

CLASSIC DRIVER

Concorso d'Eleganza Villa d'Este 2008



For the 20 years from 1929 to 1949, the Concorso d'Eleganza Villa d'Este was a world-renowned automotive beauty contest, with the latest and most stylish cars displayed in the Grand Hotel's glorious Lake Como setting. Attempts to revive the event in the 1980s and mid '90s came to nothing and then, in 1999, BMW stepped in, providing the necessary vision and backing. Today, the Concorso d'Eleganza Villa d'Este is one of the highlights of the motoring calendar, a stunning mix of the greatest classics from the 1920s-1970s and present-day concept cars and prototypes.

In 2008, beautiful weather enhanced a magnificent event, a stroll through the grounds of the **Grand Hotel** feeling like a trip through motoring history. From the **1925 Rolls-Royce Silver Ghost Pall Mall Tourer** to the black **Lamborghini Miura SV** owned by **Dr. Luigi Macaluso**, President of **Girard-Perregaux**, the automotive allure went on and on.





The seven-strong jury, chaired by Fiat designer **Lorenzo Ramaciotti**, included **Lord March** of Goodwood fame. Every detail of the competing cars was examined and, every time an engine was started up, a crowd of spectators gathered... lured by, for example, the roar of the 5.3-litre V8 of the extravagant **Bizzarrini P 538 Manta**.





Saturday's highlight was the parade of the classic and concept cars with commentary by **Simon Kidston**, the knowledgeable former head of Bonhams Europe's motor car department, rolling out anecdote after anecdote, all in fluent Italian.



The Mexican collector **Arturo Keller** took the most coveted prize, the **2008 Coppa d'Oro Villa d'Este**, for his **1938 Mercedes-Benz 540 K Autobahnkurier Coupé**, which also won the **Streamlined Style and Speed** group. Just two 540 Ks exist; the other, a gift to the **Shah of Persia**, resides in Tehran. The **Trofeo BMW Group** went to John Croul's beautiful **1949 Ferrari 166 MM Touring Berlinetta**.



Fred Kriz drove his **1959 Bentley S1 Continental 2-door saloon Mulliner** from Monaco, which won him the prize for the car driven the longest distance to the event. If there had been a prize for the most impressive sound, it would doubtless have been awarded to the **1930 4.5-litre Blower Bentley**.



On the second day, the general public arrived to view the cars in the spectacular gardens at **Villa Erba**, former home of the director **Luchino Visconti**. The visitors voted for their favourite car and the winner, the **1937 Delahaye 135M** of American **Peter Mullin**, was awarded the **Trofeo BMW Group Italia**. This unique machine, designed for a Maharajah, features bodywork by **Figoni & Falaschi**.





Surprisingly, the public audience chose the **Bugatti Veyron Fbg Hermès** to win the **Concorso d'Eleganza Design Award**. Other prototypes and concepts on display included the Swiss submersible **Rinspeed sQuba**, the **Morgan LIFEcar Coupe**, **Zagato's GTZ Bentley** and **Maserati Touring's Bellagio Fast Back Shooting Brake** study. BMW gave a glimpse into its own future with the **Concept CS** design study – though, as event sponsor, it withheld the CS from the awards.





BMW also used the Concorso to pay tribute to its **M1** sports car, celebrating the 30th anniversary of this great mid-engined model. Eight M1s were on show and, as if that weren't enough, on the Saturday evening **Adrian van Hooydonk, Design Director of BMW Automobiles**, unveiled the **BMW M1 Homage** - a detailed report on which appeared in [last week's Classic Driver](#).





The **Concorso d'Eleganza Villa d'Este** has once more confirmed its position as Europe's dream event. The selection of cars, the location and the organisation are exceptional. This outstanding experience surely deserves a place in your 2009 travel plans.

Photo Gallery

1925 Rolls-Royce Silver Ghost





1925 Bentley 3 Litre





Mercedes-Benz 680 S





1928 Isotta-Fraschini 8A





Bentley 4 1/2-Litre "Blower"





1932 Daimler Double Six





1934 Voisin C 24





1936 Hispano-Suiza J 12





1927 Hispano-Suiza H6C





1928 Mercedes-Benz 680 S





1935 SS Cars Ltd. SS 90





1936 Bugatti 57





1937 Mercedes-Benz 320





1937 Rolls-Royce Phantom III





1937 Delahaye 135 M





1940 Alfa Romeo 6C 2500 SS





1935 Alfa Romeo 6C 2300 Jankovits





1937 Bugatti 57 SC Atalante





1937 Alfa Romeo 6C 2300 B Pescara





1938 Mercedes-Benz 540 K "Autobahnkurier"





3 1948 Delahaye 135 M





1956 Bentley S1





1956 Maserati A6 G54





1958 BMW 507,





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