

# CLASSIC DRIVER

## **BMW V8 Abbate Runabout: Bavarian speedboat**



**The BMW Abbate wooden boat is one of the top lots at the upcoming Power by BMW auction in Munich this autumn. The stylish speedboat is one of only two prototypes built with a full-blooded BMW V8 engine.**

The idea of incorporating a modified BMW V8 in the hull of a wooden boat was thanks to Frankfurt-based gentleman driver Helm Gloeckler, who was best known in the 1950s for racing Porsche specials (developed by his cousin, Walter Gloeckler) that ultimately led to Porsche's iconic racing version, the 550 spyder. Gloeckler was also an avid water-skier, hence his interest in powerful boats.

Running a major BMW dealership in Frankfurt (from which he delivered a BMW 507 to Elvis Presley, then stationed at a nearby US garrison), Gloeckler envisioned a perfect match between the relatively lightweight aluminium BMW V8 with an elegant mahogany boat of Italian origin. The project, carrying the code '401', converted the tuned 503/507 twin-carburettor engine to suit high-performance boats of the kind Gloeckler had in mind.

In Giulio Abbate, a member of one of Italy's most famous boatbuilding families (and multiple offshore racing champion), Helm Gloeckler found the ideal partner for his ambitious project. When finished, his boat also served as an admired showpiece and demonstrator for BMW technology. Sadly, the planned low-volume production run never materialised – but this makes the first of the two prototypes, now being offered for sale at the Power by BMW auction in the autumn, especially rare and desirable. The estimate is 175,000 to 240,000 euros.

For further information please visit [www.bonhams.com](http://www.bonhams.com).

*Text: [Classic Driver](#)*

*Photos: Bonhams*

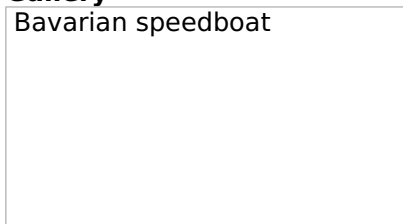
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