

Santiago Michalek







Santiago Michalek: Memories from the Road



Union Pacific, oil on canvas panel, 24" h x 48" w

Few things evoke memories or call out to us like a newly restored 1957 T-bird, an age-patinated VW bug, a vintage Motoguzzi, or images of old steam engine locomotives and brightly painted biplanes like those that chugged and flitted their ways across the continent in an earlier day. We all have recollections or dreams about travel and the machines that are often a part of them. Transportation has played a fundamental role in the history of the United States, and writers like Jack Kerouac, John Steinbeck, and Charles Kuralt have all shared their adventures while crisscrossing the nation. A love of such symbols of US development provides artist Santiago Michalek with inspiration for many of his large-scale, beautifully crafted oil paintings, and they are always gateways to conversation.

In America, traveling from one place to another retains an aura of romance. We love our automobiles, trucks, motorcycles, trains, and airplanes and we view them very personally. We name our vehicles and fondly recall experiences while we owned them. The open road beckons, promises us adventure, good times, release from everyday ties and concerns and, often, our rides are our faithful companions. It is these feelings that Michalek conjures in his intricately detailed artworks.

Artistically inclined from a very early age, Santiago has always loved to draw. He polished his considerable self-taught skills at Bridge Academy of Art in Provo, Utah, and further honed his understanding of craft in museums, galleries, and books.

Among his favorite subjects are Volkswagens. The first one he owned was a red 1979 convertible bug he bought to fix up shortly after he married. He began to restore other VWs and to meet people who also loved the brand. Everyone he met had a story, a history, to share about their favorite model. Those stories expanded to other forms of transportation and they, too, began to appear in Michalek's art.

The artist sees his paintings as a "celebration of things that are sometimes difficult to express in words, particularly qualities associated with passion and fascination." Each artwork is, in effect, a portrait. A term usually associated with a depiction of a person, these portrayals of transportation sparkle with personality and character – each engineering detail is realistically rendered yet painterly in style. Michalek is also a fine figurative artist and often includes people in his compositions to round out the narrative.

Michalek's search for the elusive emotions that surround his subject matter is an ongoing journey in itself: "It's what keeps me on the edge, always working. I love what I do, but I'm not complacent. I continue to strive for balance between craftsmanship and the spontaneous discovery of the moment!"



9328 Engine, oil on Belgian linen, 48" h x 36" w



Dappled Gray, oil on canvas panel, 48" h x 60" w



Plane Mechanic, oil on canvas panel, 30" h x 30" w

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◀ *Junk Yard Bus (detail)*
Oil on panel
48" h x 55" w

▶ *Western Pacific (detail)*
Oil on canvas panel
29" h x 29" w