

# Celebrating 'Planes, Trains & Automobiles'

*Box Factory takes transportation-themed exhibitions of Laura Kraklau, Mark Kelly for*

By **JEREMY D. BONFIGLIO**  
Sight & Sound Editor

ST. JOSEPH — When photographer Laura Kraklau tells people about her upcoming gallery show, she seems to get the same response.

"The first thing they say is, 'Oh, your lighthouses,' but I really enjoy photographing a wide variety of subjects," Kraklau says, laughing. "Still, people are surprised when I tell them it's not lighthouses."

That's because, in photography circles, Kraklau, a St. Joseph native, is best known for her 229-page coffee table book "View 366: A Year-long Visual Story of the St. Joseph Lighthouses," published in 2014, that documents a year-in-the-life of Southwest Michigan's most beloved pair of beacons through 366 consecutive daily photos captured from a variety of vantage points and times of day.

"It didn't start with a book as an end goal," Kraklau says. "It was the end of summer, 2011 and I hadn't been down to Lake Michigan very much, and I live so close so I was feeling a little guilty. I went down for three nights in a row to shoot sunsets. The third night I was walking back to the car and I thought, 'Wow, I should come down and photograph the lighthouse every day.' Because so many people are down there doing the same thing, it became this creative challenge for me to see it in different ways than other people."

Kraklau employs that same philosophy in her latest series, "Car Parts: Reflections on Automotive Design," which, along with fellow photographer Mark Kelly's series "South Shore," and a collection of aerial and historical photographs from Southwest Michigan Regional Airport, forms "Planes, Trains & Automobiles," a transportation-themed collection of artwork opening Friday and on view through June 3 in all three galleries of the Box Factory for the Arts.

As the title suggests, "Car Parts" is a photographic look at elements of vintage vehicle artistry. Highlighted in the collection on display in the Box's Williams Gallery are up-close studies of small details — the curves, chrome, lines and adornments — that have had a significant impact on the signature style of many iconic brands including Packard, Cadillac, Chevrolet, Ford, Studebaker and others.

Kraklau says her penchant for photographing vintage cars started several years ago at what is now known as the Lake Bluff Concours d'Elegance of Southwest Michigan, a vintage automobile exhibition held each summer on the bluff overlooking Lake Michigan.

"I would go down there as a spectator to look at the cars, and I was so taken by the level of detail and the level of artistry in these cars that you just don't see anymore in modern cars because everything is built to be so aerodynamic and fuel efficient," Kraklau says. "So I would go to Concours every summer and started photographing these elements that were intriguing to me, whether it was the wheels or the hood mascots or the use of chrome and the lines and the curves. I really studied those small details."

One such example is Kraklau's photograph of the front of a 1930s Pierce-Arrow Limousine, from the tip of its crouching archer hood ornament.

"The hood mascots are like miniature sculptures," Kraklau says. "The Packard line, for example, had a number of different hood mascots over the years, and they often named them. One of them is called the goddess of speed, and she's holding a wheel out in front of her. So to see those details and the vision that those designers had is so much fun."

In addition to these details, Kraklau, whose images were all taken outdoors, also uses the high shine

## IF YOU GO

**What:** Opening reception for "Planes, Trains & Automobiles"

**When:** 5:30-7:30 p.m. Friday; exhibits continue through June 3

**Where:** Box Factory for the Arts, 1101 Broad St., St. Joseph

**How much:** Free

**Contact:** 983-3688 or [www.boxfactoryforthearts.org](http://www.boxfactoryforthearts.org)

of the chrome and painted surfaces to pick up the reflections of sky and trees, people and other objects, as well as the unpredictable play of light and shadow.

"When I'm taking these pictures, I'm seeing not only the car and their elements, but how the car is reflecting what's around it at the time," Kraklau says. "There's one piece with a 1954 Nash Ambassador Country Club. The wheel cover on the back of the trunk has a chrome center and it has the word Nash engraved in that chrome area, which is painted red, the same as the color of the car. Where the car was parked, there was a Nash Metropolitan right behind it and so there was this reflection of the Nash Metropolitan in the wheel cover of the Nash Ambassador so it was a really interesting play."

It was the gift of a vintage Eastman Kodak Brownie camera from her grandmother, Gladys Smith, when Kraklau was 8 that sparked an interest in photography.

"My grandmother was a photographer, and she would take me along," she says. "I would get bored because I didn't have anything to do. So she had an old Eastman Kodak Brownie camera that she gave me. She gave me a couple of roles of film, so when we went out I could take photos, too. When I would get my pictures processed, the next time I would see her I

would show her the pictures. She would give me very constructive criticism. This of course is before Photoshop and anything digital and taught me a lot about composition. I would maybe have an electrical wire at the top of the picture and she would say, if you brought your camera down a little bit that would be out of there."

After high school, Kraklau's interest waned as the expense of the hobby grew. Then, about 10 years ago, she purchased her first digital camera, which reignited her passion.

"Suddenly there wasn't that cost barrier of purchasing film and having to get it processed and having to store a multitude of prints," Kraklau says. "There was more freedom than with a roll of 24 exposures, where you really couldn't take a deep dive into a subject the way you can with digital. It allowed me to learn more about photography and develop my own style without those cost barriers."

Accessibility is also a key component in Kelly's work, on display in the Box's Whitlow Gallery. "South Shore," which focuses on the transition of the landscape as seen from the South Shore railway, as well as its companion series, "iPhoneography," which chronicles Kelly's exploration of the creative possibilities of smartphone photography, epitomizes the ease of access of digital imagery.

"I've been a commercial photographer since '79 and I've used an embarrassingly wide range of equipment," says Kelly, who is director of the Teaching and Learning Center at Lake Michigan College, where he helps faculty use technology in the classroom and manages Canvas, the learning management system used by the college.

"I'm sometimes asked what's the best camera. You can compare megapixels and specs all you want, but what it really comes down to is

the camera you have with knowing how to use it and want to take a picture. I use that's the iPhone."

"South Shore" is a collection of images shot on iPhone many of them panoramic — from the South which connects South I Millennium Station in (20 stations along the way). "It's a collection of images that shows the effect of boom economic cycles on the Kelly says. "I grew up in Central Illinois, in Quir would come into the city Amtrak fairly regularly transition of the landscape rural to urban always fascinated me. This is an extension of that with images of how people are doing see their backyards and projects and houses that shuttered. Then there's industrial side, industry and go and leave the dead their wake."

"iPhoneography" is less than his "South Shore" very nature. The assembled images are largely a collection of experiments using the myriad editing apps and software that aids in an artist's vision.

In fact, Kelly compares phone cameras today with Polaroid SX70 instant of the '70s, whose images easily manipulated during minutes of development.

"In the '70s, even professional used the SX70 to do location scouting and to shoot portraits and that sort of thing and then some of us started with it as a creative medium. I really see the iPhone as a modern version of the Polaroid. It's ubiquitous always there."

Contact: [jbbonfiglio@TheHP.com](mailto:jbbonfiglio@TheHP.com)  
Twitter: @HPBonfiglio

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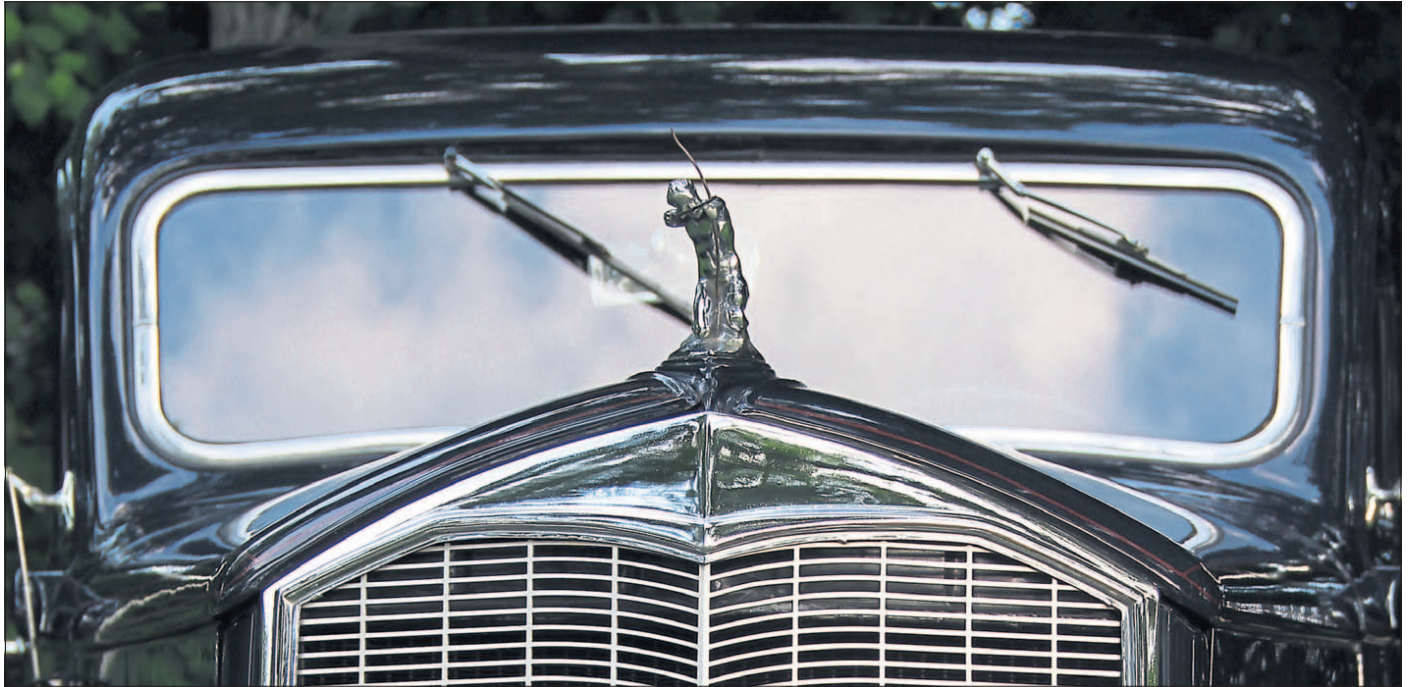
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Photos provided / Laura Kraklau

Laura Kraklau's photos of a 1930s Pierce-Arrow Limousine (above) and a Ford Fairlane (on the cover) are part of her latest series, "Car Parts: Reflections on Automotive Design," which will be on display starting Friday at the Box Factory for the Arts as part of the "Planes, Trains & Automobiles" exhibit.



Photos provided / Laura Kraklau

A Nash Metropolitan is reflected in the chrome wheel cover of a Nash Ambassador Country Club in this photo (at left) by Laura Kraklau. Above, a 1955 Studebaker President is photographed.



Photos provided / Mark Kelly

Mark Kelly's photos of the Beverly Shores train depot (above) and a factory (at left) are included in his photo series "South Shore," which will be on display starting Friday at the Box Factory for the Arts as part of the "Planes, Trains & Automobiles" exhibit.