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ART & DESIGN

Art by Salvatore Scarpitta, From Vivid Paintings to Fast Cars

By RANDY KENNEDY
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“Mail Box” (1960), by Salvatore Scarpitta. A show of his work is opening Oct. 14 at the Luxembourg & Dayan gallery. Credit Stella Alba Cartaino, via Luxembourg & Dayan, New York

The American painter and sculptor Salvatore Scarpitta has always seemed like the lost man in the lineup of durably famous artists — Robert Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns, Cy Twombly, Frank Stella — championed by the legendary dealer Leo Castelli. Scarpitta, who was raised in Los Angeles and died in 2007, never quite took off as a postwar pioneer. But then again, he never pursued anything resembling a standard art career: He was an unconventional painter who became an untrained car manufacturer.

Opening Oct. 14 at the Luxembourg & Dayan gallery, “Salvatore Scarpitta 1956-1964” will trace his evolution, from his traumatized-looking paintings made with bandages and

bulges to a turn in his sculpture toward the mid-1960s in which his automotive fascinations began to spawn racecars, a few of which actually worked (and were actually raced). (Through Dec. 23; 212-452-4646, luxembourgdayan.com.)