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From Walls to Wheels: Driving Art in High Gear

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From the primitive chariot to the modern day automobile, the designs have changed over the years from slow and cumbersome to fast and aerodynamic, and everything in between. In all that time, we have never seen this kind of artistic interpretation and this special model of automobile being incorporated together as a canvas for fine art. This inspiration and implementation happened because of Sir Alfred J. DiMora.

Sir Alfred DiMora showed a special enthusiasm for cars at ten years old when he began to race miniature slot cars, which led to a genuine passion for the automobile. By the time he was thirteen, he dreamed of building his own car, and, like most genuine passions, simply would not let go until the goal was realized.



Undaunted by his age, a 14-year-old Alfred DiMora rebuilds a burned-out 1939 Buick in his driveway in the Gates Chili suburb of Rochester, New York. Photograph courtesy of Sir Alfred J. DiMora/DiMora Motorcar.

DiMora admits being 'pushed over the edge' after seeing the film "American Graffiti," which he has viewed over a dozen times and was instrumental in motivating him to design and build his own custom, high-performance automobiles. Who would have known that decades later he would have the pleasure of meeting Bo Hopkins ("Joe," the leader of the "Pharaohs" greaser gang in the movie), and they remain good friends to this day. In a recent interview that I did with Bo, he said, "In those days, the cars, often modified, lowered, customized and beefed up, had a distinct style and integrity that simply does not exist with today's cars, until now."



Sir Alfred J. DiMora, his wife, Yvonne DiMora, George Barris (designer/builder of famous Hollywood custom cars), and actor Bo Hopkins ("American Graffiti"). Photograph courtesy of Sir Alfred J. DiMora/DiMora Motorcar.

DiMora began rebuilding engines and transmissions; he studied books on 1930s Roadster designs; and attended welding and machinist programs. He was ready to go after his dream, and at eighteen, drove from New York to California with a drawing, a vision, and \$400 in his pocket. His target was prestigious Santa Barbara, where he slept on the beach those first few weeks. He found his first job there as a machinist and worked part-time at a gas station. He soon was building luxury cars at Clénet Coachworks, Inc., where he was one of the first employees. Not long afterwards, Alfred co-founded the Sceptre Motorcar Company with a small group of people who shared the same ambition of building the Sceptre 6.6S. His first prototype won 'Best of Show' in the 1978 Los Angeles Auto Show.

By that time, DiMora was able to buy out the Clénet Coachworks and set up his own factory in Carpinteria, California. He revived manufacturing the Clénet Series II Cabriolet and the Series III Asha, and created the Series IV Sportster. Clénets were hand-built and sold to celebrities, royalty and other motor-enthusiasts around the world. Some of these included Sylvester Stallone, Rod Stewart, Julio Iglesias, Farrah Fawcett and King Hussein of Jordan, just to name a few.



Ken Gross, Jay Leno and Sir Alfred DiMora look over renderings of the Natalia SLS 2 at Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance. Photograph courtesy of Sir Alfred J. DiMora/DiMora Motorcar.

The Clénet was featured in movies and television shows such as "Dallas" and "Dynasty." President Ronald Reagan declared 1986 the Centennial Year of the Gasoline-Powered Automobile, and DiMora's Clénet was selected as the Official Centennial Car. The Clénet was called "Drive Art" by *Automotive Age* and the "American Rolls Royce" by *Fortune* magazine; DiMora and the Clénet also were honored at the Automotive Hall of Fame that same year.

DiMora recently began to see an uptrend developing in both the art and automobile investment genres, so he envisioned merging the two to see if they could be combined successfully, developing a paradigm to build on the strength of both the art and automobile worlds. Just as Dale Chihuly's unique, hand-blown glass art helped change the typical paint and canvas art platform, so will this innovative blending of art with the automobile, in DiMora's professional opinion.

After a great deal of research, DiMora discovered the work of Taiwanese artist and Zen Master Lee Sun-Don at the Beverly Hills X-Power Gallery. "Master Lee has been described as the "modern Asian Picasso." When visiting Beijing in 1989, Master Lee Sun-Don found discarded, centuries-old doorknockers, which represented Chinese traditional craftsmanship. This saddened him, so he began collecting and preserving on canvas these rare antiquities, calling them the Great Treasure Gate series.



Master Lee Sun-Don in his studio in Taipei, Taiwan, working on a painting from the Great Treasure Gate series with a centuries-old lion's head doorknocker that represents Chinese traditional craftsmanship as a focal point. Photograph courtesy of GP Deva.

"The Chinese antique doorknocker has been a symbol of the rich and powerful since ancient times, especially the dragon (which represents royalty), and the lion (which serves as its guardian), hence 'the royal guards,'" he said. "I decided to utilize a great number of lion's-head doorknockers in my collection and they have now come to good use in this series." Sun-Don is

world-renowned and was invited to participate in the 53rd Venice Biennale, as well as impressive venues at the Royal Institute of Oil Painters and numerous other gallery exhibitions.

When DiMora viewed the explosive, vibrant colors and the uniqueness of the doorknocker paintings, he easily pictured Master Lee's Totemic Energy Art on the Vicci 6.2 hood and side panels, and the rest is history. DiMora didn't know what to expect, but the success of their first joint collaboration showing at Art Revolution Taipei in 2014 was astounding, with Master Lee's art displayed on canvas and on the Vicci. Immediately, orders for their new rolling art series began selling quickly. The purchaser receives both the original canvas for their wall and the Vicci rolling art for their garage.



Crowd viewing Master Lee Sun-Don, Sir Alfred DiMora, and the Vicci 6.2 at Art Revolution Taipei 2014. Photograph courtesy of GP Deva.

When asked why he agreed to display his art on this particular automobile, Master Lee replied, "Classic and innovative, the DiMora Vicci 6.2 is by itself a work of art. What is more, this classic supercar, with its connotations of victor and conqueror, accords perfectly with the spirit of kingship and supremacy of my painting series, 'The Great Treasure Gate.'"



Master Lee Sun-Don foundation sketch on the hood of the DiMora Vicci 6.2. DiMora Motorcar then creates the final painting from his drawing. At Sir Alfred DiMora's first meeting with the artist, Master Sun-Don jumped up on top of the Vicci 6.2 and sketched spontaneously on the hood. Photograph courtesy of GP Deva.

DiMora said, "This is the first time in history that a highly-acclaimed artist and a production automobile manufacturer have come together to create true rolling art. We will work together to produce a total of 25 limited edition Vicci 6.2 Emperor art automobiles, each with its unique Lee Sun-Don canvas masterpiece in the 'Great Treasure Gate' series."



Finished collaborative art and automobile projects: Sir Alfred J. DiMora's Vicci 6.2 with Master Lee Sun-Don's painting on its hood. Photograph courtesy of Sir Alfred J. DiMora/DiMora Motorcar.

DiMora now is being approached by other world-renowned artists wishing to do a joint collaboration. With other talented artists on the horizon, even more art will be free to move about gracefully on beautiful automobiles. This successful pairing caused car and art investors to do a double-take and rethink the normal confines of standard car and art investing models. There is no limit to how far this innovative idea can go.

DiMora's Vicci 6.2 rolling art will be exhibited at the Monterey Car Week, beginning August 10, 2015 at the Stanton Center. Phil Elfstrom, executive director of the event, comments on DiMora's car: "In today's world, how do you put a value on this kind of top shelf professionalism? Where else are you going to find a car with this undisputed uniqueness?"

For more information: www.dimoramotorcar.com and <http://arts.sundon.net/en/index.html>

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