

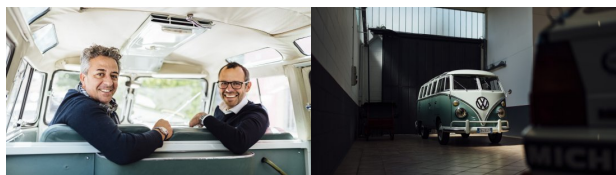
CLASSIC DRIVER

[Girardo & Co. has just opened a second showroom in Italy](#)

Lead

Three years since he left RM Sotheby's to establish his own eponymous collector car dealership in South West London, Max Girardo has announced the expansion of his business with a second showroom in Italy, a country he'll be the first to admit is particularly close to his heart. We paid a visit...

It's been three years almost to the day since former RM Sotheby's frontman and one of the classic car world's key faces Max Girardo set up shop in an intimate gallery-like showroom in Fulham, South West London. During that time, he and his team have sold a staggering 200 of the finest (predominantly Italian) blue-chip collector cars, ranging from pre-War Alfa Romeos and post-War Ferrari Grand Tourers to myriad Lancia rally cars, the evocative multicoloured machines for which Girardo's obsession is well known – [Martinis at Duke's Hotel with Henri Toivonen's 037](#), anyone?



But we're not in London today. Nope, having just been picked up from Bergamo train station not far from Milan in a minty-fresh VW Samba, we've arrived at Girardo & Co.'s new Italian showroom to meet both the man himself and Daniele Turrisi, who'll head up the company's new satellite operation. If there is a group of cars that demonstrates the diverse cross-section of the market Girardo & Co. occupies, it's the impressive assembly with which we're greeted upon entering the tall, bright, and airy Italian-style industrial showroom on the outskirts of Bergamo. It's a stone's throw from Milan, Brescia, and Como, to name but a few key automotive locations.



In the middle of the room proudly sits a gleaming red Maserati 200Si, surrounded on all sides by automotive royalty. A silver Bugatti EB110 Super Sport (the final example built, no less) is joined on the left-hand side of the room by a Mercedes-Benz 300SL Roadster and a Porsche 356 Speedster, while on the right there are three veritable Lancia rally icons: Stratos, 037, and Delta Integrale. It's quite the line-up and a serious signal of intent for Girardo's newfound Italian arm.

So, why Italy? Well... isn't it obvious? "We do loads of business in Italy, be it buying, selling, restoring, or simply moving and storing cars," explains the ever-passionate Girardo as we sit down in the office that overlooks the showroom. "It's not by accident – I'm Italian, most of the cars we deal with were born in Italy, and most of the specialists we work with, be it the Baldi twins or Cremonini Carrozzeria, are here. In many ways, it's an underestimated automotive hub – there's so much knowledge and passion and the number of events also serves to back up that claim."



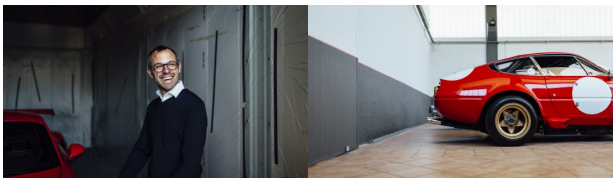


Girardo's former experience in the auction world, not least his 10 years at the helm of the European division of RM Sotheby's, inevitably allowed him to make personal connections with countless collectors, enthusiasts, and specialists from across the globe. It just so happens that rather a lot of them are located in Italy...

"London's a fantastic place because it's easily accessible and a hub for world travel; the idea was simply to put in place the infrastructure to broaden our reach," he continues. "Don't get me wrong, the goal is not to become a huge machine. We were a small boutique three years ago and we're still small now - the idea is to have the four of us in London as well as a small operation in Bergamo so we can reach a lot more people in person. Personal service is, after all, how we differentiate ourselves. It should give us a great competitive advantage as, bizarrely, we don't really see anyone operating here at a similarly high level."



That Daniele Turrisi was chosen as the man to head the new operation was no accident either. Having formerly operated as a one-man band under his own name, Turrisi has known Girardo for over 25 years. "I first met Daniele when I was working at Brooks, which subsequently became Bonhams," Girardo recalls. "I went to Bergamo to consign an Alfa Romeo GTA and he took me out for lunch in a Citroën Méhari. When I got out, I tore my trousers and that's how we became friends! We always stayed in touch and have done a lot of business together."



Having cut his teeth in the family Carrozzeria, Turrisi had single-handedly restored his first car by the age of 17. Soon after, he began travelling the world inspecting cars for his father's clients - a skill of his that Girardo can't emphasise enough. "I'm really looking forward to joining the team and heading up Girardo & Co. in Italy," he comments, enthusiastically. "Having worked on my own for so long, I'm really excited to build something special as a team and bounce ideas with the guys. We're going to rock it!"





The showroom will officially open with a party next Tuesday evening ahead of the Mille Miglia on Wednesday and we're told there will be some very special cars in attendance – watch this space. Before the prosecco corks fly and the people flood in, however, we're keen to ask Girardo how it feels to have made such an expansion so soon after founding the business. "It all sunk in this morning as I was driving here in my Fiat 500 rental car," he says. "I couldn't believe we have a bricks-and-mortar showroom with our name over the door here in Italy. There's so much more to this than hiring someone random to run it, too – with Daniele coming on board, there's a lot of emotion.

"I remember moving into our London showroom. We filled it with cars pretty quickly, but it was quite bare – there was nothing on the walls, for example. And now I look at this showroom, which is full of incredible cars, and I get exactly the same feeling. It's sort of going back to the beginning, and beginnings are always fun. We've got the knowledge and the know-how and now we've just got to go out there and sell some great cars!"



As we hop back into the company's courtesy Samba bus (how fun is that?) for our ride back to the train station, there's one final question we can't resist posing to Girardo: which of the 200-odd cars he's sold under the Girardo & Co. banner does he wish he could buy back? "Probably the ex-Works Maserati 300S we sold very early on – I sold it too quickly and too cheaply and I now realise just how great a car it was. It's not the one that got away as such, we just didn't get to have enough fun with it!"

Photos: Andrea Klainguti for Classic Driver © 2019

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