

## Go! Magazine

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# Photographer Philip Hall 'aluminates' automobiles using sheets of aluminum

By LISA CRAWFORD WATSON  
Herald Correspondent

It's hard to appreciate the nuances of a luxury car from inside the garage where it lurks under the anonymity of shadows.

But out on the 18th green adjacent a certain pebbled beach, where the sun puts a sparkle on the sea and a polish on the paint, where the chrome catches the light and the glass glistens, the automobile is elevated to art.

Photographer Philip Hall saw it firsthand while chronicling a car show when he noticed the tail light on a 1953 Corvette. He studied the sculptural element from an artist's perspective then raised his camera and shot it.

When he printed out the image, he gasped. Here was this very isolated tail light, this single piece of a car providing the sole subject in the composition and then fading out into nothing.

"And I thought, 'How can a tail light be so meditative, so clear, so ethereal?' The light on this one detail was great," said Hall. "It was a moment. I couldn't have told you the light was perfect when I was standing outside, but it was, and it took my breath away. As it turns out, it was a very artistic composition."

Artistic enough to eclipse the day job so Hall could focus on automotive fine art photography.

For more than 30 years, that "day job" was in lighting -- as an award-winning lighting designer, photographer, filmmaker and lighting control specialist -- a broad talent and experience that is now influencing his photography.

Particularly when printed on aluminum.

"I really began focusing on automotive imagery once I learned about aluminum," he said. "That's when I totally got it. The image becomes self-illuminated. My artwork is less about cars and more about light and dark, shape and color, hard and soft. Cars are simply the vehicle -- an exceptional one-- I'm using to drive my art to the physical."

Here's how it works. Hall takes a sheet of aluminum and adds a slightly translucent layer of white before taking an equally translucent image and heat-pressing the two together.

This, he says, creates an illuminated 50-year archival image he can clean with Windex -- or any other brand of glass cleaner.

"What's magical here," he said, "is the way light hits the image and comes back to your eye. Part of it passes through to that pearl coating, then brings the image back to you, then passes all the way down to the aluminum and back to your eye. In a millisecond, the image keeps coming back to you, resulting in a liquid, illuminated image -- a quality I could never do on canvas or paper."

Imagine what it does with a car.

Either in honor of the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance or because of it, Friday afternoon, "Cars," Hall's "painted light" series of automotive fine art photography, will be featured at Edward Montgomery Fine Art in Carmel.

"Cars' is a testament to Hall's mastery of the field," said Edward Montgomery Waznis. "We are fortunate to have the honor of showing and exhibiting his latest, groundbreaking creations of 'archival imagery fused to aluminum.' These digitally manipulated original Hall photographs of some of the sweetest autos and auto details you'll ever see have been further enhanced by his ability to mount these transparent images to specially treated aluminum. The resulting visual impact is unlike anything that has come before."

Hall graduated from the California Institute of the Art with a bachelor of fine arts degree and also studied at the Art Institute of Chicago, the San Francisco Art Institute, California College of the Arts and Vista College.

His lighting projects include televised visits with The Pope, the Queen of England, four presidents of the United States, as well as a celebration of the Golden Gate Bridge, feature films, commercials and thousands of permanent lighting systems, his favorite of which was the renovation of the San Francisco Opera House.

In 2004, he received the Prestigious Sol Cohen award from the Illuminating Engineering Society for service to the lighting field.

"What intrigues and stimulates me," he said, "is how shadows detail life, enhancing or diminishing perceptions or emotional reactions to my artwork. Reality is defined in my work by revealing the mystery of an image -- its light and shadow -- through crystallizing or distorting pixels until the inherent beauty of an image is revealed."

Perhaps Hall could find something in that garage after all.

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ART OPENING • What: "Cars" photography exhibit by Philip Hall • Where: Edward Montgomery Fine Art, Ocean Avenue near Mission Street, Carmel • When: Photography series will be featured from 2 to 4 p.m. Friday, Aug. 18 • Tickets: Free and open to the public • Information: 622-9292 or online at [www.edwardmontgomeryfineart.com](http://www.edwardmontgomeryfineart.com)

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