

Kahane Puts Viewers in the Driver's Seat

By Loren King

Recreating experiences with her large scale yet intimate photographs is E.A. Kahane's passion and specialty. Her latest exhibit, "Front Row Seat" at the Sarah Langley Gallery at the Hammetts Hotel, co-curated by Jessica Hagen Fine Art and Newport Curates, puts viewers in the driver's seat at the legendary Mille Miglia auto race in Italy.

"My goal was to tell the story of why this is called the most beautiful race in the world," said Kahane, who lives in New York and Newport.

The photographer had a front row seat at this year's event, a 1,000-mile round-trip course between Brescia and Rome that's been an Italian tradition since 1927.

She headed to Italy in June with her husband, Bill, who drove in the event, accompanied by their 20-year-old son, Harry. The Mille Miglia, she says, "has been on my husband's bucket list for quite some time."

His classic Ferrari wasn't in shape for the challenging endurance course over four days. But he was offered the chance to drive a pre-qualified Fiat, joining some 400 other pre-1957 cars in the event.

The Mille Miglia was a one-day race from its inception in 1927 until 1957, when it was terminated after two fatal crashes. It was revived in 1977 as a race for classic cars selected on the basis of their provenance, relevance to the Mille Miglia, and variety.

"It wasn't planned. The next thing you know, we were going to Italy and my son was the co-pilot. My husband would never have me; I'm terrible with directions," she said, laughing.

Kahane obtained photographer credentials and drove her own vehicle on Italy's "autostrada," the national highway system, which brought her into the cities and hill towns along the Mille Miglia course well ahead of the racers. She reveled in being in the streets of these quaint and historic villages as residents and tourists eagerly awaited the procession of automobiles.

"They got to know me. I was able to engage with people and share the human emotion," said Kahane, whose photographs capture the visual pomp of the cheering spec-



The Mille Miglia museum in Italy will host Kahane's exhibit in June 2022.

At bottom, E.A. Kahane, right, is joined by Jessica Hagen in front of Kahane's montage of race prints.

The public is invited to an artist's talk by Kahane on Oct. 27 from 4 to 6 p.m. at the Sarah Langley Gallery in the Hammett's Hotel.

tators, as well as the gleaming vintage sports cars.

Channeling her natural enthusiasm into her work is what makes Kahane's exhibits so appealing, says Hagen, who represents Kahane and whose gallery has hosted her exhibits in the past.

"Since I started working with Elizabeth five years ago, she has taken us strolling through Central Park, riding in a jeep on African safari, marching in Newport's St. Patrick's Day Parade or, as in her current exhibit, zooming through the lovely towns and villages of Italy in the famous car race, the Mille Miglia. The show is glamorous, colorful and interesting and, like all things E.A. Kahane does, it's fun," Hagen says.

Kahane's 2020 show, "We Need a Parade," displayed more than 160 large format prints in a free outdoor installation that captured Newport's St. Patrick's Day Parade, which had been canceled for the first time in its 100-year history. "OFF THE WALL: On Safari with E.A. Kahane," at the Jessica Hagen Gallery in 2019, presented portraits of wildlife complete with sound effects and a jeep replica that provided visitors to the gallery with an immersive experience.

As with those shows, "Front Row



Car #186 and the parade of cars seen on a historic street in Verona, Italy.

Seat" boasts large-scale images that draw the viewer into the action. There are 60-by-40 canvas prints and 24-by-36 images that Kahane decided to print on metal.

"I wanted a shimmer for the cars. I chose images with bold shapes and colors. It's car as art," she says. "The highlight that I did not expect was that I made a photo montage."

This 110-by-63 Dibond panel takes the viewer through her Mille Miglia experience with multiple images of varying shapes and sizes.

Kahane also personalized the exhibit with artifacts from the race and had T-shirts and flags made to recreate some of the excitement of the event for her show.

She hopes her images and the experiential exhibit give viewers the chance to share in a rare experience. She has many unforgettable memories from the race, but one that most stands out happened in Verona. Harry jumped from the Fi-

at's front seat and insisted that his mother sit next to Bill for the final stretch back to Brescia.

"I got in the car at the end in Verona. Technically, you're not supposed to do that, but we weren't trying to win or anything. Having watched in towns along the route, I saw how much the crowd loved when the cars engaged with them," said Kahane. "So, I'm hanging out the window like a crazy person and at some point, someone handed me a glass of champagne. I'm half Italian and I am yelling 'Chin don! Chin don!' [meaning 100 years]. I got great photos. It was magical."



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