

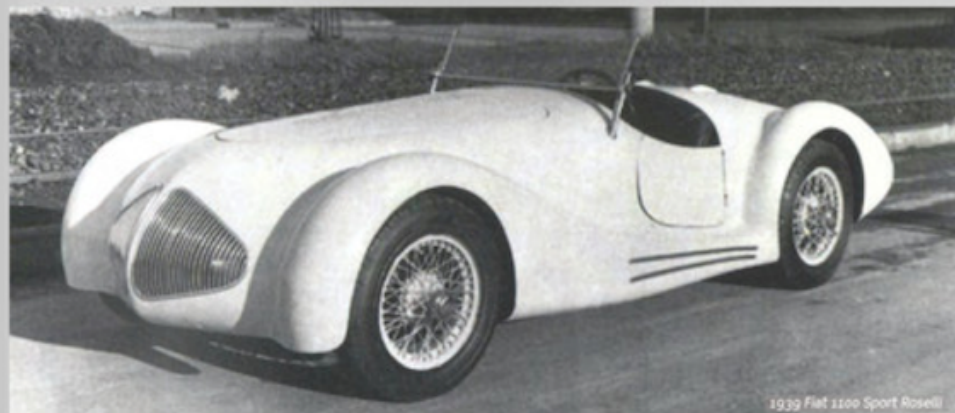
# Carrozzeria Colli

The Milan-based family run company that specialised in building cars with aluminium bodywork

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Photography by Archivi Deganello, Auto Italia and the Heseltine Collection



ABOVE: The Alfa Romeo museum's 1953 6C 3000 CM  
RIGHT: 1949 Fiat 500 Sport Spider at Museo Nicolis



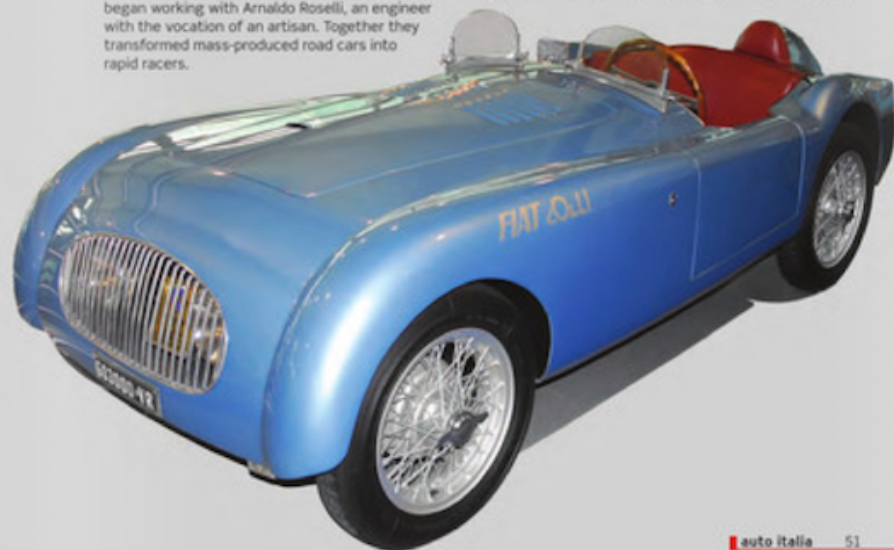
1939 Fiat 1100 Sport Roselli

**B**efore opening a carrozzeria in his own name, Giuseppe Colli worked for Touring Superleggera in Milan. He was a master in shaping aluminium panels and in 1931, aware of their capabilities and potential of the workforce in his own family, opened a workshop in Milan in Viale Certosa 'enlisting' his children Beniamino, Mario, Candido and Tarcisio.

The five members of the industrious family worked from morning till night building aluminium parts for other bodybuilders. Their skills were also well-known to racing drivers, who used their workshop for repairs to dented racing cars damaged in minor accidents. It was a short step for Colli to progress by undertaking more complex repairs and eventually to the creation of complete bodies. At the end of the 1930s Colli began working with Arnaldo Roselli, an engineer with the vocation of an artisan. Together they transformed mass-produced road cars into rapid racers.

Because of this successful collaboration and the lightness of the aluminium bodies, an increase in racing car performance was provided, which gave rise to several successful sportscars based on the versatile mechanics of the Fiat Milicento. The fame of 'Sport Roselli and Colli' even crossed national boundaries, so much so that Fiat-Roselli 1100 Sport driver Adolf Reichenwallner achieved a class win in the German Eiffel Grand Prix of 1939.

Colli's ability was soon recognised, especially in the Milan area, and new customers were attracted that required their cars to be prepared; some were individual owners, others came via the official Lancia dealer Rinaldo Tinarelli. Notably among the latter was Gigi Villoresi who had special bodywork made for the Lancia Astura Sport modified by Jano. The car dealer







1939 Fiat 1100 Sport Roselli aerodinamica



1947 Pagani Lancia PS147 Sport



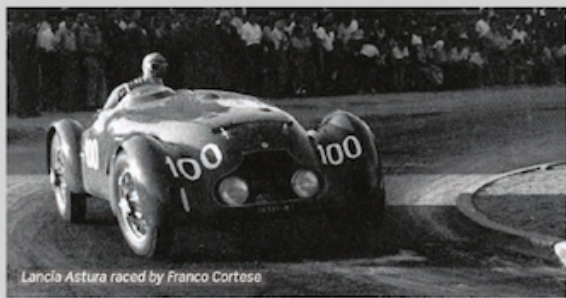
Fiat 1100 Sport raced by Adolf Reichenwallner



1948 Alfa Romeo 6C 2500 SS



1939 Fiat 1100 Sport Roselli



Lancia Astura raced by Franco Cortese

come racing driver, Eugenio Minetti, commissioned Colli to prepare a Lancia Aprilia for the 1940 Mille Miglia and Enrico Beltracchini called upon Colli to build a fully faired, unique Fiat 1100 Sport.

During WWII, Carrozzeria Colli devoted itself to the construction of aluminium parts for military aircraft, and in this context developed important relationships with the state-owned IRI company (Institute for Industrial Reconstruction) that was involved in war production. When the war ended, Colli returned to deal with racing cars and its traditional customers were joined by other small manufacturers like Paolo Volpini, Enrico Arzani and Gastone Crepaldi, the importer of the Italian Dyna Panhard who wanted to give prestige to the brand through motor racing.

Colli also built an elegant Fiat 500 'Topolino' Sport for the 1947 Concorso d'eleganza Villa d'Este. The carrozzeria then turned its attention to building GT cars like a fast Fiat 6C 1500 coupe and a small range of Fiat 1100 berlinettas based on the production chassis. These sedans were followed by Spider Corsa versions of a very similar style.

While all this was happening, the versatile little family collaborated with engineers Luigi Pellarini and Amilcare Porro to develop the Aircar, a car capable of flying, or more accurately a small plane that could move short distances on the road thanks to its folding wings. The first prototype was introduced in 1946 and was followed by two evolutions, the last of which made a demonstration tour of Italy in 1950. Shortly after the Aircar passed into oblivion, mainly because it lacked a reversing capability and regulation lighting requirements and



UK based Alfa Romeo 3000 CM

so could not obtain approval for road use. However, the publicity generated by the highly original vehicle gave Colli great notoriety and, in fact, revived automobile production.

With orders continuing to rise, the family business evolved and became a well-structured and capable company with new initiatives. Thus was born a fruitful collaboration with Alfa Romeo and also IRI. With this renewed confidence Colli was entrusted with the construction of an Alfa Romeo 1900 that was lengthened to accommodate six people and the 3000 CM Sport coupe and barchetta. From the relationship with the Enti di Stato for producing wartime military equipment came orders for the armoured Alfa Romeo 1900 Ti 'Pantera' for the police and the Fiat 1400/1900 torpedo (cabriolet) for the Polizia Stradale. Other special vehicles included an Alfa Romeo 1900 ambulance.

In 1954 Colli worked with Phanter Diesel SpA to create a new small car that debuted at the annual Salone di Torino. It had a two-cylinder diesel engine of 450cc and reappeared a few months later at the Paris Salon with the capacity increased to 520cc. Although on paper it promised a top speed of 85km/h and with a fuel consumption of only three litres of diesel per 100 kilometres, the small car was not mass-produced even after the project was taken on by the ISCA production company (San Marino Construction Automotive Industry).

Also in 1954, Colli presented an elegant coupé based on the Fiat 1100/103 but it did not achieve the sales success that was hoped for. However, this was a temporary setback because a further agreement



1947 BMW 328 on the Mille Miglia



1948 Fiat 1100 Volpini raced by Pietro Carini





with Alfa Romeo resulted in Colli building the Giulietta Promiscua station wagon, which was suitable for the transportation of people and goods. In 1959, the Giulietta family saloon was increased to a six-seater by a stretched floorpan, while among the special vehicles was the Romeo Van prepared for the Reparti Celere della Polizia and the Romeo Van, Alfa Romeo's official service vehicle.

In 1962, Alfa Romeo asked Colli to transform the bodywork of the new Alfa Romeo 105 series Giulia to create a Promiscua version. The model received a lukewarm response from normal customers, but aroused strong interest by the Società Autostrade (roadside assistance). In fact, with suitable modifications, the car was assigned to detachments of the Polizia Stradale for patrol and

rescue, combining the Giulia's recognised high performance qualities and a cargo area capable of holding all the necessary equipment for the police patrols on the autostrada.

In addition to the police Giulia, Colli built a number of ambulances on the same platform and a special cabriolet version that Alfa Romeo commissioned for the use of the President of the Republic, Giuseppe Saragat, on the occasion of his visit to the factory at Arese.

During the early 1970s Carrozzeria Colli was in crisis because of the irregularity in the orders of the Giulia Promiscua by the Società Autostrade and soon after closed its doors in 1973. However, the fast and spacious Promiscua developed by Colli survived for a few more years, produced by the smaller carrozzerie of Grazia, Giorgetti and Introzzi. 🇮🇹

ABOVE: Very smart 1954 Fiat 1100-103 TV Coupe  
LEFT TOP: Fiat 1100 Spider Corsa - Ferrari 166 inspired?  
LEFT LOWER: 1954 Alfa Romeo 1900 Ambulanza



1959 Alfa Romeo Giulietta Promiscua



1966 Alfa Romeo Giulia TI Polizia



1955 Colli Panhard Autocorse



1953 Alfa Romeo 1900 Coupe