



DENNIS ZIEMIENSKI

Hit the Road

By Alyssa M. Tidwell

This summer, the iconic Route 66 byway that once stretched across eight states and covered 2,448 miles from Chicago to Santa Monica celebrates 100 years. In a solo show at Blue Rain Gallery in Santa Fe, New Mexico, artist Dennis Ziemienksi presents a new body of work celebrating the centennial of this ubiquitous piece of American culture. Far and wide, young and old, everyone knows Route 66.

"Route 66 isn't just a road with motels, gas stations and restaurants. Its character comes alive when you travel the Mother Road from beginning to end, whether it's nature or man made. Starting in the incredible city of Chicago, wending its western way through the grasses of the high plains, through the awe-inspiring Southwestern landscape and ending at the Pacific Ocean at the famous Santa Monica Pier. All of this is accompanied by dramatic clouds and skies," says the artist.

"This show was very challenging to design because I love so many elements of this road in all the different states. All the different cultures compel me to paint them, from city life, farms, ranching [and] the many Native lands, to the LA beaches. Neon signs have always been a big attraction for me. As they are disappearing I feel more urgency to record them. I love painting them also because they are an art form in and of themselves and can be quite challenging when the sign is complex. I knew I wanted to honor the history of this road during this centennial year. I could have painted 100 paintings with all that I wanted to say, so it was very difficult to pick and choose my subject matter. I tried to touch on various time periods, locations and cultures, which gives the show a little bit of everything—and of course, my obsession with all types of clouds."

Paintings in the upcoming exhibition that especially channel this theme include *Midway*, which focuses on the drama of the Texas panhandle, halfway between Chicago and Santa Monica; *Airway Drive In* with its iconic neon "cheerleader" sign; *Teepee Curios*, another bright neon sign along Route 66 advertising a quirky Native



1
Teepee Curios, oil on canvas, 40 x 30 in.

2
Grand Canyon Route 66, oil on canvas, 40 x 30 in.

3
The Impala Meets the Chief, oil on canvas, 30 x 30 in.

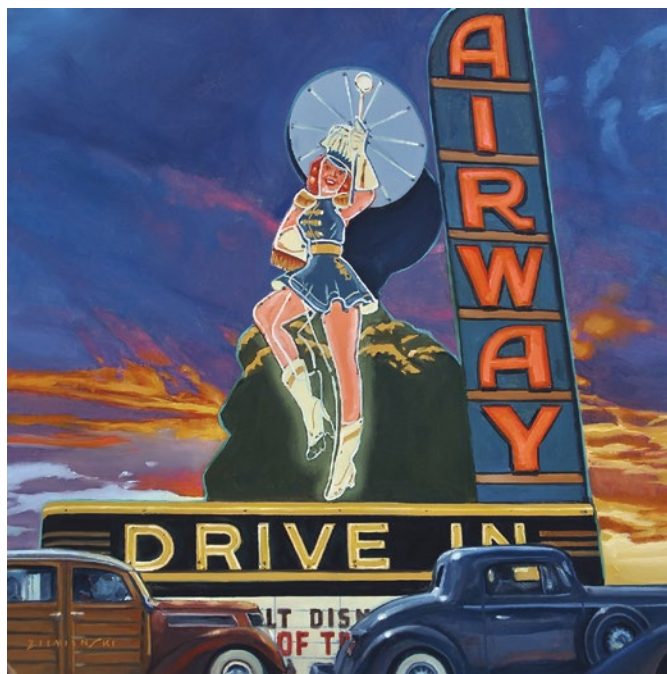
4
Airway Drive In, oil on canvas, 36 x 36 in.



2



3



4

American-themed gift shop; and *Check-in at the Wigwam* ("I actually stayed here many years ago in Holbrook, Arizona," says Ziemski. "Still in business.").

Dennis Ziemski: 100 Years of Route 66 will hang from July 31 to August 10, with an opening reception on Friday, July 31, from 5 to 7 p.m.

Leah Garcia, of Blue Rain Gallery, adds, "In this new body of work, he captures the spirit of the open road with a striking sense of clarity and atmosphere where expansive skies, iconic roadside imagery and fleeting moments of travel converge. His paintings are both nostalgic and immediate, honoring the visual language of a bygone era while reintroducing it with a freshness that feels alive in the present. There's a cinematic quality to Ziemski's work, where each scene unfolds like a memory in motion. For collectors, these paintings hold a timeless appeal rooted in history, yet continually revealing new layers of beauty, story and place." ●

Blue Rain Gallery 544 S. Guadalupe Street • Santa Fe, NM 87501 • (505) 954-9902 • www.blueraingallery.com