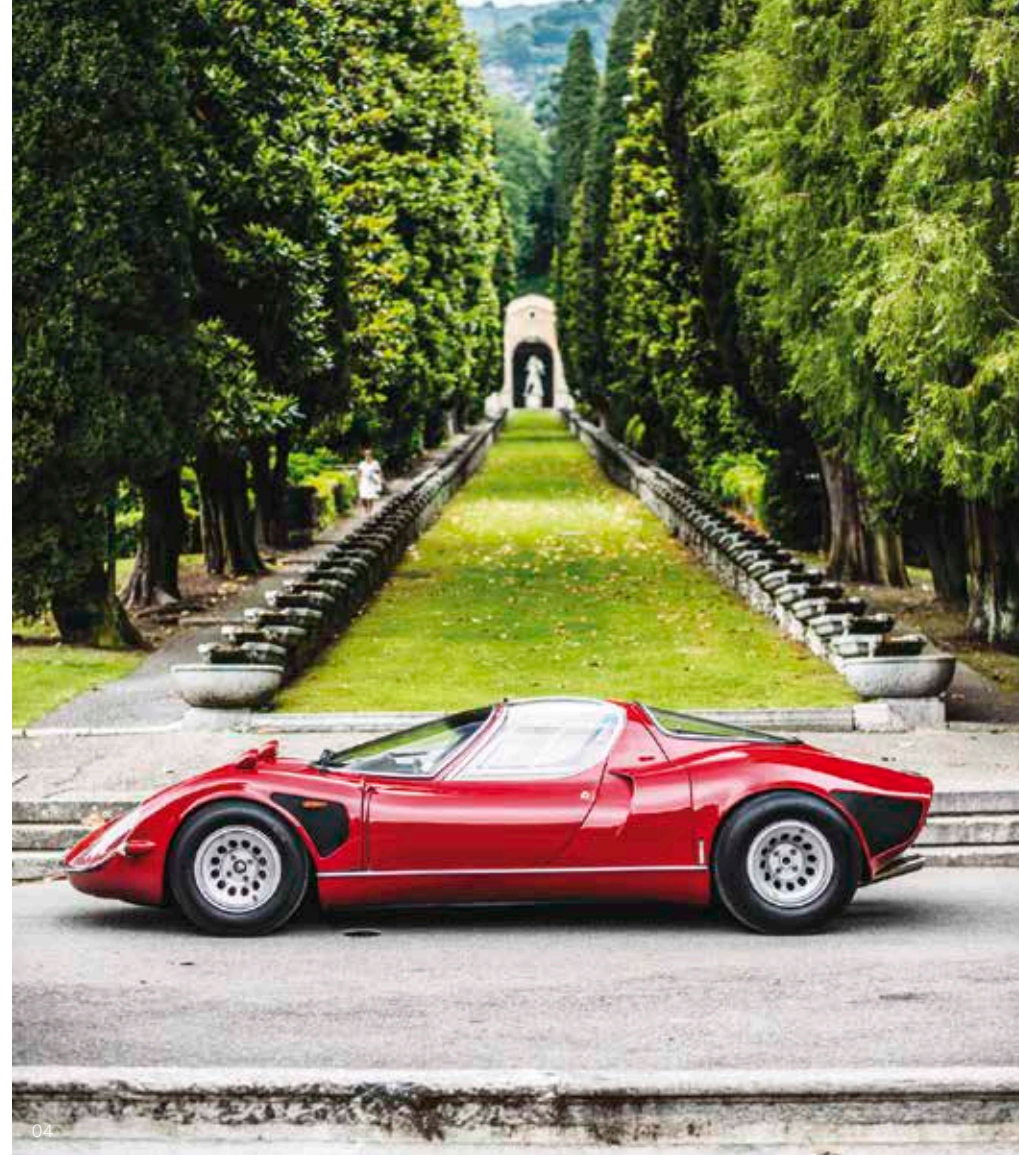


THE CONCORSO D'ELEGANZA

The 2018 theme for Villa d'Este's celebration of classic and concept cars, Hollywood on the Lake, paid tribute to automotive brilliance, the silver screen and Lake Como itself. James Nicholls shares some of the highlights.



01 Class D: 'New World, New Ideas: The Story of the GT' participants at the Concorso d'Eleganza Villa d'Este
 02 Villa d'Este's Italianate gardens provide an enchanting backdrop for the 50 cars on show 03 A Ferrari 750 Monza turns heads. Images 01 & 03 © Pietro Bianchi.



04 1968 Alfa Romeo 33/2 Stradale won Best of Show by Public Referendum © Remi Dargegen 05 The Genesis Essentia Concept © Gudrun Muschalla. Images 01, 03-05 courtesy BMW Group Classic

The Concorso d'Eleganza, hosted every year by grand hotel, Villa d'Este on the shores of Lake Como, was first held in 1929. This year it celebrated perhaps two of the 20th century's most important socio-historic events: the arrival of the automobile and its relationship with the cinema. Eighty-nine years after the first Concorso, when the movie industry was still in its infancy, the 2018 edition was themed 'Hollywood on the Lake'.

Historic cars on show

The 50 cars featured in the Concorso were divided into a variety of classes according to their style and purpose: pioneering racing cars ('The Titans'), including venerable Alfa Romeos and Bugattis; opulent automobiles ('From Manhattan to Mayfair'), of which surely none was more luxurious than the gold-plated 1929 Rolls-Royce Phantom seemingly touched by the hand of King Midas; stunning Art Deco *grandes routières*, exemplified by the 5.4-metre-long 1936 Lancia Astura Serie III, or the beautiful Bugatti 57 Atalante of 1937, named after the Amazon hunter from Greek mythology.

GT cars were in abundance with wonderful specimens from the great marques – Ferrari, Bentley, Jaguar and Aston Martin – and from the pens of the great coachbuilders: Mulliner, Vignale, Pinin Farina, Scaglietti.

For the first time, Formula One was a featured class, designated with the risqué classification, 'When Sex Was Safe and Racing Dangerous'. Here were single-seaters, or *monoposti* as they are known in Italy, driven by those who hold a place in the pantheon of *piloti*.

Some of the most interesting cars, though, were in a class entitled, '80 Years of Automotive Archaeology'. Here were cars that have amazingly avoided the ravages of time without need of restoration. Foremost among these were the incredible 1913 SCAT (Società Ceirano Automobili Torino), which was in the family of its first owner for 104 years! Other worthy 'relics' were the 1954 Fiat 8V still sporting its lustrous turquoise paintwork, and the cute 1958 Fiat 500 Spiaggia of which only two were made by coachbuilder Boano.

The original *raison d'être* of this Concorso d'Eleganza was to showcase the latest new cars and this still exists today with the Concept and Prototype class. Flavio Manzoni's Ferrari SP38 Coupé drew lots of attention, as one might expect in Italy, and Ferrari's Head of Design told me he had created this one-off for a major international art collector who wanted his car to represent his life in art.

Automobiles at the movies

It was the 'Stars of the Silver Screen' class, though, that truly encapsulated the 2018 theme. The 1939 Delage D8-120 appeared in the 1951 movie, *An American in Paris*, with Gene Kelly behind the wheel. Rita Hayworth's 1953 present from her ex-husband, Prince Aly Khan, was a Cadillac Series 62, the first car to feature twin headlights. Also a gift was the 1958 BMW 507 presented by Elvis Presley to his co-star, Ursula Andress, in 1963's *Fun in Acapulco*.

There were six Aston Martin DB5s used in the making of the early James Bond films, but only one of them, the one on display here, was driven by Sean Connery in *Goldfinger* and *Thunderball*.

Also in this group of 'film stars' was the jet age-looking Lancia Stratos Zero; at its highest point the car stands at just 83.8 centimetres. It did not appear in film, but a replica was made especially to appear in Michael Jackson's *Moonwalker*.

One of my favourites was the gold 1965 Ferrari Superfast. This five-litre beauty capable of 280 km/h was first owned by none other than Peter Sellers.

Great fun was had by all at this BMW Group Classic event, topped off by boat rides on classic Rivas, and a fancy-dress ball. The theme was of course, Hollywood on the Lake, with the inspiration being *Casino Royale*, and *Star Wars: Episode II - Attack of the Clones*. Both were filmed in part at the nearby Villa Balbianello. A third film theme for the ball was *Ocean's Twelve*, which utilised Villa Erba. Let us not forget too, that the protagonist of the Danny Ocean series, George Clooney, also has his own villa close by on the shores of this, the most glamorous and deepest of all of Europe's lakes. concorsodeleganzavilladeste.com ♦