

# LANCIA APPIA GTZ PROTOTYPE COLLECTOR'S ITEM FOR SWITZERLAND

For around 40 years, the Lancia Appia GTZ prototype had vanished from the scene—the very car with which Elio Zagato had once launched his racing career. It has recently resurfaced. Together with the new Swiss owner, SPIRIT paid a brief visit to Elio's son Andrea Zagato, who today runs the design studio with his wife Mariella.

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The history of this last of three GTZ prototypes is fully documented. Perfetto.



### A unique piece of history

1958 Lancia Appia GTZ, this is one of three prototypes built for the later Appia GTE.

**P** Vehicles like this are rarely unearthed. Tracking them down requires not only a keen instinct but also luck. We are all the more delighted to share this special story, which began more than 60 years ago when Elio Zagato launched his racing career. It stands to reason that he used a car that, all, Zagato had long since made a name for himself with particularly aerodynamic and lightweight bodies. One need only think of the Alfa 6C, which had caused a sensation on the racetracks.

Thus, in 1958, the brand-new Lancia Appia GTZ with chassis number 81201.1875—one of three prototypes for the later Appia GTE—was registered to Elio Zagato, the eldest son of the family. The Zagato scion successfully raced the coupé during the 1958 season, securing a class victory at the “6 Ore Esso at Vallelunga,” as well as at the “Giro Delle Calabrie” and the “Coppa Intereuropa” in Monza. At the “Coppa San Marino” and the “Trento-Bondone” hill climb, Elio Zagato also took third place in his class. What a debut! In the following

years, the Appia GTZ passed through the hands of other drivers. Francesco Prioglio once again raced the coupé with great success during the 1959 season, and even later, in the hands of other drivers, the Appia GTZ achieved respectable results. During its active racing career up to 1961, however, the car was involved in two accidents and sustained serious damage: once in June 1959 at the “Coppa Città di Asiago” and again in June 1960 at the “Coppa della Consuma” in Florence. Both times the front end was severely damaged, and the car was subsequently repaired professionally on each occasion.

### MISSING FOR 40 YEARS

From 1975 until early 2023, the Appia remained in the hands of the same owner. He attended the first meeting of the Zagato Car Club at Villa d'Este in 1979. Until the early 1980s, the Appia could be seen from time to time at Italian classic car events, after which it virtually disappeared from the scene for 40 years. Until the long-time owner passed away and a Swiss collector took notice of the well-preserved, completely original car. Through a dealer acquainted with the owner's family, he was able to acquire the Zagato icon and bring it to Switzerland.



### Wonderful details

The Appia wears its patina with dignity. In the engine bay, a plaque from the oil manufacturer Mobiloil, dated 1958 and issued to Zagato s.r.l., small rear windows and, of course, the famous “Z” on the side.

It is a matter of good taste not to quietly remove such a car from its country of origin, Italy. So the seller and buyer contacted the Zagato factory in Rho near Milan, where the car’s story once began. And so it came to pass that on a September morning, the Appia GTZ stood on the factory grounds at Zagato in Rho, and Andrea Zagato personally welcomed the Swiss delegation. Standing there, deeply moved before his father’s car.

The history of this unique Appia is fully documented. A thick folder contains countless documents and photos that trace its history. Andrea Zagato gazes with fascination at the pictures showing his father, Elio, at races in Italy in 1958. When a photo from 1979 catches his eye, a smile flits across his face: The photo shows him, 19-year-old Andrea, standing next to the Appia with his father, Elio Zagato, on the occasion of the first meeting of the Zagato Car Club in Como. Exactly 44 years later, Andrea Zagato sees the Appia again—the car with which his father won races 65 years ago. A fitting farewell before the Zagato model leaves Italy for the first time.

### THE ESSENCE OF SOPHISTICATED DESIGN

The Lancia Appia, and the Appia GTZ shown here in particular, are in the finest Lancia tradition. A brand founded as early as 1906 and known since the early 1920s for cars that were particularly advanced and outstanding in their craftsmanship. This reputation was based primarily on the Lambda, introduced in 1922. With its wealth of innovations, it was simply a sensation, and its successor, the Aprilia, was in no way inferior.

While other manufacturers focused their expertise primarily on prestigious luxury models, Lancia always aspired to design small cars with the same attention to detail and passion as the large ones. This is exemplified by the Augusta, introduced in 1933, which, with its compact V4 engine, is the smaller version of the luxury Dilambda model with its four-liter V8. The Augusta was followed by the compact models Ardea and finally Appia. The models differ significantly in design but share common features such as the V4 engine with a narrow cylinder angle or the impressively functional sliding-pillar front axle: a clever telescopic design conceived by Vincenzo Lancia and his engineer Battista Falchetto. The Appia was introduced in 1953 as a sedan and is regarded as a smaller version of the legendary



**Small-scale race car** Tactile wooden steering wheel, center-mounted gearshift, and Jaeger instruments for all key parameters.



#### LANCIA APPIA GTZ PROTOTYPE

**Year built** 1958 | **Engine** 1090 cc, V4, Weber carburetor | **Power** 53 hp | **Torque** N/A  
**Transmission:** 4-speed manual, rear-wheel drive | **Length/Width/Height:** 4150/1460/N/A mm | **Weight:** 750 kg | **Top speed:** 160 km/h | **Acceleration:** N/A | **Production:** one of three GTZ prototypes for the Appia GTE

Aurelia. Like the Aurelia, the Appia sedan features a sober, elegant design and does away with a B-pillar. The doors open in opposite directions, allowing for comfortable entry. Under the hood is a 1,090 cc V4 engine. With a cylinder angle of 10.14 degrees, it is one of the most compact V4s ever built. The engine features two lower camshafts and hemispherical combustion chambers. Its development was the work of the congenial engineers Vittorio Jano and Francesco De Virgilio. The two had not only conceived the Aurelia's V6 but also the Lancia racing engines of the 1950s. Jano, the technical director at Lancia, had previously developed legendary racing engines at Alfa Romeo and achieved a kind of hero status.

#### SUCCESSFUL IN RACING

The engine was undoubtedly a small work of art, even if its initial 38 horsepower seems quite modest by today's standards. As with all Lancias of that era, it was the perfectionist engineering that delighted contemporary testers and journalists. Lancias were never excessively powerful, but components such as the engine, chassis, and transmission were so finely tuned to one another that the driving experience always stood out clearly from that of other cars. The quality was also beyond reproach. Lancias were considered robust and reliable.

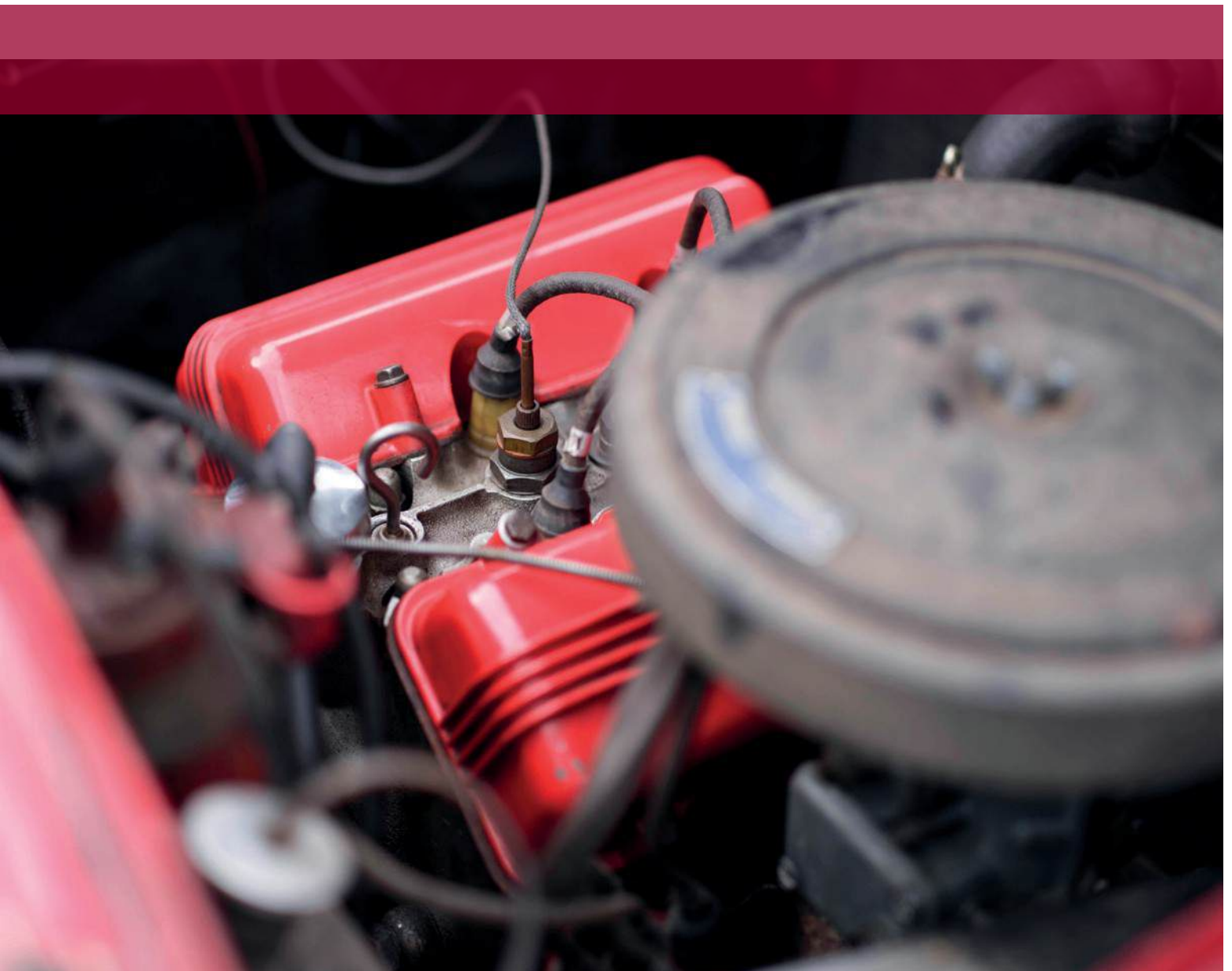
So it's no surprise that Lancias were popular in racing. The Aurelia B20 is legendary, having competed against rivals with engines sometimes twice as powerful and earning plenty of respect in the process. At the 1951 "Mille Miglia," a B20 with a two-liter V6 nearly claimed victory. It was only on the final straight through Emilia-Romagna that a Ferrari 340 America with a powerful 4.1-liter V12 managed to relegate the Aurelia to second place. This exemplifies just how superbly Lancia cars were engineered back then. And it explains why the Appia was used by private drivers in grueling rallies like the Austrian Alpine Rally, even though the Appia was by no means designed for that purpose.

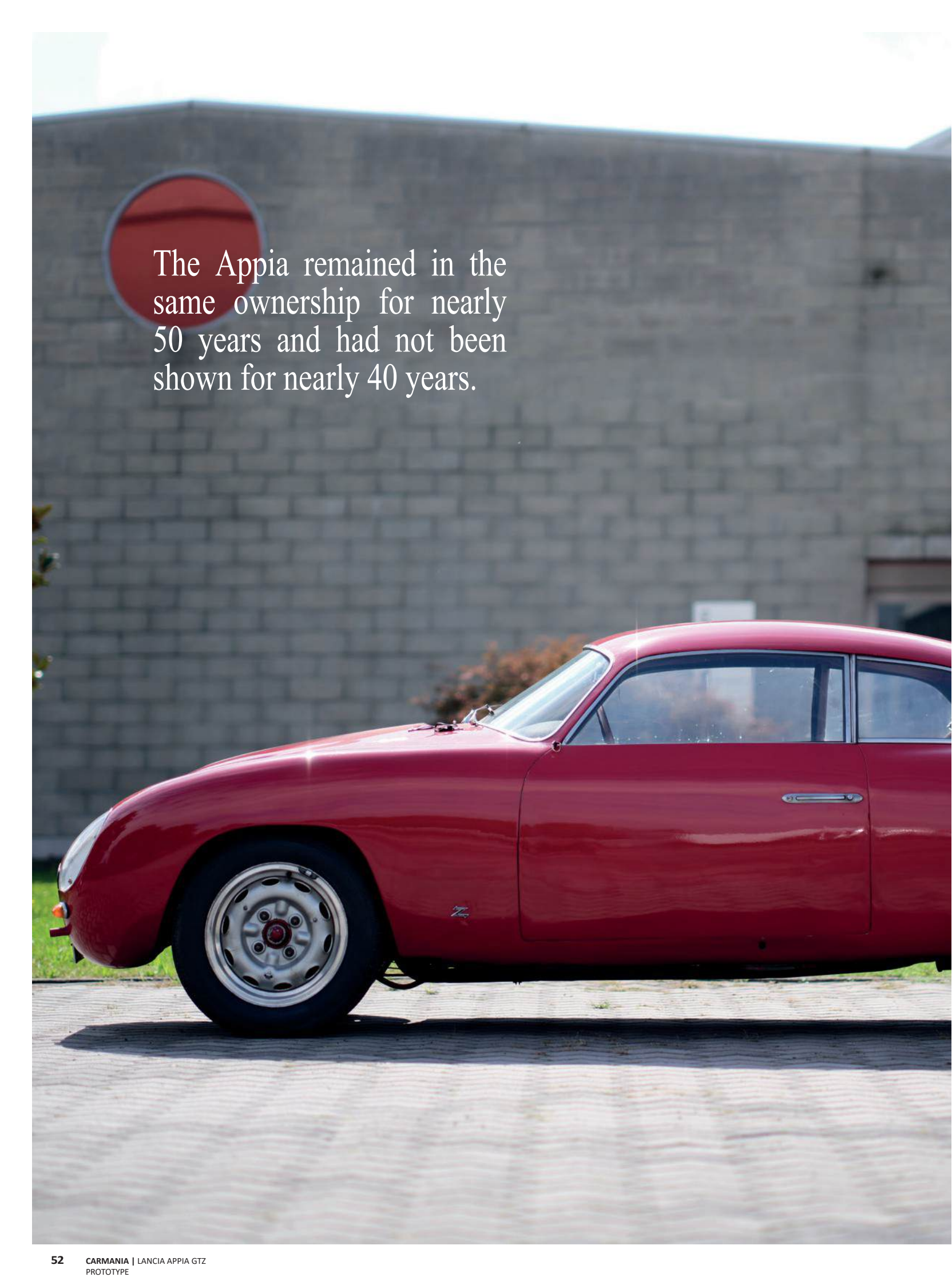
Perhaps it was the successes of such private drivers that paved the way for Lancia management to develop a small, lightweight sports car with racing capabilities. In any case, a special Appia chassis was designed for coachbuilders. Unlike the sedan, this version was equipped with a center-mounted gearshift instead of steering wheel-mounted controls. In addition, the engine was given more power than the sedan's. Thanks to higher compression and a Weber carburetor, the V4 then produced 53 hp. Zagato was commissioned as the coachbuilder for the sportiest version of the Appia. After a few prototypes, the Appia GTZ was built in small numbers starting in 1957.



#### **A Look Back**

The taillights were modified in the 1960s. They appear to be the same as those on the OSCA 1600 GT Zagato; a compact V4 engine, developed by the brilliant engineers Vittorio Jano and Francesco De Virgilio.



A side-profile photograph of a classic red Lancia Appia GTZ Prototype car. The car is parked on a paved surface in front of a large, grey stone building. The car's design is sleek and aerodynamic, with a prominent front grille and distinctive wheels. A small 'Z' badge is visible on the front fender. The background is a textured stone wall with a circular opening. The overall scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

The Appia remained in the same ownership for nearly 50 years and had not been shown for nearly 40 years.



#### Well-documented

The Appia GTZ at the "Giro Delle Calabrie" in 1958 with Elio Zagato at the wheel (top). The Appia in 1975 when purchased by its long-time previous owner, Andrea Zagato (left) and Elio Zagato (center) with the Appia at the first meeting of the Zagato Car Club in 1979 (bottom)





#### **Coda tonda**

The prototype shown here is the only Appia with a rounded rear end—known as the “Coda tonda.” A similar design was later used on the Alfa Romeo Giulietta SZ.



### Reunion after 44 years

Andrea Zagato last saw the car with which his father had once launched his racing career in 1979.

### ORIGINAL CONDITION FROM 1958

The Appia shown here is one of three prototypes that Zagato produced for the subsequent Appia GTE. The prototypes differ not only from the production vehicles but also from one another. This prototype is the only one with a “coda tonda,” as the rounded rear is called, which was used starting in 1960 for the Alfa Romeo Giulietta SZ. Compared to the Appia GTZ and GTE, the prototype also features a more aerodynamic front end with plexiglass covers over the headlights. Furthermore, the car was put on a diet: unlike the production GTZ—though with such a small number of units, one can hardly call it a production run—the prototype weighs only 750 kilograms. The standard GTZ models weigh 800 kilograms. As far as is known, of the three GTZ prototypes, only this one has survived.

But the car is also unique because of its original condition. When you sit in the Appia, it feels like 1958. The interior has never been refurbished and greets you with the typical black faux leather seats. The appeal of this Lancia is further enhanced by its nearly fully documented history. A true time capsule! The Swiss classic car scene has all the more reason to celebrate that Elio Zagato’s former Appia is now in the country. The owner has promised that the Appia will be seen at events again after 40 years.

Currently, the well-known Rowland Di Marzio in Schlieren is working to restore the car to top condition and introduce it to the Swiss market. It was Di Marzio who purchase process. SPIRIT can hardly wait to see the little racer in action. During a short test drive on the Zagato factory grounds, the Appia certainly made it clear with the confident, throaty sound of its V4 that it is ready for new adventures.



The history of the Appia GTZ has been extensively documented by **Sandro Binelli and his team** at [www.automotivemasterpieces.com](http://www.automotivemasterpieces.com). Thank you for your support!



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