

From 0 to 100: a journey around a legend

Friday, November 14th, 2008

"From 0 to 100": it was decided to title the exhibition of the one hundred years since the birth of Karl Abarth, which will be held in Torino Esposizioni from November 14 to December 14, 2008, with the expression which, more than any other, defines an engine's performance.

The fundamental concept of the exhibition is to demonstrate how the values that typified Karl Abarth's life are present in the company today, guiding its choices one hundred years after his birth. For this reason, the exhibition traces the important stages of Abarth's life and work, illustrating the brand's most important moments, curious facts, life in the workshop, racing and successes seen with a thread that links the Scorpion's past, present and future with its imaginative founder. And pictures, facts, anecdotes and numbers that were part of Karl Abarth's life are displayed on the large walls, using striking dynamic visual communications techniques.



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It is a fascinating journey through stage settings, projections and technological installations that accompany the visitor in a crescendo of emotions. And together with Karl Abarth, the stars are the most representative cars in his life and his style, focusing in particular on those that have helped to create and maintain the legend of the brand over the years: the Abarth 205 Vignale berlinetta, Porsche 356 Carrera GTL Abarth, Fiat Abarth 1000 twin-shaft coupe GT "paperino", Fiat Abarth 2400 coupe Allemano, Simca 1300 coupe GT, Abarth 1000 twin-shaft SE016 "cuneo", Fiat Abarth 1000 saloon TCR "radial", Abarth 695 Assetto Corsa and Lancia 037. The display also includes a Gilera Saturno motorcycle fitted with the famous Abarth silencer and two models that represent the Scorpion's recent rebirth: an Abarth Grande Punto Rally Super 2000 and an Abarth 500 Assetto Corsa.



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Immersed in a highly charged atmosphere, the visitor is conducted along a chronological itinerary where the salient moments of Karl Abarth's adventure in the engine world become opportunities to reflect on Italian society in those years. Today, as it did in the past, the Abarth name sums up a philosophy of sporting life which has become a legend, synonymous with assertive cars, competition, passion and strong emotions. A whole world is growing up around the new Scorpion brand, which was revived in 2007 by Fiat Group Automobiles, focusing on a number of values that determined its good fortune in past decades. innovative design, the use of cutting-edge materials, attention to detail. At the basis of all this is a true passion for motoring, which does not overlook the human and technological heritage, or the professional pride of the thousands of people, technicians, blue-collar workers and managers who have worked in the plants, offices and race tracks over the years.

Below we describe the various chronological sections into which the exhibition celebrating Karl Abarth is divided, opened by an original work by sculptor Ugo Nespolo that was inspired by this centenary.

“From 0 to 100” – The work of Ugo Nespolo

“I wanted to (playfully) overturn Marinetti's hyperbole of how much more beautiful a racing car is than the Winged Victory of Samothrace, adding that the relationship between the latter (the Nike of course) and a racing car is the same as that between Abarth and the Venus of Milo! Beauty, proportion and legend. It all fascinates me. Which is why I am happy to try my hand.” This is how Ugo Nespolo explained the work that stands at the entrance to the exhibition and how he was inspired.

The Thirties: invention, a spirit of competition and speed

He was born in Vienna on November 15, 1908, and he achieved almost unprecedented success in the world of motor racing, the fruit of absolute dedication to the engine world and to a truly prodigious talent, passion and taste for innovation.

Scooters, bicycles, motorcycles and sidecars: young Karl liked all types of vehicles. The important thing was being able to dismantle them, repair them or improve their performance. When he was just 11, he modified a scooter to race, and 9 years later he enjoyed his first success on a Motor Thun: by now his precocious passion for engines was mapping out his future path. Plus driving, of course, the giddiness of speed, and striving for competition. An aptitude for racing that was soon accompanied by his innate capacity for engineering: in 1930 he produced his first motorcycle with the Abarth name. Unfortunately, a serious accident during a race in Linz forced him to abandon motorcycling, but he did not lose the determination to push himself and his own limits, and he continued to race with sidecars, a vehicle that he made famous, thanks to exploits such as the challenge to the Orient Express train (obviously won by Abarth) in 1932. In 1939 a second serious accident finally forced him to give up racing.

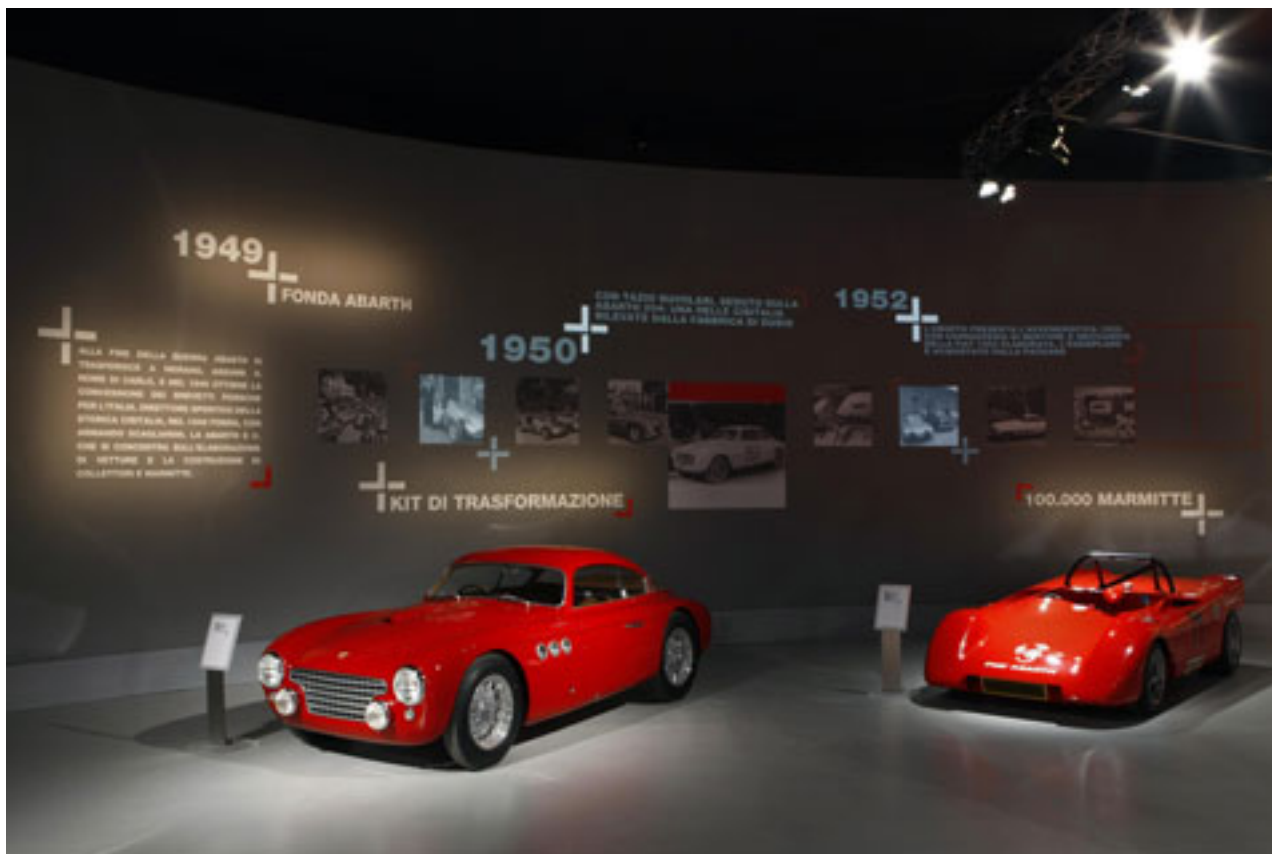
The Forties: enterprise and team spirit

Abarth's second life and the true legend now began. In 1945 he moved to Merano and became an Italian citizen in every way. The following year, with Ferdinand Porsche, he set up the Cisitalia racing team with Tazio Nuvolari.

In 1949, after the Cisitalia experience was concluded, Karl founded Abarth & C., with driver Guido Scagliarini. The first car built was a 204 A Roadstar, derived from a Fiat 1100, which immediately won the Italian 1100 sport championship and formula 2 championship. At the same time, Abarth had the brilliant idea of combining racing activities with attention to the general public, and he began to create his famous tuning kits for standard production cars, increasing their power, top speed and acceleration. The first "historical" product was the tuning kit for the gearbox control of the Topolino (1949). But his real success came with the silencers, which were to become a true icon of the "Abarth style" over the years. Thanks to the experience gained years earlier on motorcycles, the Abarth silencers became a cutting edge product, and not only for cars, as Gilera demonstrated when, in 1953, it adopted an Abarth silencer on its Gilera Saturno motorcycle.

The first prototypes had a pipe with a constant central section and lateral passages in fibreglass, eliminating all the diaphragms to contain the gas compression as much as possible. It was a simple but innovative system, which gave his products a clear advantage in terms of performance, and an unmistakable full, dull roar. In just a few years, Abarth & C achieved global dimensions: in 1962 it turned out 257,000 silencers with a staff of 375 people, with exports accounting for 65%.

Two elements of fundamental importance determined the success of Abarth components and kits: a clever advertising campaign and racing activities. Karl Abarth introduced marketing and communications techniques that are still valid today. In fact, to convince motorists to remove their standard silencer and install an Abarth pipe, he devised a sleek advertising campaign that focused on an elegant presentation of the product. The silencer was advertised in a revolutionary, new language in the leading papers, presented in an opaque black version with chrome-plated terminals, and offered at a price much higher than that of the competition (4,500 lire compared to a maximum of 2,000 lire). Abarth's collaborators, who were originally sceptical of his strategy, had to revise their opinions: it was an immediate and extraordinary success. The first 50 units were built for the Fiat "Topolino".



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