



Keno Brothers ready 'rolling sculptures' for inaugu

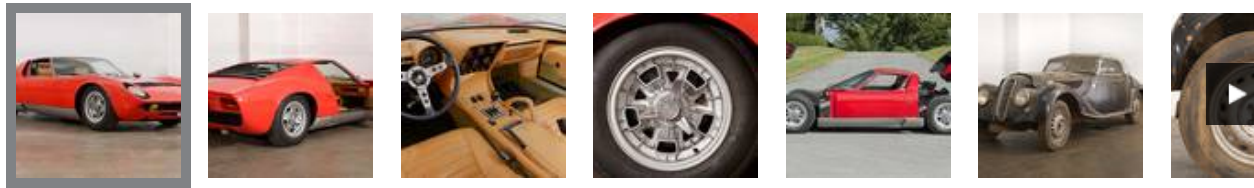
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UNRESTORED MIURA, '39 BMW SET TO CROSS THE BLOCK

It's been raining all day in Westchester County. Leaves are down everywhere. Before taking the next corner, I say to myself, "Remember the tires." Such skinny little Michelins. Turning in, the sound from the 12 cylinders behind my head mixes in my imagination with the soundtrack of Frank Sinatra singing Vernon Duke's "Autumn in New York."

This week, the unrestored 1969 Lamborghini Miura P400 S I'm driving just north of New York City will be up for bid at the [Keno Brothers](#)' "Rolling Sculpture" auction in Soho.

If you've seen "[Antiques Roadshow](#)" on TV, you've likely seen twins Leigh and Leslie Keno appraising Federal Period furniture. Now they're jumping into the premium auto auction market. The Kenos conservatively estimate the Miura at between \$800,000 and \$1.6 million. Another '69 P400 S sold at Monterey this year for \$2.3 million.

Ol' Blue Eyes' crooning suits this car. He owned the only other [Miura S](#) clothed in Cinghiale leather (actually boar's hide) like this one. The story goes that Sinatra presented [Lamborghini](#) with a roll of Cinghiale and ordered it be used in the interior -- not true (it was Nuccio Bertone's idea) but a nice thought.

Launching the Keno Brothers' first auction in New York City in November is a fine thought, as well. As Sinatra emotes in "Autumn in New York," "It spells the thrill of first-nighting ..."

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1939 BMW 327 Sport Cabriolet
PHOTO BY KENO BROTHERS

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It also places a vintage auto auction in the middle of NYC's fine arts auction season, attracting collectors and artists from around the world. You could argue it elevates a car auction to a different level. The brothers' deep connections in the fine arts world and their relative star power may explain why RM Sotheby's moved their own automotive auction in New York to December.

You may not guess it, but the Kenos are full-blooded car guys. "We grew up going to antiques shows with grease under our fingernails," Leigh affirms.

Their automotive infatuation stems from a succession of classic cars that the twins' father, Ron Keno, purchased at modest prices in the 1960s and '70s, including Jaguar XK120s/140s, XKEs, an MG TC and a 1939 Alfa Romeo 6C 2500 Berlinetta that Mussolini originally bought for his girlfriend. The brothers have also competed in vintage racing in their 1959 Series-2 Lotus Eleven and late-'70s Ferrari 512 BB LM sports racers.

The Kenos' involvement in the antique business led them to the Pebble Beach Concours, where Leigh began judging pre-WWII "preservation class" cars in 2004, joined a couple years later by Leslie. That preservation mentality is

obvious in their selection of approximately 30 lots for “Rolling Sculpture” from the Miura we drove to a “barn find” 1939 BMW 327 Sport Cabriolet still wearing the dust of its hibernation.

Leigh likens the thrill of finding an unrestored car to discovering an 18th century Chippendale table, only better: “Take that excitement and increase it 95 percent.”



1969 Ferrari 365 GTB4 N.A.R.T. Competizione
PHOTO BY KENO BROTHERS

Both brothers have auction experience -- Leigh at Christie's and Leslie at Sotheby's -- but acknowledge that cars are different. Accordingly, they've staffed their new auction house with veterans of Bonhams and Barrett-Jackson. They've also joined forces with a former tech CEO, Bradley R. Farrell, who brings a tailored Web platform that integrates market comparables with popular auction platform Proxibid.

Tech will permeate the live auction as well, each bidder receiving a Google Nexus tablet instead of a printed catalog. Loaded with all the expected information, the devices will also use near-field communication. When a bidder

strides up to car, videos of the vehicle will play along with information.

Expect the auction space itself to look a bit different, in line with the curatorial bent of the Kenos. Cars will be on plinths, Leslie explains, arrayed to best advantage like an art exhibit. Lighting will be leveraged to give each car a sense of motion and drama. Potentially adding to that drama will be conservative auction estimates that, combined with market comparable information, should draw bidders who don't want to miss a deal.

You can preview the potential deals and look in on the auction at kenobrothers.com. Or if you're in the city, see it yourself. Where better, as the song goes, to woo "glittering crowds ... in canyons of steel."

By Eric Tegler

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