
Artcurial to Sell Rare Voisin Aérodyne

04 January 2010 | Classic Driver



In naming one of his creations 'Aérodyne', Gabriel Voisin paid testament to the pioneers of the early aeronautical industry. Of imposing size and elegant lines, the avant-garde design remains one of the most beautiful and dramatic ever built. It lacks just a tailplane - yet still seems to fly.

Certain inventors are touched by the destiny of others. **Gabriel Voisin** (1880-1973) certainly knew how to live and was one of aviation's early pioneers. He created the company **Voisin Frères** in 1907, and it soon became one of the most significant airframe manufacturers in France. The **First World War** released unheard-of levels of demand and the company did well.

Success did not bring satisfaction for **Voisin**, however, so in November 1918 at the age of 38 he stopped manufacturing aeroplanes and liquidated the company. Joined by engineers **Dufresne** and **Artault** from **Citroën**, he commenced car manufacture and announced his first vehicle, the **Voisin M1**, in 1919.



Grandeur and decadence

Over the next decade - 10 years of success, tragedy and frustration - the innovative engineer (and sometime dissolute dandy) reached his peak of fame. He was a friend of artists, politicians and celebrities such as the architect **Le Corbusier**. In 1929, the worldwide financial crash crushed the company and by 1931 it was under the ownership of the Belgian company **Imperia**. Not to be defeated, **Gabriel Voisin** filed a lawsuit against **Imperia** and by 1933 owned the company again.

The following year less than 150 cars were produced – against 1200 or so in 1928. The company was running out of creativity. From this painful period was born the **Aérodyne**: a car so dramatic and innovative that it was hoped it would restore the company's fortunes. Named the **C25**, the first prototype was equipped with a 2994cc **Knight** six-cylinder engine and a sliding roof that could retract into the cockpit.



Luxurious, but late

The new **Voisin** also featured futuristic developments such as driver-adjustable suspension and a two-ratio gearbox by **Cotal-Voisin** with electrically operated overdrive. It had all the refinements you'd expect in a car intended for the very top customers in France.



However, it was too late and much too expensive. 88,000 francs for a **Voisin** compared unfavourably with a **Bugatti Type 57 Galibier** costing 'only' 70,000 francs. Just seven **Aérodynes** were

constructed and the model was replaced, in 1936, by another space-age design, the **Aérosport**. That, too, failed to rescue **Gabriel Voisin**. Successful or not, the **Aérodyne** remains one of the world's most beautiful cars and truly has a place in the 'art gallery' of automotive design.

*This **1936 Voisin Aérodyne** will be sold by French auction house **Artcurial** at its **14 February 2010** sale to be held at the **Palais des Congrès, Paris**. For further information, please contact **François Melcion**, tel. +33 (0)1 42 99 16 31, email: fmelcion@artcurial.com or visit www.artcurial.com*



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