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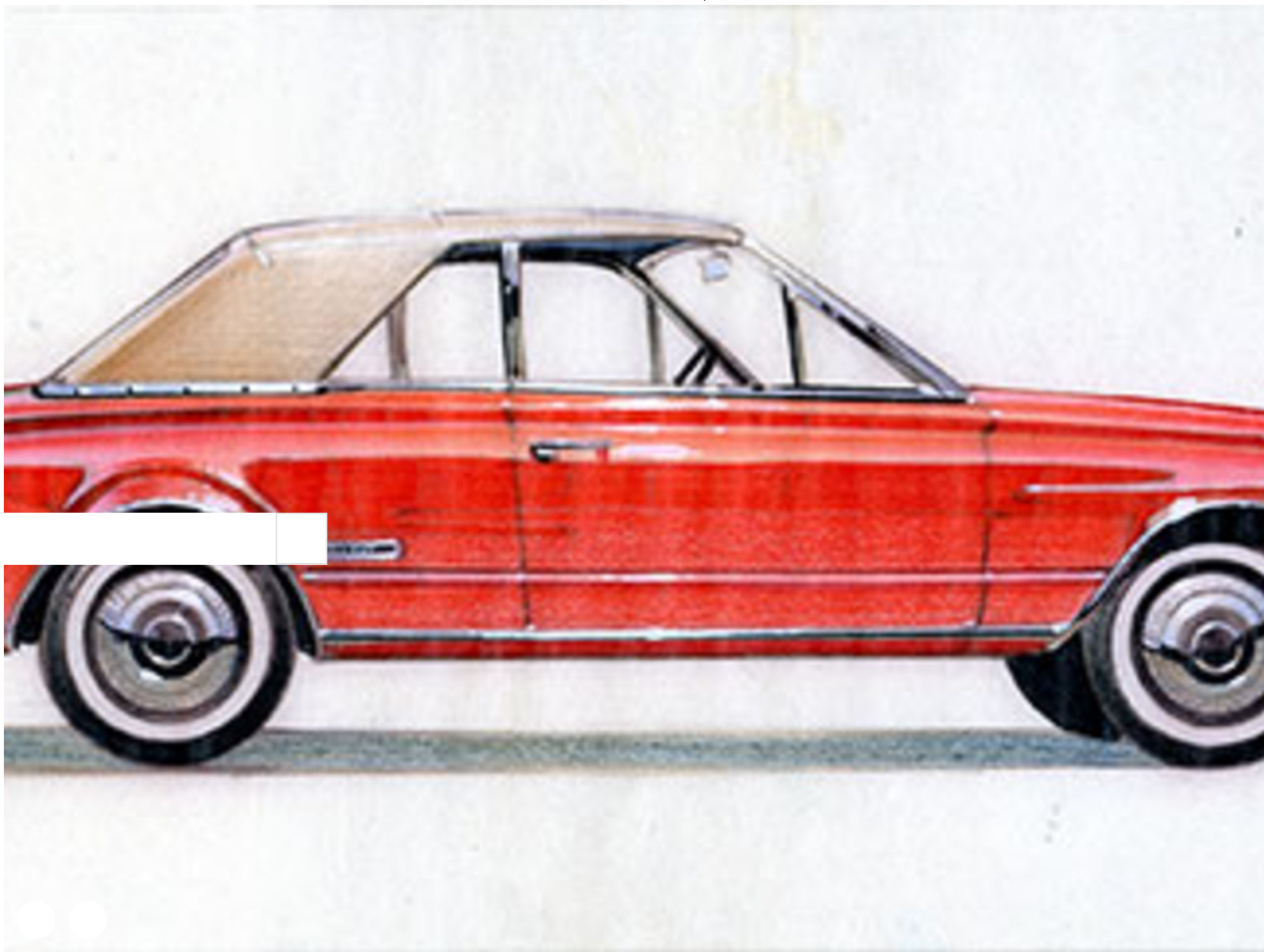
MOTORING

American automobile sketches on view at LA's Christopher W. Mount Gallery

Christopher Mount curates an impressive selection of automotive sketches at his eponymous Los Angeles gallery

TEXT BY [MICHAEL SLENSKE](#)

Posted December 31, 2014



A design sketch for a Plymouth Valiant, 1963.

Before he opened his eponymous Los Angeles gallery last May, Christopher Mount spent years as the architecture and design curator at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). Mount oversaw its automotive exhibitions and acquisitions, which included a Jaguar E-type and a 1990 Ferrari F1 racer. "One of the things I liked very much was going to visit design studios and seeing the models and design drawings for the cars," recalls Mount, who organized shows featuring these rides as well as the acclaimed 1999 MoMA survey "Different Roads: Automobiles for the Next Century." "There is something about the combination of the artistic and engineering aspects of the works that makes them so much more interesting than most ordinary drawings."

Having collected these studies for many years, Mount wanted to honor this tradition with "When the Future Had Fins: American Automotive Designs and Concepts, 1959-1973," a new exhibit at his space in West Hollywood's Pacific Design Center. The works, which feature the concepts of top marques (from classic Cadillacs to vicious Valiants) and designers (Ford's John Samsen, GM's Bill Michalak, and Dodge's Robert Ackerman) were loaned by northern California dealer Leo Brereton, who has long sourced them from the Motor City.

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"One of the strange aspects of most [car] companies is that they have little interest in their own history," says Mount. "I spent two weeks at Browns Lane workshop, in Coventry, England, while working on a Jaguar show, and they had basically nothing [in terms of drawings, studies, models] from the 1960s and '70s. I had a similar experience at Ferrari, until I went into Enzo Ferrari's office at the test track in Maranello and found all of these wonderful pencil sketches for cars and parts made soon after the Second World War." Unless you're able to sneak into one of Detroit's fortresslike design labs, this show is a rare opportunity to see some great drawings that never came to fruition.

"I can't say I am a big fan of the automotive-design drawings produced today," says Mount. "I don't know if it is the influence of the digital or just a kind of accepted style, but they look a bit too fantastical and forced. It's a rigid style, but these are much more varied and have much more of the artists' hand and personality."

Fins, it appears, are still very much in.

January 23 through May 20; christopherwmountgallery.com

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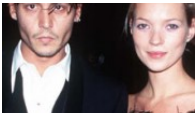
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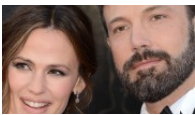
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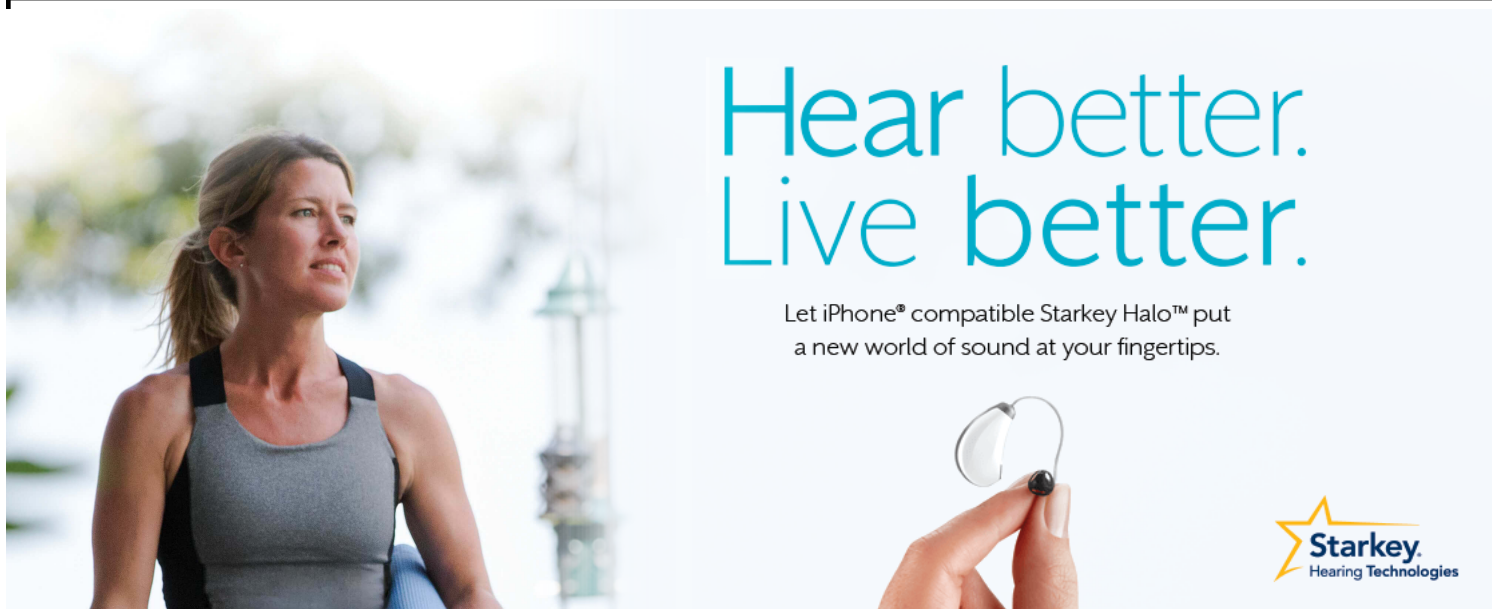
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