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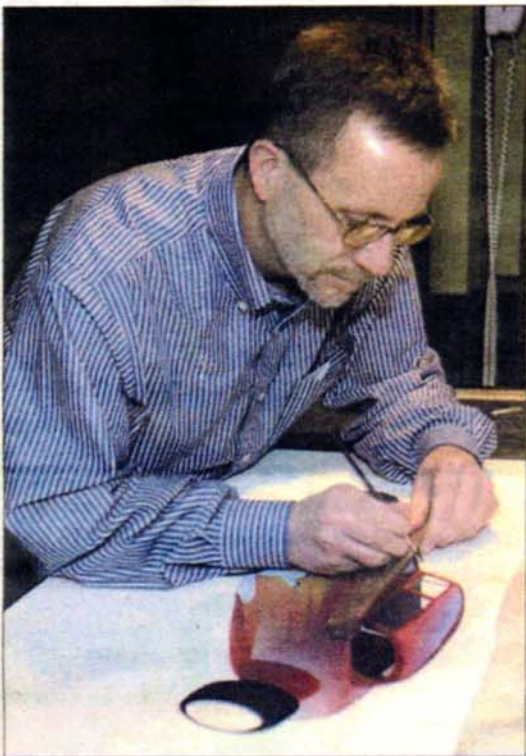
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Artist Mike Kelly works on a rendering of a hot rod in his home studio. Kelly has created and sold hundreds of portraits of classic cars and trucks for automobile lovers in the metro area.

Photo by
Edward Osinski



Artist paints his passion for Motor City's autos

BY ROBIN D'ANGELO
C & G STAFF WRITER

Mike Kelly spends a great deal of his spare time working painstakingly on some of the most stylish classic cars and hot rods in the Motor City. But unlike most, his time isn't spent beneath a hood or a chassis.

Rather, the Grosse Pointe Woods resident lends his time and talent to capturing the beauty of the cars in oil and watercolor portraits for proud owners of the cars.

"I was always interested in drawing cars and trucks, so I went to art school and took design courses in college," said Kelly, who currently works for an auto

supplier. He describes it as a "part time avocation," but hopes to concentrate more fully on his art in the future.

Working mostly with watercolor and acrylics, it can take Kelly from four days to a week and a half to complete a portrait, depending on the size and the detail.

His personal favorites are hot rods.

"I'm fascinated by how the background, the sky and the grass reflect into the shine of the vehicles," he said.

In addition to cars, Kelly has also created renderings of futuristic Class 8 heavy trucks that could

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revolutionize the industry.

"The heavy truck industry has been fairly slow to evolve into more modern shapes, mostly because it's too expensive to change the design every few years like cars," he said.

"But eventually if the high fuel prices continue, the industry will have no choice but to concentrate on more aerodynamic shapes."

Ernie Stroud, plant manager of Farmington Hills-based Mayflower Industries, which builds truck bodies for major suppliers, said the company has numerous paintings by Kelly adorning the hallways and lobbies of the corporate office.

"At the time Mike was working here, we were looking at different types of truck bodies for our customers, so he was very instrumental in having a great mind that looked into the future, and came up with

very interesting designs. People look at them and say they're incredible," Stroud said.

"I've seen other illustrators that do truck renderings and never seen anyone who had the ability to make it look feasible. The things Mike drew, you could actually build."

Kelly, who sells his art mostly at local and regional car shows, said his portraits range from \$500 to \$2,000, depending on size and detail.

Over the years, he's painted hundreds of car and truck portraits, though not all were commissioned pieces.

"I've sold many after they were created, and then many as commissioned paintings. More than 100 over the years were paid-for paintings," he said.

"Some people spend a lot of time working on their favorite classic cars, and they want something to capture and commemorate that."

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