

CLASSIC DRIVER

These were the highlights of the Concorso d'Eleganza 2018

Lead

Each year, the automotive upper crust descends on the shores of Lake Como for a beauty pageant unlike any other. We were at the Grand Hotel Villa d'Este to bring you all the highlights from the weekend...

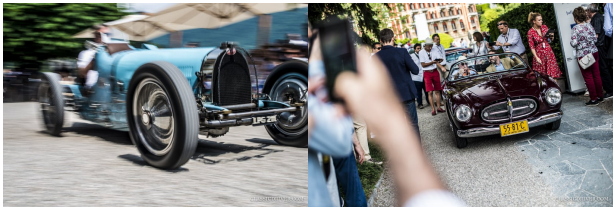


Gleaming Rivas gently bobbing on the waves of Lake Como, buzzing seaplanes approaching from a distance, elegant people dressed in summer suits strolling across the terrace of what is arguably the most beautiful Grand Hotel south of the Alps - Saturday at the Concorso d'Eleganza Villa d'Este is a real journey through time. Only the omnipresent smartphones reminded us that we were in 2018, not one of the golden eras of coachbuilding in which most of the competing cars originated. And there was a certain irony that the creator of the most style-defining mobile phone of all time, the Apple design chief and inventor of the iPhone Jony Ive, sat on the jury this year.



Arguably the purest and most impressive automobiles began life in the racing workshops of the 1930s. Take Roderick Jack's Zagato-bodied 1931 Alfa Romeo 8C 2300 Monza painted not in the usual red, but in 'British Racing Green'. Not only did the car make its debut at Brooklands, but it also ferried a later owner's children to school.





Another surprise was that the avant-garde designer Marc Newson chose not to show a shark-like concept car, but instead a wonderful 1934 Bugatti 59 Grand Prix car for his Concorso debut.



When it comes to automotive elegance, the pre-War period remains unparalleled. The unrestored 1936 Lancia Astura Series III Cabriolet with a beautiful Pinin Farina body and a silky-soft V8 was certainly one of our favourites, while the pair of burgundy-and-black Bugatti 57s – an Atalante Coupe and a Cabriolet – showed reverence for Ettore Bugatti’s artistry.



It’s amazing how quickly the automotive world returned to its peak after the Second World War – albeit in a more compact and mass-suitable format. Monaco-based Fred Kriz brought a 1949 Bentley MKVI ‘Lightweight Coupé’, whose sporty inclined radiator was supposedly deemed ‘shocking’ by the company’s clientele. Another eye-catcher was the 1954 Jaguar XK120 SE bodied by Pinin Farina for Max Hoffman, which made the baroque lines of the original look quite dated.



Austrian collector Andreas Mohringer proved that the Testa Rossa is not the be-all and end-all of the Ferrari world. His beguiling silver-blue 335 Sport, one of just three remaining examples, more than held its own beside its neighbour, the Ferrari 250 GTO chassis #3445GT. In fact, the jury judged it to be the most beautiful of them all, [awarding the car and its owner the 'Best of Show' award](#).



The Abarth 2000 Sport SE 010 also embodied radical Italian racing sportsmanship. In terms of purity, it certainly competes with icons such as the Ford GT40 and the Porsche 917.



As you'd expect, the most famous Italian design experiments were present on Lake Como. Swiss collector Albert Spiess has brought not a Lamborghini, but an Alfa Romeo: the 1968 Tipo 33/2 Stradale, which was faster than its contemporaries and significantly more expensive than, say, a Ferrari 275 GTB/4. As such, just 18 examples were built. That the car claimed the audience-voted Coppa d'Oro award was entirely expected after its thunderous demonstration.



One of the most dramatic concept cars of all time, the Lancia Stratos Zero, is also here causing quite a stir. Owned by the American collector Phillip Sarofim, the car was created by Marcello Gandini in 1970 and heralded the 'wedge age' that prospered throughout the decade. We can't imagine many guests on the terrace will noticed when Alois Ruf took the wheel at the last minute, beside the owner's girlfriend and major American pop star Avril Lavigne.



If we happened to be regular visitors to the Grand Hotel Villa d'Este, we'd be content with two cars to use during our stay: the gold Ferrari 500 Superfast once owned by Peter Sellers, who used it for shopping trips, and Giovanni Agnelli's Fiat 500 Spiaggia for bathing trips.



For the first time, the selection committee has invited Formula 1 racers to the Concorso. There seven cars here on the Villa d'Este gravel from between 1954 and 1984 and they certainly lend a fresh aesthetic - even if the elegance of these minimal machines should not be evaluated with the traditional criteria.



The critics were certainly silenced by the sight and sound of a BRM P180, with which Marlboro began its sponsorship activities in the sport, the six-wheeled Tyrrell P34 or the McLaren MP4/2B owned by Formula 1 veteran Gerhard Berger.

Photos: Rémi Dargegen for Classic © 2018

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