



# Resurfaced!

## *Elio Zagato's former Appia*

**For 40 years, the Lancia prototype with which Elio Zagato had once launched his racing career had been missing. Now it has resurfaced. Pronto drove up to Andrea Zagato in the Appia GTZ to revel together in the unique history of this car.**

1958 Appia GTZ. This is one of three prototypes built for the later Appia GTE.

Gems like this story rarely come to light. It takes luck to track them down. We are fortunate that there aren't too many Lancia-specific magazines, and our publication has gained a certain reputation among Lancisti. That's how we received the request asking if we'd like to visit the Zagato factory in Rho, near Milan, in Elio Zagato's former Appia GTZ. We were up for it—and so

we brought this very special story back for our readers.

Elio Zagato began his racing career in the late 1950s. It stands to reason that he would use a car built in his family's body shop. After all, Zagato—founded in 1919 by Ugo Zagato—had long made a name for itself with particularly aerodynamic and lightweight bodies.

Just think of the Alfa Romeo 6C by Zagato, which had already caused a sensation in the early 1930s.

**Zagato scion with Zagato racer** In 1958, the brand-new Lancia Appia GTZ with chassis number 81201.1875—one of three prototypes for the later Appia GTE—was assigned to Elio Zagato, the family's eldest son. The Zagato scion drove the coupé in the



The Appia GTZ at the 1958 Giro Delle Calabrie with Elio Zagato at the wheel.

1958 season, securing a class victory at the “6 Ore Esso a 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 finished third in his class on both occasions. What a debut!

In the years that followed, the Appia GTZ passed through the hands of several drivers. Francesco Prioglio drove the coupé to great success again in the 1959 season, and the Appia GTZ went on to achieve respectable results with other drivers as well. During its active racing career, which lasted until 1961, the car was involved in two accidents and sustained serious damage. Once in June 1959 at the Coppa Città di Asiago and once in June 1960 at the Coppa della Consuma in Florence. On both occasions, the

front end was severely damaged, and both times the car was professionally restored.

#### 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 occasionally at Italian classic car events; after that, 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. The collector, who remains unnamed here, acquired the Appia through a dealer acquainted with the owner’s family.

It is only proper not to quietly

. So the seller and buyer contacted the Zagato factory in Rho, near Milan. There, they showed great interest in the unique history of this coupé.

#### We are welcomed personally by Andrea Zagato

And so it happens that on a September morning, we find ourselves at the Zagato factory grounds in Rho with the Appia GTZ in tow, where we are welcomed by Andrea Zagato himself. The history of this one-of-a-kind Appia is fully documented. A thick folder contains countless documents and photos that chronicle the car’s history. Andrea Zagato looks with interest at the pictures showing his father, Elio Zagato, at races in Italy in 1958. When a photo from 1979 catches our eye, a smile flits across



Small but mighty. Thanks to its lightweight construction and excellent aerodynamics, the Appia is a competitive race car. With the Jaeger instruments, the driver has all the key parameters at a glance. The rear end was later used in a similar form on the Giulietta SZ.





Andrea Zagato's (left) face, alongside his father Elio Zagato (center), in front of the Appia GTZ during the first meeting of the Zagato Car Club in Como in 1979.

Andrea Zagato's 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. Forty-four years later, Andrea Zagato encounters the Appia again—the car with which his father won races 65 years ago. A fitting farewell before the Appia leaves Italy for the first time.

**Clever Lancia Designs** Let's take a closer look at the Lancia Appia and, in particular, the Appia GTZ shown here. Readers of this magazine know that Lancia has been renowned since the 1920s for cars that were particularly advanced and outstanding in their craftsmanship. This reputation was founded on the Lambda, introduced in 1922. With its wealth of innovations, it was simply a sensation

The Aprilia, its successor model, was in no way inferior.

While other manufacturers focused their expertise primarily on prestigious luxury models, Lancia always aimed to design small cars with the same attention to detail and passion as the large ones. This is exemplified by the Augusta, presented 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 their basic design, yet 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 once conceived by

Vincenzo Lancia and his designer Battista Falchetto.

**Appia, the Aurelia's little sister**

The Appia was introduced in 1953 as a sedan and is regarded as a smaller version of the legendary 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 1,090cc V4 engine. With a cylinder angle of 10.14 degrees, it is one of the most compact V4s ever built. The engine features two bottom-mounted camshafts and hemispherical combustion chambers. Its development was the work of the congenial engineers Vittorio Jano and Francesco De Virgilio

Italian automotive historian and author **Sandro Binelli** verifies the provenance of vehicles on behalf of collectors. The results of his research can be viewed on the platform **Automotivemasterpieces.com**.

The history of our featured car, the Appia GTZ, is also comprehensively documented.



**Detailed Information**



After 44 years, Andrea Zagato encounters the Appia GTZ for a second time—the car his father raced in 1958. The car is in its original, unrestored condition and has a well-documented history.



. The two had not only conceived the Aurelia's V6 together, but also the magnificent Lancia racing engines of the 1950s. Jano, the technical director at Lancia, had previously developed legendary racing engines at Alfa Romeo and achieved something of a hero status.

The engine was undoubtedly a small work of art—even if the initial 38 hp 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 all components—such as the engine, chassis, and transmission—were so finely tuned to one another that the driving experience in a Lancia always stood out distinctly from that in other cars. The quality, too, was beyond reproach. Lancias were considered extremely robust and reliable.

#### Successful in Racing

It is therefore no surprise that Lancias were frequently used in racing. The Aurelia B20 is legendary, having competed against rivals with engines sometimes twice as powerful and earning itself a great deal of respect in the process. At the 1951 Mille Miglia, a B20 with a 2-liter V6 engine nearly claimed victory. It was only on the final straight through Emilia-Romagna that a Ferrari 340 America, equipped with a powerful 4.1-liter V12 engine, managed to relegate the Aurelia to second place. This demonstrates

just how superbly engineered Lancia cars were back then. This is the only way to explain why even the Appia Limousine was used by private drivers in grueling rallies like the Austrian Alpine Rally. And this despite the fact that the Appia was by no means designed for that purpose.

Perhaps it was these private drivers who 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 bodybuilders. 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 now 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 Unique Appia

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. Our prototype is the only one with a Coda Tonda—the name given to the rounded rear end—which was used on the Alfa Romeo Giulietta SZ starting in 1960. Compared to the Appia GTZ and GTE, the prototype

by a more aerodynamic front end with Plexiglas covers over the headlights. Furthermore, the car shown here was put on a diet. Unlike the standard GTZ—though with such a small production run, one can hardly call it a series—our prototype weighs only 750 kilograms. The standard GTZs 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 just like 1958. The interior has never been refurbished and greets you with the typical black faux leather seats. The appeal of this Lancia is rounded out by its nearly fully documented history. A true time capsule!

We are all the more delighted that Elio Zagato's former Appia is now in Switzerland. The owner has already promised us that, after 40 years, the Appia will finally be seen at events again. We can hardly wait to see this little racer in action. During a short test drive on the Zagato factory grounds, the Appia certainly made it clear to us with the confident, throaty sound of its V4 engine that it's ready for new adventures. Who knows, maybe we'll get to welcome the Appia to one of our events soon. \*\*

#### Lancia Appia GTZ Prototype

Year of manufacture	1958 as one of three GTZ prototypes for the later Appia GTE Engine
	V4 engine, 1090 cc
	Very narrow cylinder angle of just 10.14°, Weber carburetor
Power	53 hp
Transmission	Manual four-speed transmission, rear-wheel drive
Weight	750 kg
Top speed	160 km/h

