

# Magneto

ISSUE

8

WINTER  
2020

B O N N E V I L L E

THE LAND OF SPEED



£10.00 | WINTER 2020



PRINTED IN THE UK

SKY ICKX ON PORSCHE 959 | LAND-ROVER 001 | CZECH FERRARI COLLECTION | 50 GREATEST COACHBUILDERS | McLAREN F1



WORDS  
DONALD OSBORNE

**OSCA**

History shows that the Maserati brothers' Officine Specializzate Costru

...obili marque deserved to do better – and this GT is a prime example why

**BRAVO**

PHOTOGRAPHY  
LOPRESTO/CARRSTUDIO



*BELOW AND RIGHT* Body design is flashy in detail yet at once almost

*This Touring coupé gives up its secrets slowly, in a continually gratifying manner*

*painfully restrained and sombre in aspect.*





1600 O S

P 1122 S



*LEFT AND BELOW* Beautifully aged cabin is testament to

*Original seats, doors, dash and carpets give the look and feel of a well cared-for automobile*

*many miles of smiles in this delightful GT.*



**THIS IS, OF** course, a story about a car – not a man. But, for me, in order to describe why we should care about this particular OSCA 1600 GT, it is important to consider the collector who owns it. Corrado Lopresto, an architect who lives in Milan, Italy, has built an amazing collection of vehicles. It is at once broad ranging and tightly focused – and all Italian.

The unifying theme is one-of-a-kind celebrations of the Italian coachbuilder's art, true kinetic sculpture created for the most discerning and sophisticated clients. If a production model finds its way into this collection, it is a very special car indeed – chassis number 01, the mother of all that would follow. Finally, there are the extraordinarily preserved automobiles – loved from new, always well maintained even when they were not being regularly driven. They show their lives honestly and directly, true time machines.

'Our' 1961 OSCA 1600 GT is not a 'one-off', but rather one of two built. It is not chassis 01 of the 1600 GT. It is not completely original. So, why would Lopresto seek out this example? The answer is a somewhat complex, yet simple one. It is for the car's design. And a logical bonus is that although Lopresto has given the OSCA a correct external and mechanical restoration, the interior – the part that the driver and passenger directly touch – remains completely original and beautifully refreshed.

I have known Lopresto and the collection for many years, and have marvelled at both the cars and the enthusiastic passion which he communicates to all with whom he shares them. His is a childlike energy, which un-embarrassingly and endlessly pours forth with the details on how a vehicle came to be chosen for the collection and why it gives him pleasure.

He is quite aware that this Touring-bodied OSCA is one of my all-time favourites, not only in the Lopresto Collection, but in the world of automobiles in general. Why? Again, the answer is a simple one; because it connects with me on all the levels I want to have engaged when I encounter a special car.

I respond viscerally to design, driving pleasure, history and the emotional pull a vehicle has on me. And while I find Italian coachbuilt models from the 1930s through to the 1970s particularly captivating, they are hardly the only cars that make my pulse race. I've long had a fascination for vehicles that piqued my interest on as many levels as possible.

I have also long been a champion of the automotive 'underdog'. I feel deeply for cars that, if not for the fickleness of fate, should have and could have been world beaters. It's also become clear to me over the years that not

all stories turn out the way you might have liked them to. There is no 'fair' when it comes to timing or circumstances in the auto industry.

This period in the history of OSCA is a somewhat sad tale of what could have been. Thinking ahead to 1969, when Fiat took its 50 percent interest in Ferrari after the successful collaboration with the Dino V6 engine, one can only imagine what might have happened years earlier. At the time our feature car was being built in '61, Fiat was in the third year of its arrangement with OSCA to build and supply 1.5-litre DOHC engines designed by the Modenese firm and used in its top-of-the-line sporting car, the 1500 S.

Fiat marketed a Spider, and Pininfarina directly sold a limited-production coupé version of the twin-cam car which earned a warm reception from the press and public. The 1.6 variant of the engine found its way into OSCA's own 1600 GT, built in three versions for the road or track: a single-carburettor 95bhp GT; a twin-carb 125bhp model; and a GTV competition version. The last of these had larger twin Webers, made 145bhp and boasted a modicum of weight saving and theoretically aerodynamic additions such as covered headlights.

Most of the 1600 GTs ended up wearing Zagato bodies, and a few of those were taken to racetracks across Europe and the US, but without the kind of distinction usually seen by OSCA cars. Rather, they turned out to be very interesting small grand tourers – which was particularly ironic given that the marque's founders, the Maserati brothers, were not particularly interested in building road models.

Of course, road cars are what keep racing manufacturers on the circuit – a point not insignificant when you realise that even the Orsi family, who bought Maserati in 1937, found that without the 3500 GT of 1957 it would be impossible to go on. That decision came along with one to largely abandon works racing and leave the field to privateers. This is something the Maserati brothers would never abide.

And it's a shame that the 1600 GT was not more successful, and that it did not prove the on-ramp to the road of recovery for OSCA. It is truly a remarkable machine – one that perfectly captures the essence of what the Maserati brothers always did best in a racing car in an eminently roadable form.

If you think of how a Porsche 356 Carrera 2 is in so many ways the perfect road-going evolution of the race-winning, bare-bones 718 RSK – and a comfortable, well built and dare I say elegant version at that – you can begin to see what the 1600 GT was to the spartan, lightweight racers that characterised the OSCA brand. Yet

***RIGHT** Ingenious arrangement for spare tyre allows easy access and frees up boot space. It's both practical AND stylish...*





by 1963, painfully slow sales and continued challenges in balancing the books forced a sale of OSCA to Count Domenico Augusta, who had little interest in either a minor road-car business or a partnership with Fiat. By 1966, Fiat had introduced its own twin-cam engine for the 124 Spider, and had begun to look to the aforementioned Dino V6 for a new range-topper.

Back to 1961, however, and for the owner who wanted a compactly packaged car with exquisite engineering, superb chassis design and brilliant performance that was also agreeable enough for a weekend trip or a spirited dash to the office, what could have been better than an OSCA 1600 GT?

For me, the peak of Italian coachbuilding came from the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s. The spirit of *il miracolo economico* and *la dolce vita* came together to create an unmistakable and unrepeatable time of confidence and expression in all things Italian – not least of which was in the automobiles of the period.

What Carlo Felice Bianchi Anderloni achieved in this Touring-bodied car is exactly what this chassis deserved. Granted, it was the ‘cooking’ GT version of the model, not the fire-breathing GTV, but then again that perfectly fits the character of the design. This is an automobile to both cruise around in and enjoy when you want to push it. It doesn’t demand that you ‘be on it’ all the time.

And the details! From the characteristic concave rear window to the sculpted lines of the rear fenders into the bootlid, the form captures light in a way that is simply captivating. It has been observed that the grille and hood scoop are reminiscent of those of the coupé that Touring designed and built for the Pegaso Z-102 – and this OSCA is none the poorer for that resemblance.

As with the Pegaso, the 1600 GT is rare and wonderful, experienced only by a shamefully small few. And this particular Touring coupé gives up its secrets slowly, in a continually gratifying manner. As mentioned, it has been externally restored both expertly and sensitively.

Having been resprayed earlier in its life, the very particular shade of medium metallic green had been lost to a more common tone. The

restored colour is a very sophisticated one, now appearing green, then a moment later more towards teal. It contrasts perfectly with the white and brick-red leather interior, which is very simple yet cleverly detailed, with close pleating on the seats and door panels.

Those seats, doors, dashboard, carpets and headliner give the look and feel of a gently used and well cared-for automobile. They reveal the miles covered inside the OSCA, the pleasures realised behind the wide, wood-rimmed steering wheel. They hint at joys of the open road – the cut and thrust of motorway and city traffic the car has seen since its unveiling in Torino’s equally dramatic Pier Luigi Nervi exposition hall during the 1961 motor show.

And the surprise that awaits upon opening the passenger door! It’s a necessity to carry a spare wheel, especially in a high-performance car. But, here, it’s not hidden ignominiously inside the boot. Rather, a drilled-metal articulated arm rests at the ready to present the tyre to you, wrapped in a fitted cover.

Simply fold the seat backrest and draw the arm forward, and you are prepared for your roadside duty. It’s an elegant, if delightfully overdone, feature – but one that has a practical aspect as well. Rather than forcing the owner of the GT to tortuously arrange the weekend’s luggage behind the seats on a shelf, it liberates the boot space for that purpose instead.

As a plus, there is sufficient strength in the bodyshell that the space between the boot and the interior compartment is open, allowing maximum use of the available area. Once again, this car is meant to be used – and it’s one that surrenders no aspect of practicality for its undeniable style.

Further reinforcing its relationship as a comfortable counterbalance to OSCA’s competition exploits, this car has also travelled across the Atlantic to take part in an exhibition at the Audrain Automobile Museum of Newport, Rhode Island, titled *From The Racetrack To The Opera – Marques That Did it All*.

The show, running from mid-August through to mid-November 2020, features pairs of cars from a wide variety of marques that found success in both racing and building luxury or

grand-touring models as well. Included are Delahaye, Duesenberg, Jaguar, Chevrolet, Ferrari, Isotta Fraschini, Alfa Romeo – and OSCA.

Contrasting with the Lopresto Collection 1600 GT Touring coupé is the 1952 OSCA MT4 Vignale coupé that won its class in the 1953 Le Mans 24 Hours. That the beautifully fitted and detailed 1961 coupé is miles away from the spartan, if dramatic, 1952 racer is undeniable.

That they share a distinct and distinctive DNA is equally undeniable. It is not at all surprising that Corrado Lopresto, a man who appreciates style, driving enjoyment, rarity and historical importance, would want to welcome this very special OSCA into his exclusive stable. There, it shares space with its close style cousin, the Alfa Romeo 2000 ‘Praho’ coupé.

Carlo Felice Bianchi Anderloni’s 1960 creation for Touring is a one-off special on the Alfa 2000 platform. It is specifically named for the ship from whose sail its rear window takes its form. As Lopresto explained: “There was no way I could have the Alfa Praho in my collection without the OSCA – they belong together.”

How can this argument be challenged? The Alfa Romeo Praho is also a car I find intriguing, and one that employs unique design elements inside and out to give surprising twists on what you might expect to see in a sporting luxury coupé. Both the Alfa and its ‘little sister’ the OSCA 1600 GT give nothing away in driving dynamics in exchange for the undeniable style they possess.

In a very special and almost unrepeatable way, they are at the same instant incredibly flashy in detail while being almost painfully restrained and sombre in aspect. They are a magnificent pair, worthy of finding a home in the same, very exclusive company.

As much as I admire the Alfa, it is the OSCA that truly steals my heart. Lopresto has occasionally asked me the age-old question: “If you could take home one car from my collection, which would it be?” My response has never varied; in a heartbeat, it would be the 1600 GT Touring coupé. I can’t see that changing.

*Thanks to Collezione Lopresto, [www.lopresto.it](http://www.lopresto.it), along with the Audrain Automobile Museum, [www.audrainautomuseum.org](http://www.audrainautomuseum.org).*

**‘It connects with me  
on all the levels I want  
to have engaged when I  
encounter a special car’**