design techniques including clay and foam mock-ups.

Few American cars that are on the market these days are appealing to me. The current Ford GT and Chevy's Corvette are certainly stunning cars, but even these are well-crafted extensions from days past and are hardly ground-breaking design. The art pieces shown here call back another time when the artist had to keep an open mind and an eye to the future. What was the future going to look like? How will we travel? What will power our vehicles? Will it be water, air, solar, nuclear, battery, electricity or something else entirely that we have yet to consider. Will we ultimately be better off with new modes of

transportation? Will we need to completely redesign our entire infrastructure to accommodate our travel modes? The questions are many, but the answers always come back to using Imagination.

This book is not trying to rewrite the automobile concept story — it is primarily about the artwork that I have collected and the stories that the artists had to tell. There are many fine publications available to dig deeper into the history of the automobile, and I encourage you to do so.

I did not have a father who worked for GM, nor did I go to art school or live next door to Syd Mead. I do not have Detroit DNA in my blood and I never dreamed of being an automobile designer. I am simply a man who fell in love with automobile concept art, and became interested in the artists and stylists who drew them. My book is a showcase to honor this creative work. I have included short biographies on most of the artists, but they are less than complete and in some cases unavailable or unknown. Many of these individuals could have whole volumes dedicated to their work and stories. I wanted to let the images see the light of day again, not to be stored away and not to be lost to time and other misfortunes. I also want their families, friends and colleagues to see the works that they created. The images in the book are presented in their raw form. The paper or board that they were executed on is old and some have scars from time, but they are real and that is how we decided to present them. These pieces are primarily survivors and it's a minor miracle that they exist. I hope you enjoy them!

Patrick G. Kelley
July 2019



HISTORY OF AUTOMOBILE DESIGN

“ ...a good sense of artistic forms and proportions must enter into its successful practice. The eye must be trained to see, and the hand to make, lines of beauty and utility, and the color sense must be cultivated... if these things are absent in the creation of an automobile body, it may, when finished, be a useful thing, but it will never reach the dignity of a masterpiece. ”

Andrew F. Johnson

When we talk about automobile concept art, it is covering the evolution of design and styling over the last century. Design covers both the exterior and interior style, including the trim, color and graphics. This book mostly deals with exterior design although there are several images of interesting interiors.

An automobile designer is challenged with combining aesthetics and ergonomics while staying within exacting rules and regulations. He or she must work together with engineers to ensure that what is envisioned can be created. They also need to make the vehicle look appealing or their work will be for naught. Today, sketches become rendered graphics via CAD (computer-aided design), while, as in the past, models are created and scrutinized during the entire process.

Ever since the first automobile was built, designers have been imagining or envisioning the style of an automobile. The earliest car builders were coach and carriage makers and worked out of premises that were more like blacksmith shops than design studios. The designs were primarily basic, black and plain though the look later became distinct due to the work of good staff designers and stylists.

Andrew F. Johnson can be said to be one of the most influential people in the design of the automobile and many consider him to be the “father of automobile body design.” Born in Nova Scotia in 1854, Johnson moved to Maine in 1870 and was an employee of the Smith and Leslie Company, which built sleighs and carriages. He trained at the Technical School for Carriage Draftsmen and Mechanics in New York until 1885, when he won a scholarship to the Albert DuPont School in Paris, France to study carriage design. Johnson returned to New York to serve as principal of the Technical School for Carriage and Automobile Draftsmen and Mechanics until purchasing the school in 1918. In 1920, Johnson went to Detroit to teach Automobile Design at Cass Technical High School and until his death in 1943, he taught over 2,300 students through his correspondence school. Many of his students became highly influential in the field of automobile design. Johnson’s aim was to inspire his students by cultivating their eyes and hands to create beautiful form in their automobile designs.

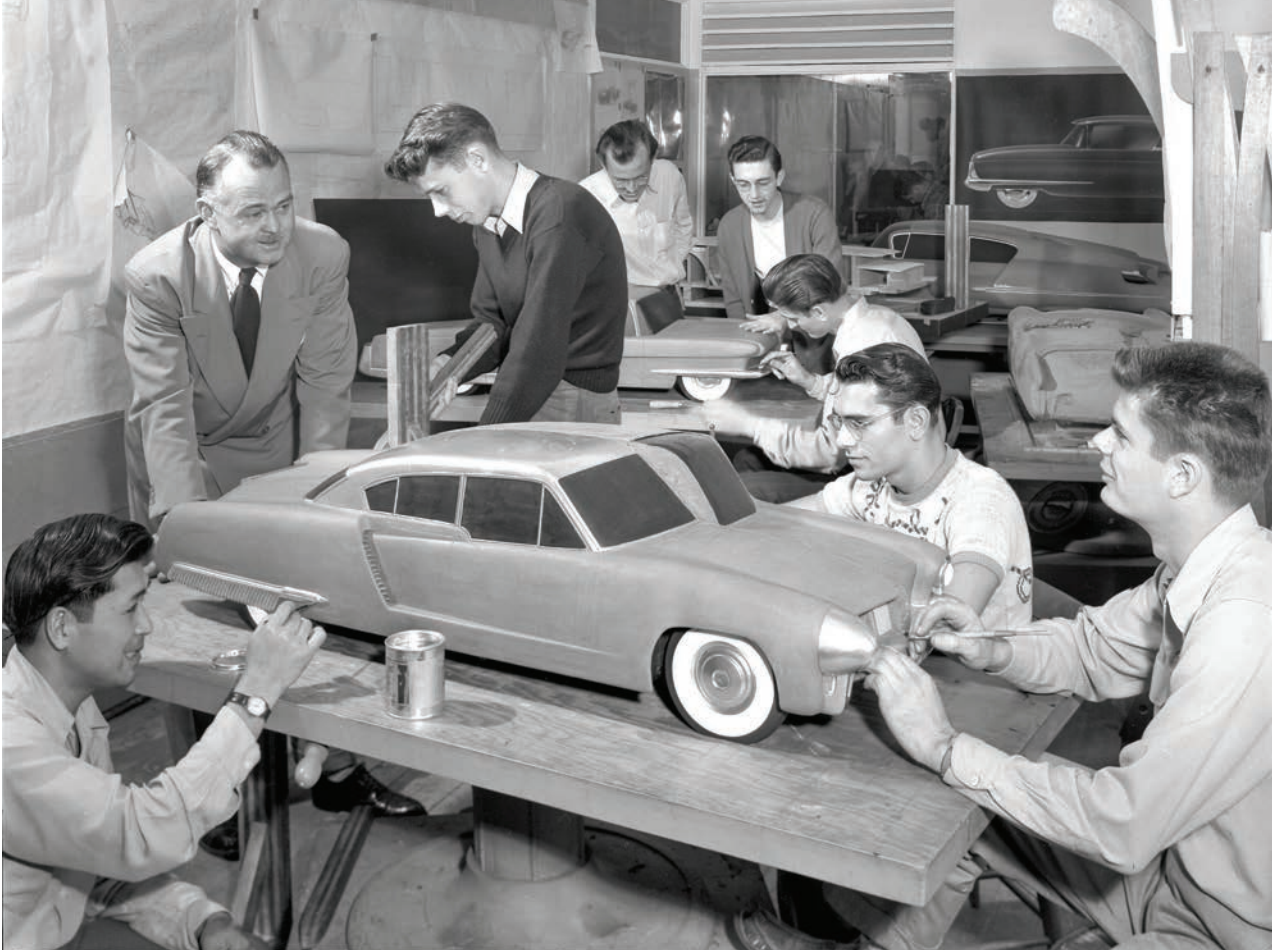
In 1903, Henry Ford launched his Ford Motor Company and although his ‘automobile’ was not the first made (that honor went to the Benz Patent-Motorwagen in 1885), it was wildly popular. He introduced the first assembly line in 1913, which was

an industrial revolution. Millions of units of both the Ford Model T which was first produced in 1908 and the Model A which replaced it in 1927-1931 were sold. The outward appearance of the Fords changed very little during that time and they dominated the landscape with their 'same' appearance while many other consumer goods were going through major design changes, and customers soon demanded more attractive and exciting cars not just functional or 'available in black only'.

Alfred P. Sloan can be credited with the introduction of design changes in the automobile industry when he suggested the creation of new car designs on an annual basis, or 'planned obsolescence'. As GM's President he also established a pricing structure in which there was a ladder of 'success' that the customer could climb as he or she made more money and decided to spend it within the 'GM family'. These two innovations pushed GM past Ford in sales in 1931, particularly as Ford was reluctant to come up with new and exciting designs or engineering innovations.

Strother MacMinn and students looking at finished 1/8 scale models of cars. (L-R): Ron Tonkin, Strother MacMinn, Stewart Reed, Doug Wilson and Rolph Kneefel. Photographer unknown.
/ COPYRIGHT ART CENTER SCHOOL OF DESIGN, PASADENA, CA

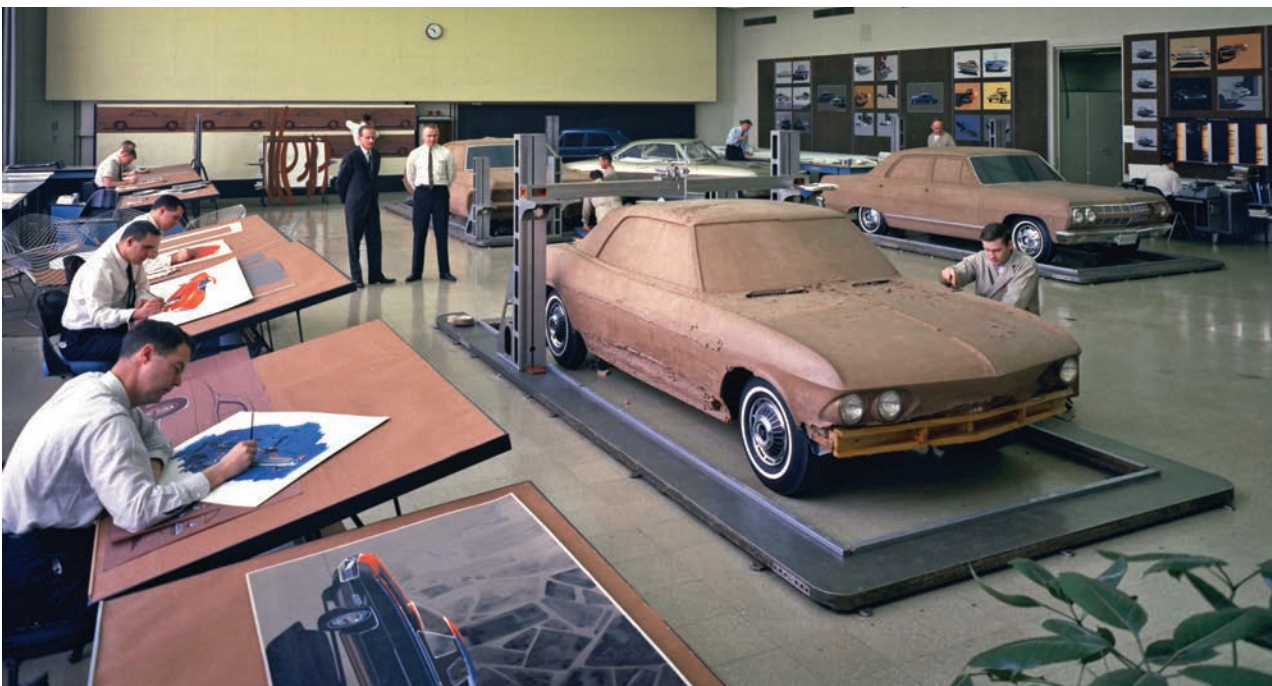




Strother MacMinn, Harry Bradley, Pete Brock, Wayne Cherry, Dick Nesbitt and Ron Hill, Syd Mead, Jack Telnack, Larry Shinoda, Roger Huguet, are but a few of the many prestigious alumni from ACCD. Many other graduates throughout this book call Art Center School of Design their Alma Mater. Art Center School emphasizes a very hands-on approach to the field of design. Drafting, sketching, clay modeling and CAD are all techniques brought together to allow the best students to thrive in the field of automotive design.

Detroit Institute of Automobile Styling was another important school for aspiring automotive designers. Established by Harley Earl and (unofficially) GM, students at DIAS would study under some of GM's best designers.

In addition to the before-mentioned schools, one must include today's Center for Creative Studies (CCS), evolved from the Art School of the Detroit Society of Arts and Crafts, which added an industrial design curriculum in the 1930s, and has since become one of the world's top schools for automotive design. Its ID faculty is heavy with practicing professionals, and its graduates can be found in design studios worldwide. CCS and ACCD are rival giants in the field of automotive design education.



TOP: Students at work on a clay model of a car with instructor George Jergenson, 1949. / PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN. COPYRIGHT ART CENTER SCHOOL OF DESIGN, PASADENA, CA

LEFT: Irv Rybicki stands in the center of a Chevrolet Studio with Henry Haga. Pictured along the left at their drawing tables are Ned Walters and Phil Garcia. March 1, 1963. / GM PHOTOSTORE

OPPOSITE: Instructor Joseph Thompson advising Howard Eichen and another student who are at work on a model of a car, circa 1950. / PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN. COPYRIGHT ART CENTER SCHOOL OF DESIGN, PASADENA, CA



ARTISTS

“ *Art is not what you see, but what you make others see.* ”

Edgar Degas

The men and women artists whose artwork is shown on the following pages all have unique talents and gifts. For one thing they can certainly draw! They can, in some cases, allow you to feel like you could fit into the drawings. They have the ability to make you think about the future. Remember that when most of this work was drawn, nobody knew what the future would be like, and we still don't! We can only imagine and draw what we have in our mind's eye.

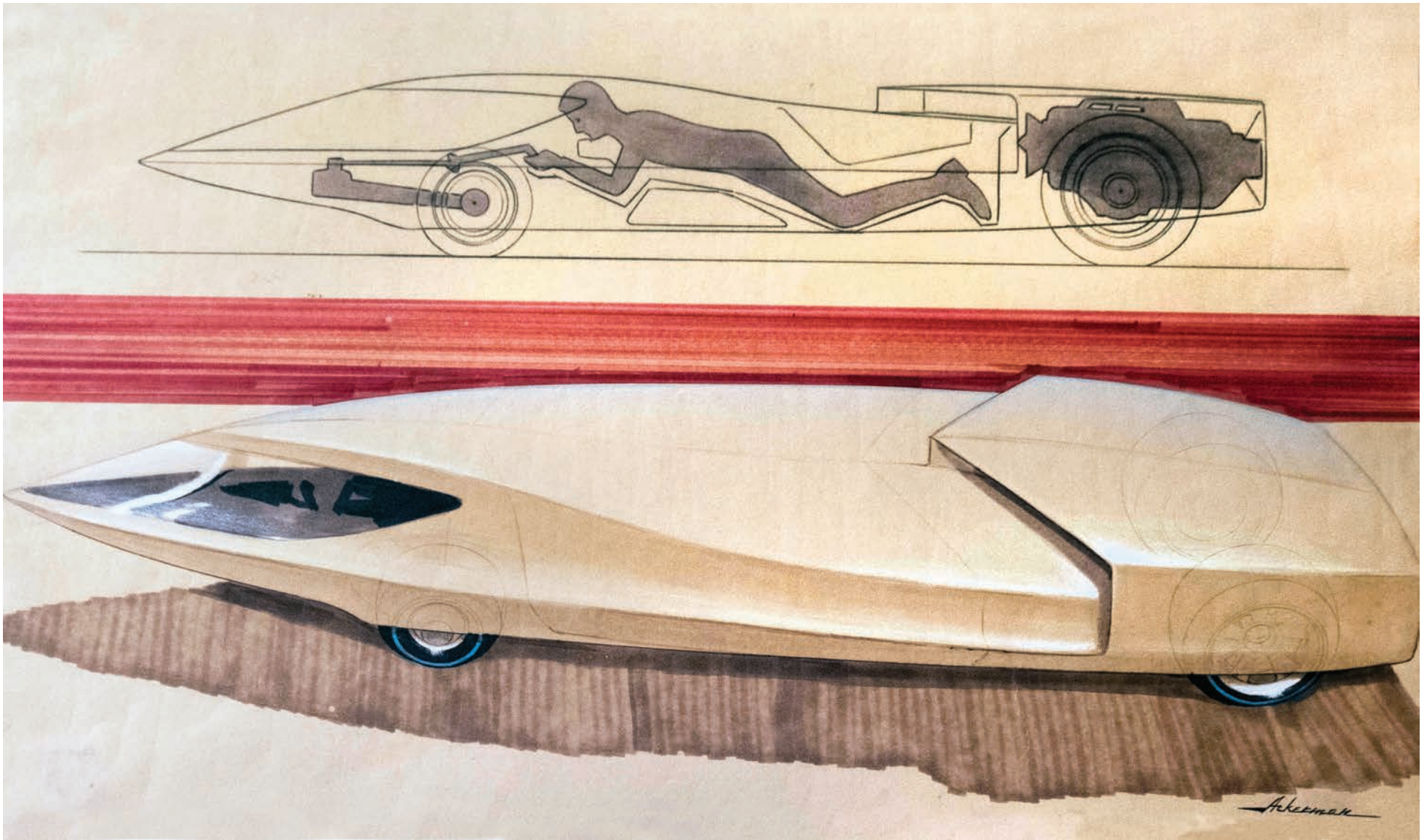
The primary goal in much of the work that follows was to sell cars. Some of the images will look like cars that rolled off the assembly lines, while many never stood a chance since they were either mechanically impossible to build, or the manufacturers didn't think the public was ready for such radical ideas.

Many of the artists stayed in the automobile business, designing and creating, while others took different avenues to ply their trade and skills.

There are five special friends with great images and stories shown throughout the book. They are: George Camp, Joan Klatil Creamer, David McIntosh, John Perkins and Ken Vendley. I met them at 'Eyes on Design' in Grosse Pointe, Michigan, except for Ken Vendley, whom I met after I found that he lived close

by. Their work has been more than inspiring and has been a strong catalyst in producing this book. I am pleased to share their work and stories and thank them immensely for their contributions.

There is also a section listed as 'Unknown Artists'. Try as I might to find out who was behind these images, I exhausted my resources and have put them in the 'Unknown' category. Perhaps this book will help bring light to who these folks were and what their stories were, as I feel they deserve recognition for their fine and inspiring work.



Robert Ackerman

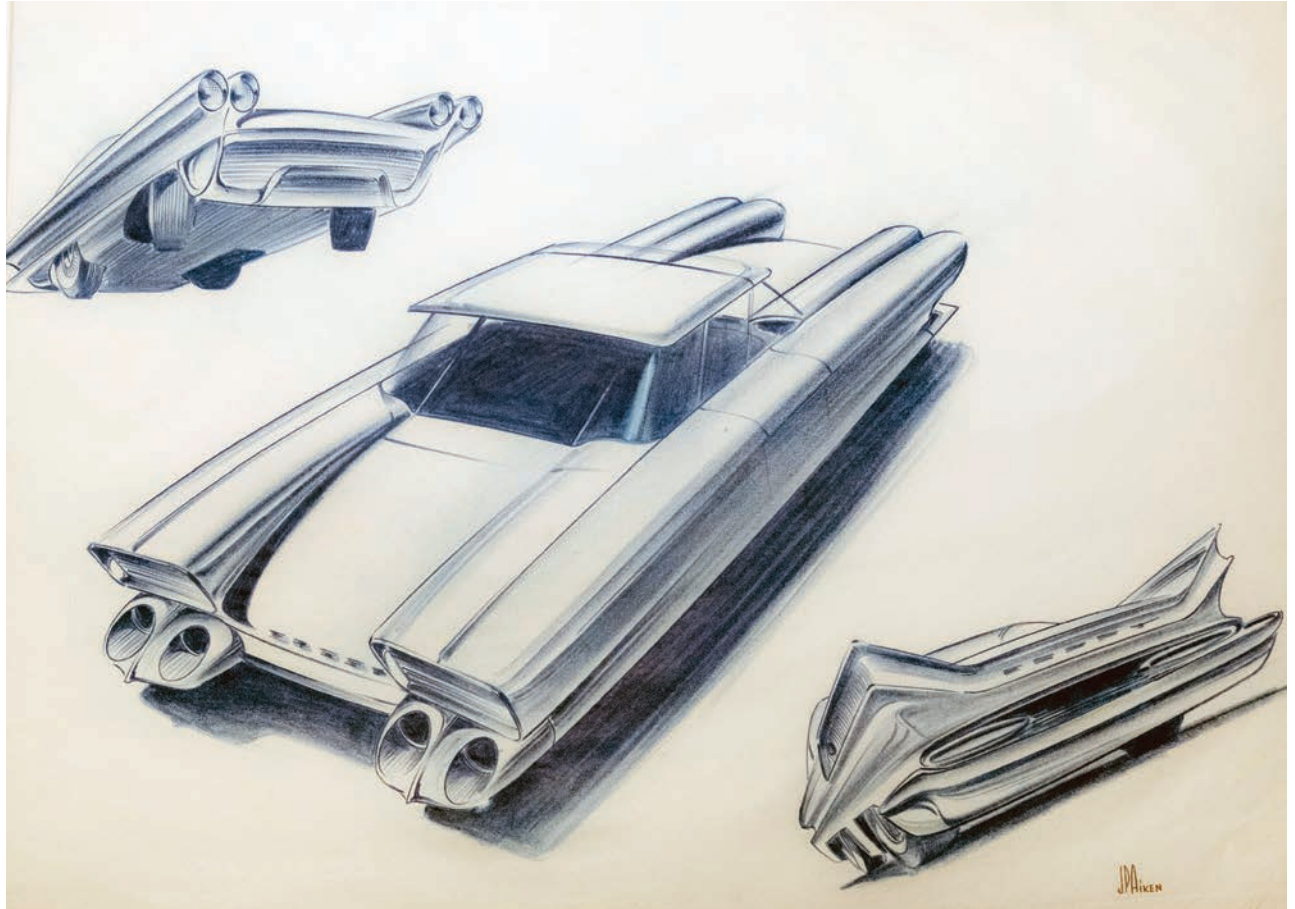
23" x 13"

1967

Watercolor/marker/pencil on board

John Aiken

John Aiken graduated from Art Center in Pasadena and worked for the Ford Motor Company in the Lincoln Continental department in the 1970s and 1980s, ultimately becoming the Design Manager for Styling and was a primary designer on the Lincoln Continental Mark VI, VII, and VIII.



John Aiken

22" x 26"

Circa 1950s

Colored pencil on paper

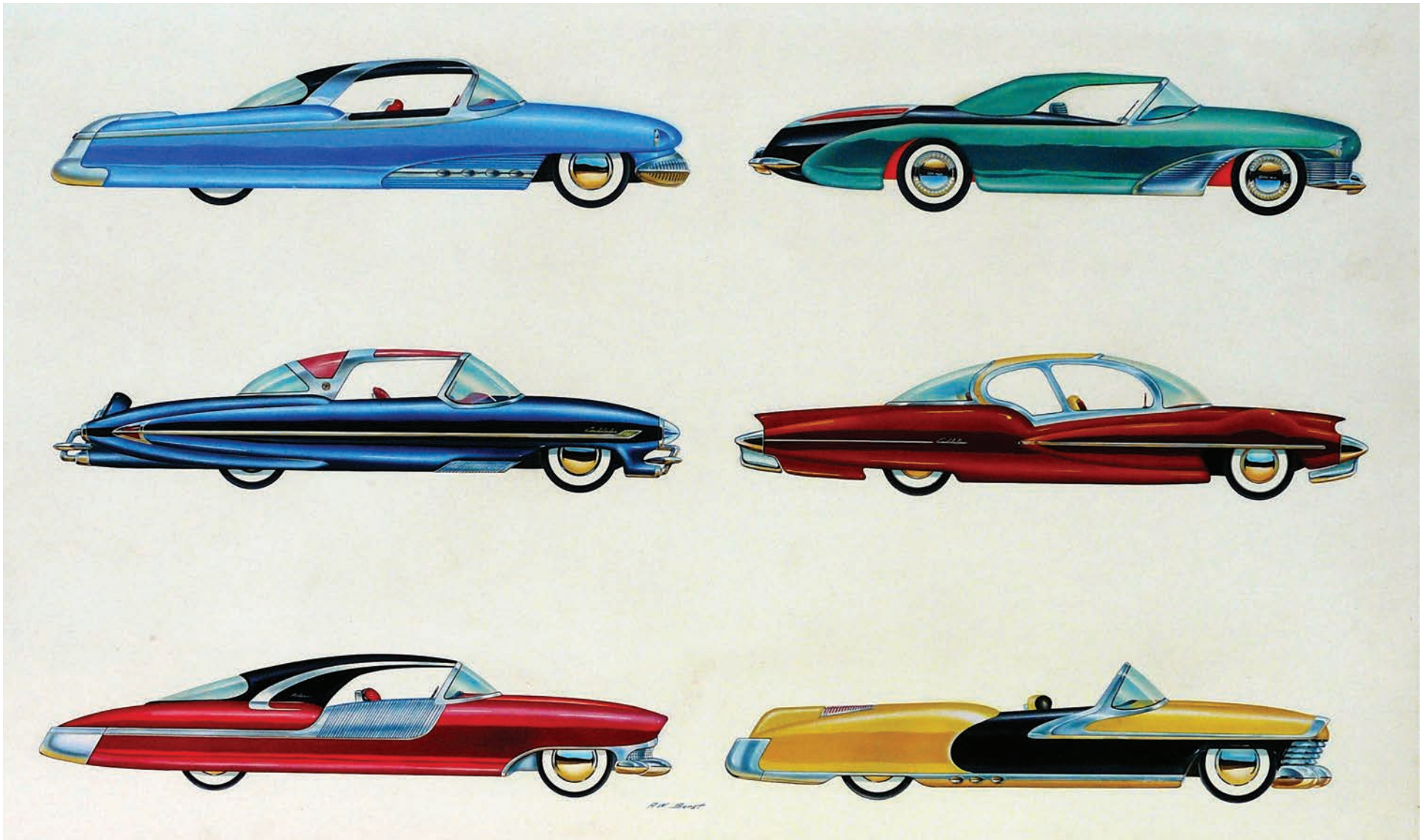


Richard Arbib

21" x 14"

1956

Watercolor on paper

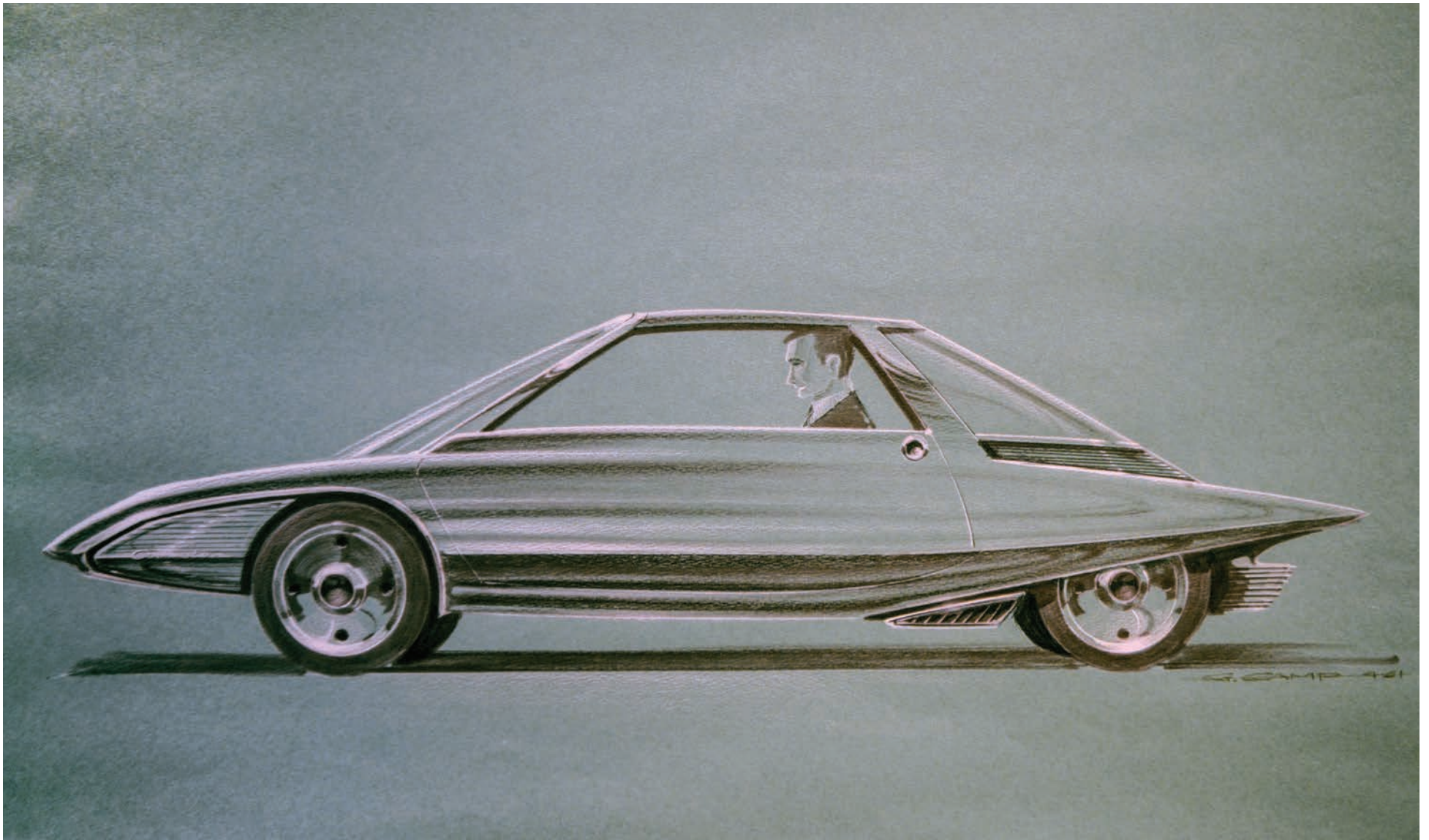


Al Borst

24" x 24"

Circa 1950s

Mixed media on paper

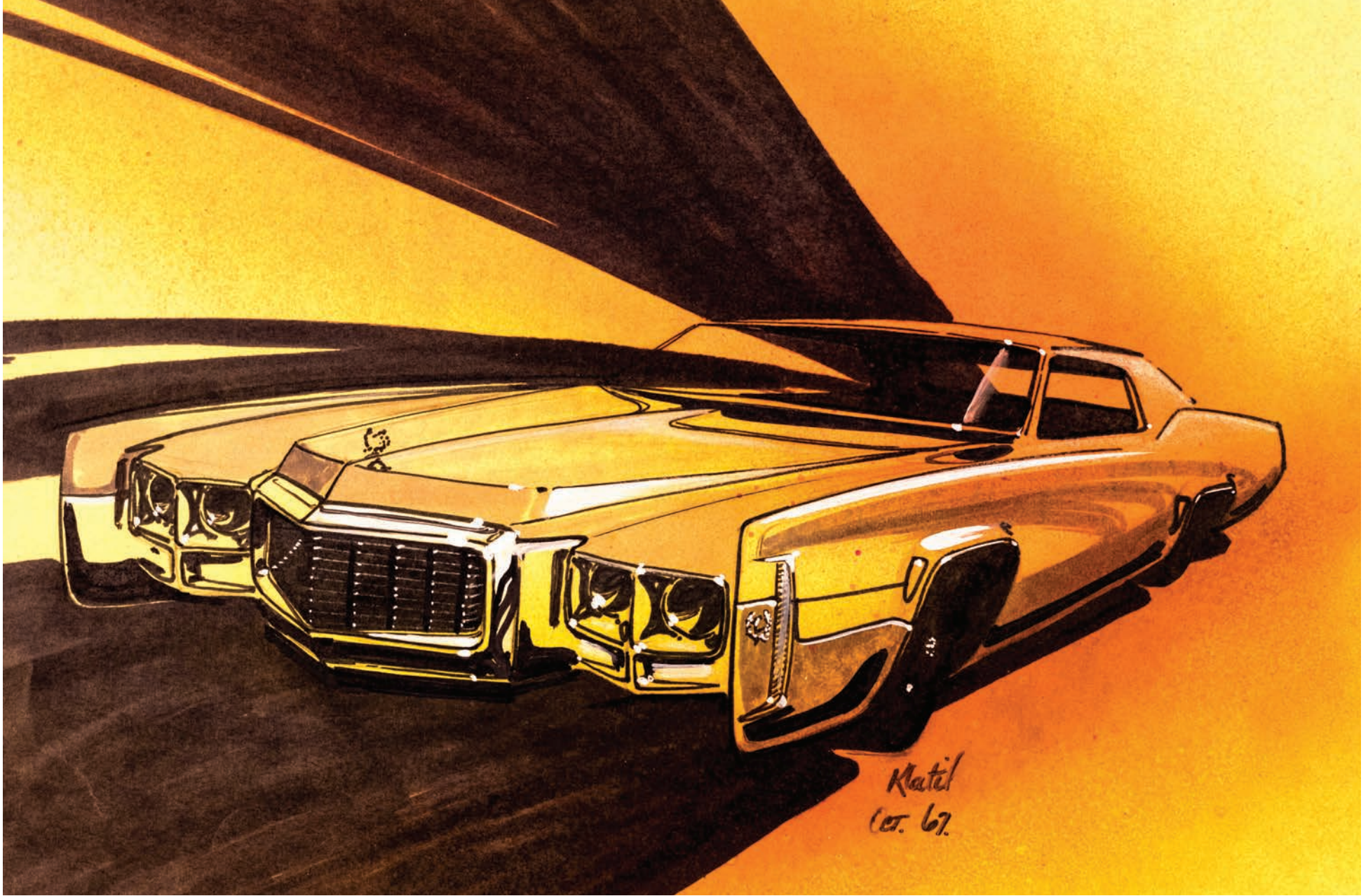


George Camp

24" x 14"

1961

Ink/gouache on paper

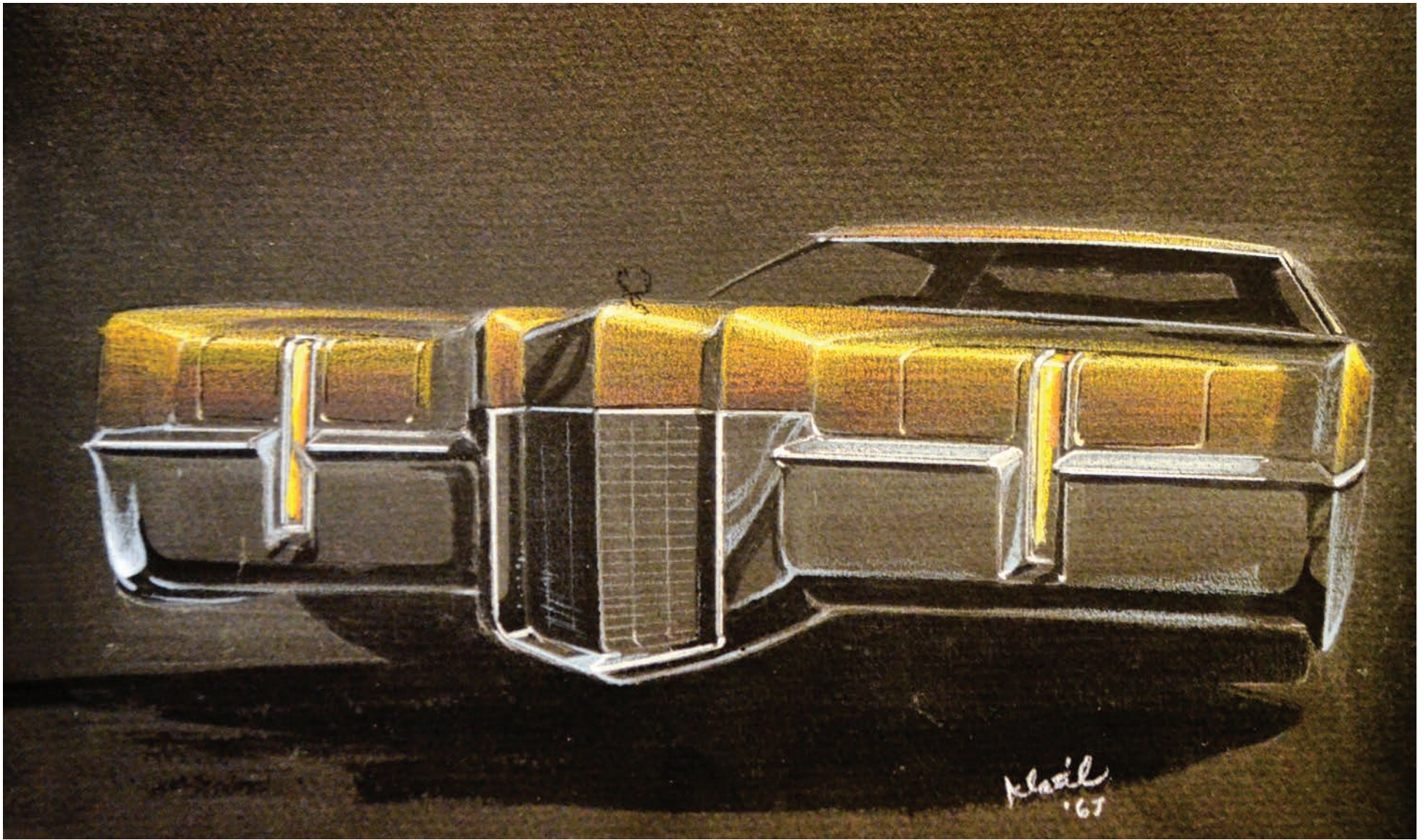


Joan Klatil Creamer

11" x 8"

1967

Colored pencil/marker on paper



Joan Klatil Creamer

9" x 7"

1967

Colored pencil/gouache on paper



Herb Grasse

Herb went to Syracuse University and then graduated from Art Center. He designed and modeled cars for Chrysler, Ford and Nissan, as well as working on the Challenger. He helped turn the Ford Futura into the Batmobile for George Barris and worked with Malcolm Bricklin to design the Bricklin SV1. He also worked with Smith-Corona and designed many new and interesting products for his own firm, Herb Grasse Design.

Herb passed away in 2010.

Herb Grasse

29" x 19"

Circa 1970s

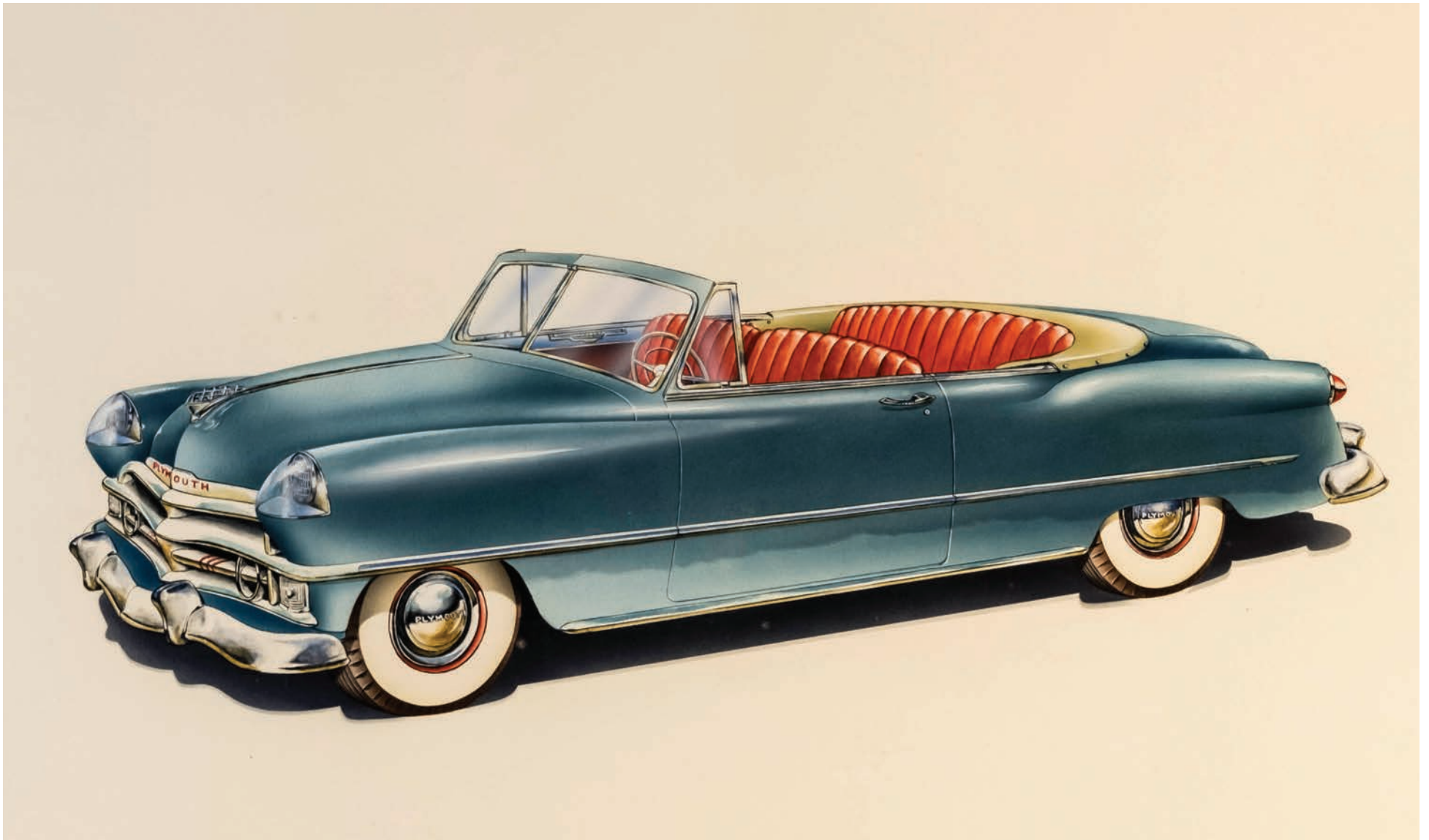
Mixed media on board

OPPOSITE:

20" x 14"

Circa 1970s

Mixed media on board



Norman Griffith

25" x 16"

1950

Crayon on paper

Robert Hubbach

Bob Hubbach graduated in 1962 from the Art Center, and went right to work at General Motor's Advanced Studio, transferring to Chrysler in 1967 where he was instrumental in many of their notable vehicles, including the Chrysler Atlantic, Dodge Copperhead, Dodge 300C and Dodge Caravan, as well as the Dodge Viper GTS Coupe and Roadster.

Bob retired in 2001 after nearly 33 years with Chrysler.

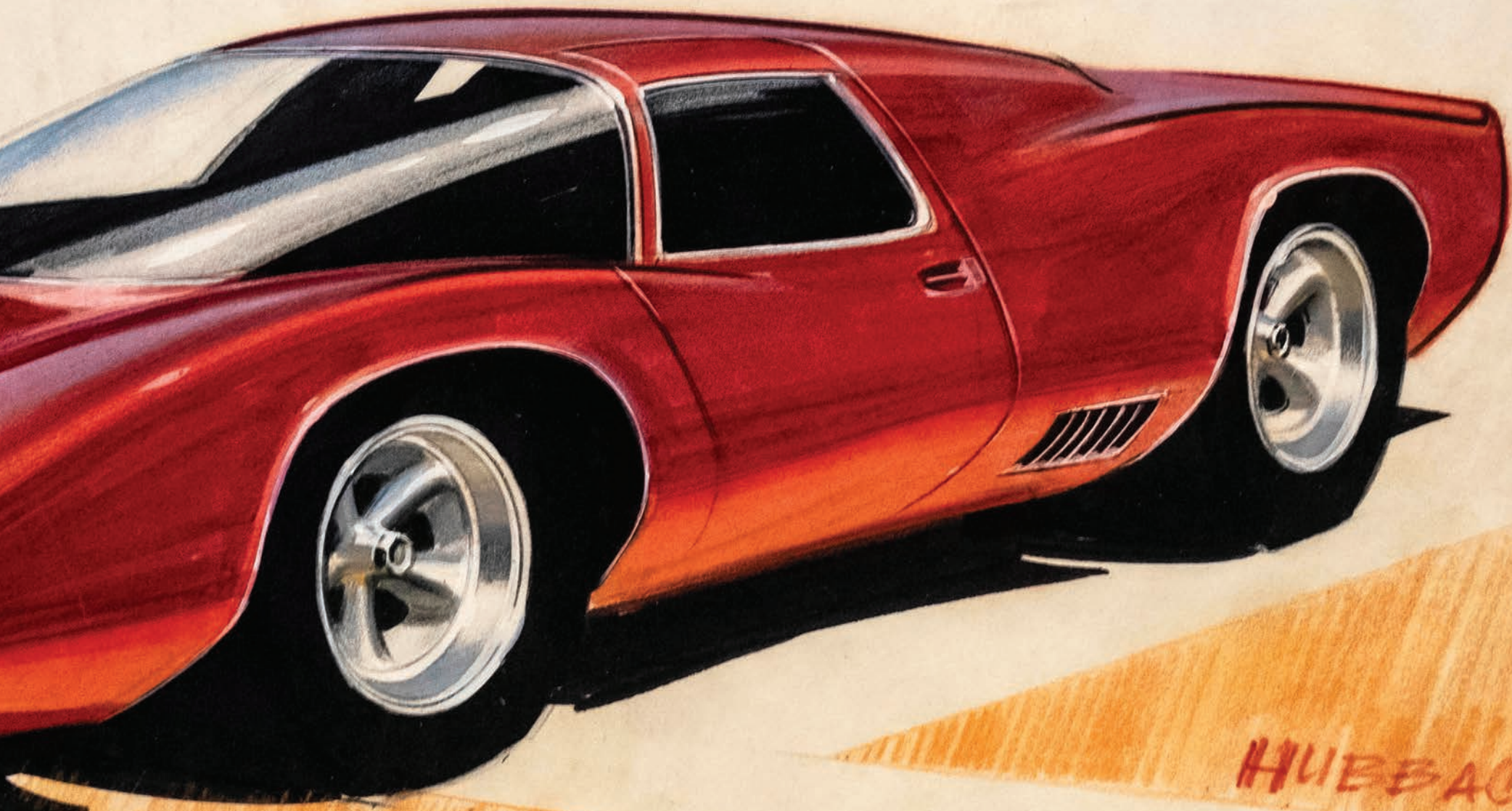
Robert Hubbach

20" x 10"

Circa 1960s

Mixed media on paper





HUBBACH

Allan Kornmiller

Educated at the Cleveland Institute of Art, Kornmiller became a design Manager at Chrysler Corporation working on several Chrysler Imperials, and Cordoba. He also worked at Ford's Advanced Studio, Hudson and Nash and American Motors and Chrysler from 1956 until his retirement in 1987.

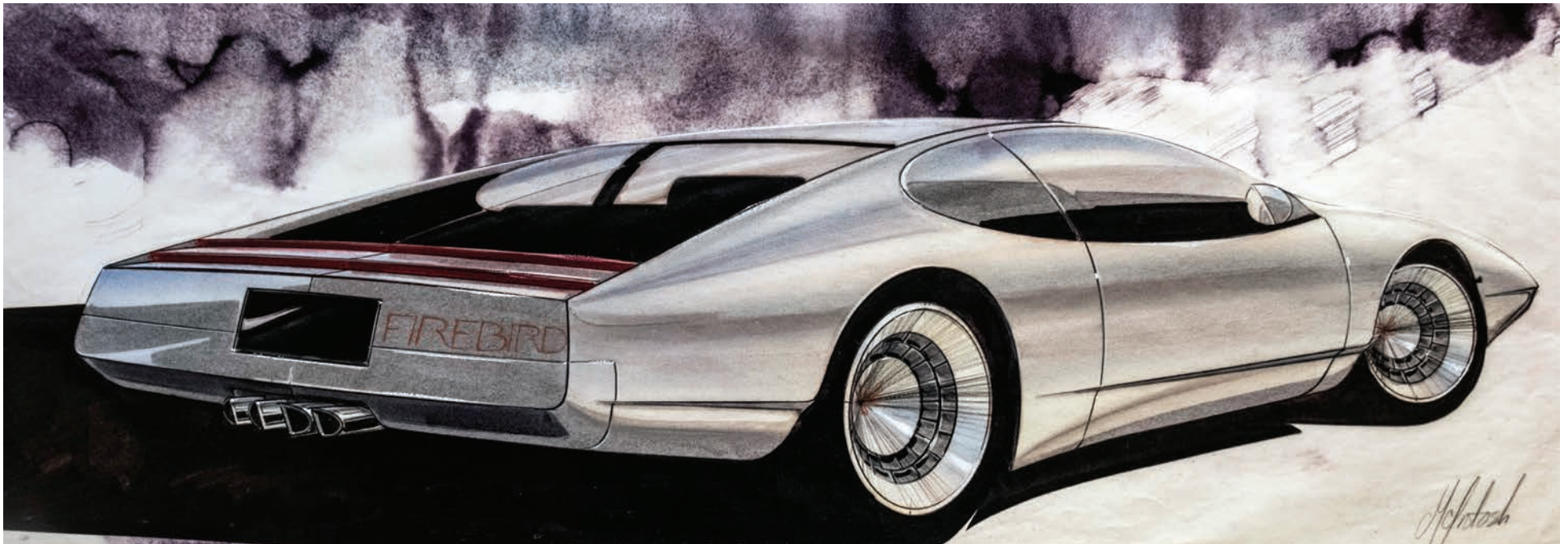


Allan Kornmiller

18" x 12"

Circa 1960s

Mixed media on paper



David McIntosh

26" x 10"

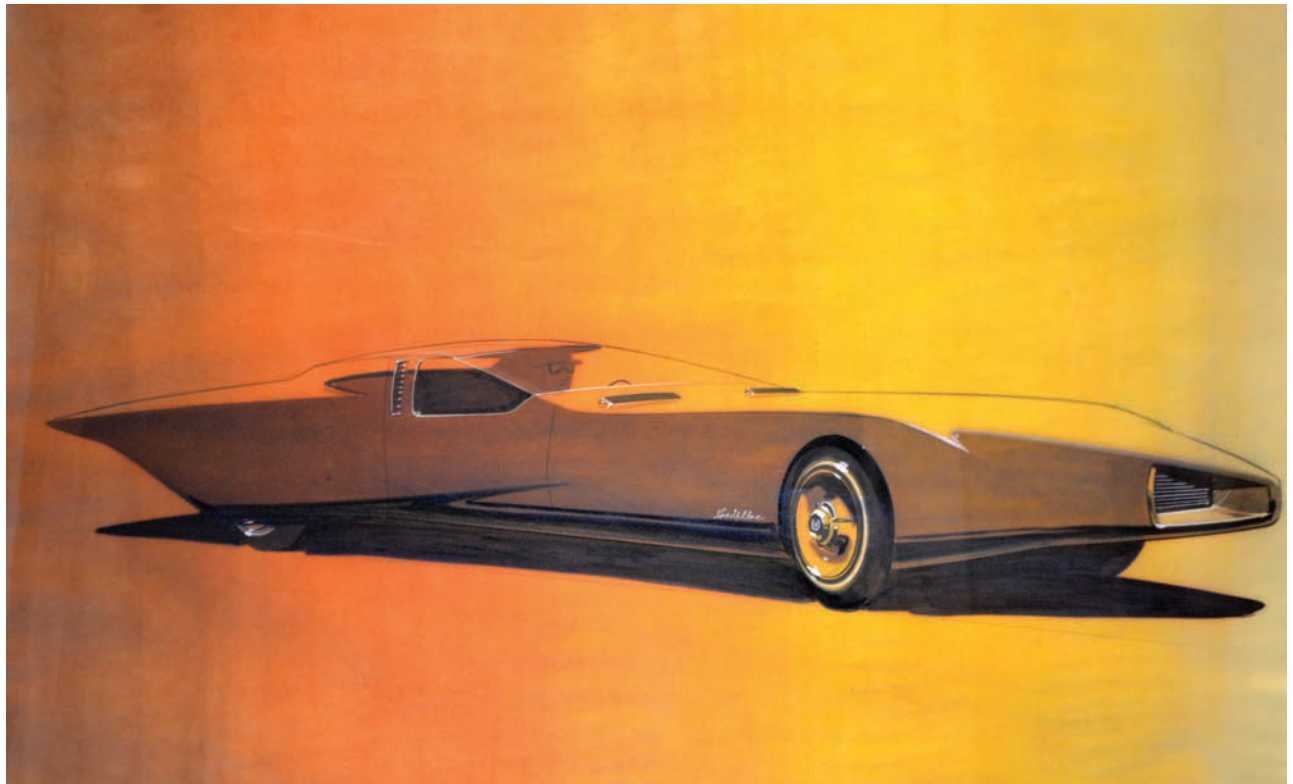
Circa 1970s

Pastel/ink/marker on vellum

John Perkins

John grew up in Lansing, Michigan and started drawing cars at the tender age of five. John's father worked at Oldsmobile and became Chief Body Engineer, so it was natural that John followed in his footsteps. John began attending Kettering University (formerly General Motors Institute) in 1959, majoring in Mechanical Engineering. John soon approached GM design with his drawings and they so liked his work, he was offered a job right out of school.

John went to Cadillac Studios and then to Pontiac Studios in 1968 where he was able to work on the Firebird model. John has always felt fortunate that he got his degree in engineering, which was beneficial when it came to proposing ideas for new concepts. John produced important designs before his retirement in 1999 after 37 years with GM. Some of his best designs include the Cadillac DeVille, Buick Riviera, Chevelle, many Pontiacs as well as the Cutlass Supreme and Aurora for Oldsmobile.

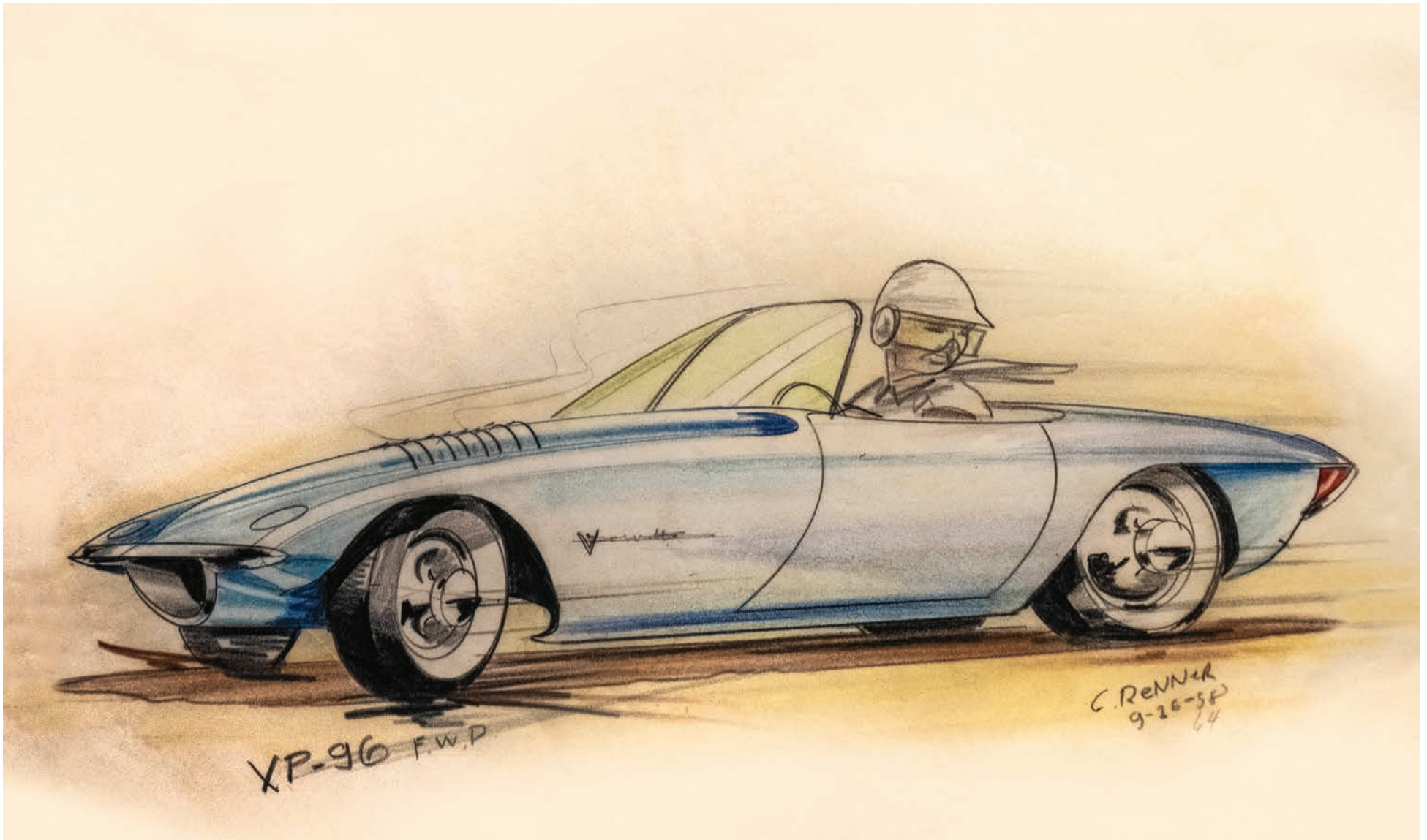


John Perkins

25" x 17"

Circa 1960s

Gouache on paper

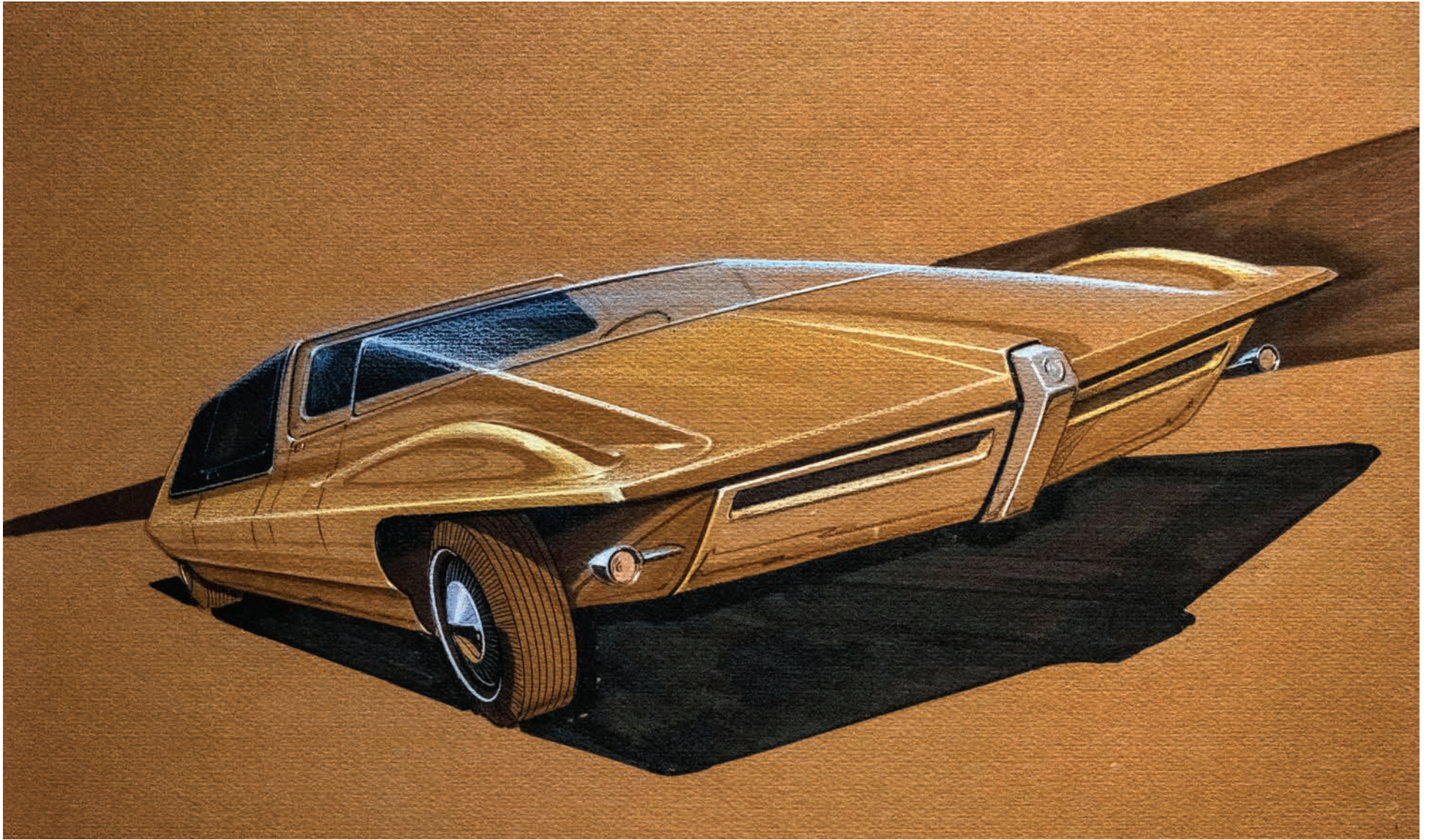


Carl Renner

17" x 12"

1958

Crayon/pencil on paper

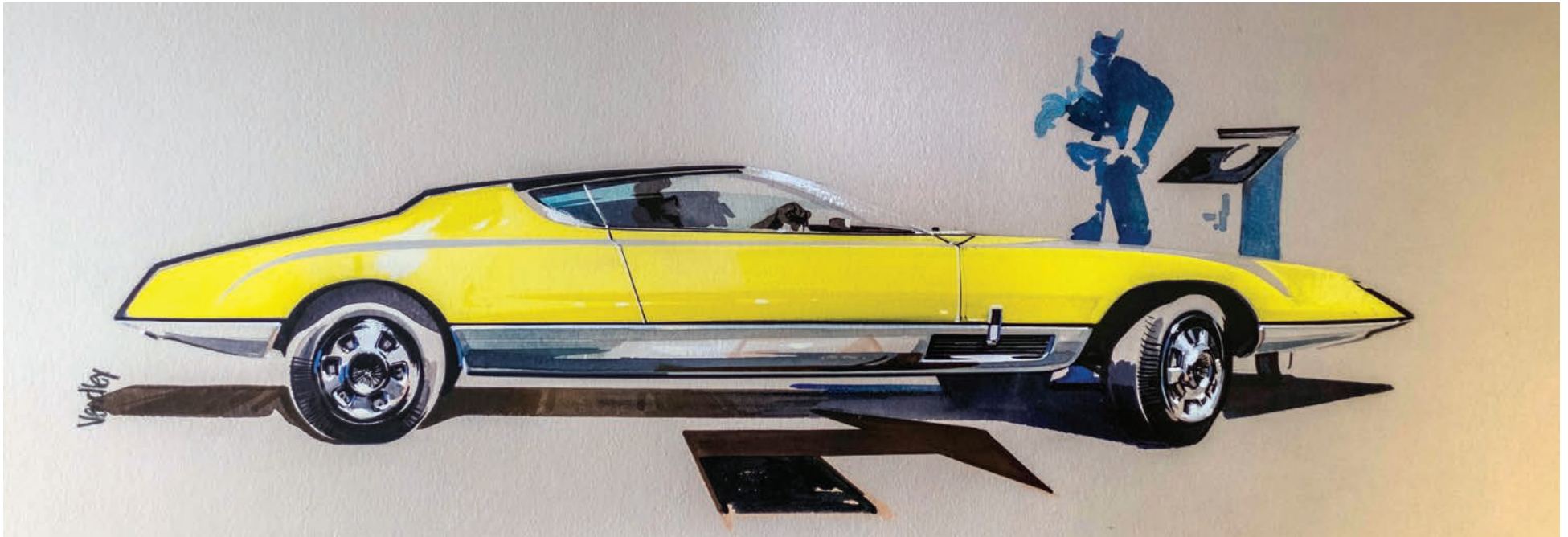


William Schmidt Studios

19" x 13"

Circa 1960s

Mixed media on board



Ken Vendley

24" x 9"

Circa 1960s

Tempera on art board

THE 'BIG' PIECES

“ *It's a dream when it's in your mind... It's a goal when you're working towards it... It's reality when you put the two together... DREAM BIG.* ”

Anonymous

These images are quite unique and especially large so that they cannot be ignored. Dave McIntosh indicated that there were all done in the late 1960s to early 1970s on the full-size drawing boards. They were used to show ideas for current and/or future projects and to make the studio look creative. The desks were about 4' x 8' and rolls of vellum, either 36" or 24" wide were used and spread generously across the desks. One could imagine that if the smaller images were met with favor, that the suggestion to enlarge might follow. McIntosh indicated that the big green Riviera and the Red Buick were his favorite sketches at that time in his career.





ABOUT THE AUTHOR: PATRICK KELLEY

After a lifetime of fascination with all things automobile, Patrick Kelley shares his passion for cars and art. Born in Merced, California, and raised in Fresno, Patrick developed a deep love of the automobile in all its various forms. From racing to custom cars, from Sears Point to Laguna Seca, Le Mans and Daytona Beach for the racing, and to the Pebble Beach and Quail Concours, Patrick has always loved cars and racing. About 15 years ago, he stumbled onto what would soon be a new passion, the collection of original automobile concept art by many of the finest designers and stylists working in and around Detroit. These were drawing and paintings of what future automobiles might look like. Patrick felt that the story of this futuristic work that came out of art schools across America and ultimately the 'Big Three' automobile companies had to be told.

