



Rare beauty: the BMW 3200 Michelotti Vignale is a genuine one-off.

The BMW 3200 Michelotti Vignale

Giovanni Michelotti was so consumed by the BMW 507 that he drew up an alternative form for the car's body. Fixing his new design to a 507 chassis, Michelotti created the BMW 3200 Michelotti Vignale – a truly unique model that was added to the BMW Mobile Tradition collection in 2004.

By Kai Jacobsen

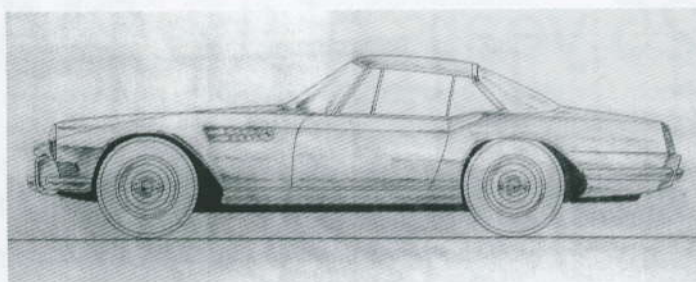
The Italian designer started to give serious thought to creating an alternative body for the BMW 507 in 1957. By late July that year he had completed an initial draft, which proved to be very close to the final version of the car. At the time, Michelotti had an image of his new model as a coupé. In September 1958 he purchased BMW 507 chassis no. 70184 through Italian BMW importer Casa dell'Automobili, owned by Alessandro Paolini & Figlio. Assembly work began on 8th September 1958 and the chassis was delivered to Italy on 11th September 1958.

The body created by Michelotti had considerably sharper edges than the BMW 507 and wore its Italian influences on its sleeve. Body construction was entrusted to Modena-based coachbuilder Sergio Scaglietti, who had already made a name for himself with his work for Enzo Ferrari. The body was then introduced to the chassis at the Carrozzeria Alfredo Vignale company in Turin. The rear of the hard-top roadster recalled the hind quarters of the BMW 700 Coupé, also penned by Michelotti. And the same rear-end lines made another appearance in 1961 in the Michelotti-designed Triumph TR 4.

The BMW 3200 Michelotti Vignale went on display for the first time at the Turin Motor Show held from 31st October to 11th November 1959. As the press reported, it was 1.5 million lire (10,098 deutschmarks) cheaper than a standard BMW 507, which cost 7.222 million lire (DM 48,619) in Italy at the time. The BMW 507 was certainly rather more affordable for customers in Germany, where it was priced at a comparatively modest DM 31,700 (including a coupé hard top). From there, the trail of this extremely rare model ran cold. Indeed, it wasn't until 21st April 1986 that Michelotti's creation re-emerged – at the auction house Christie's. An American, Oscar Davis, put up the winning bid of £50,760 (DM 169,234, including surcharge) at the sale in Beaulieu to secure the purchase of a car that had only 10,315 kilometres on the clock. According to the auction catalogue, the car had been under the ownership of the Earl of Chichester between 1980 and 1986.

Christie's put a guide price of £25,000-35,000 on the distinctive, reddish-brown metallic BMW, and was pleasantly surprised when it changed hands for twice its lower-end estimate.

Car enthusiast Davis, whose collection already included a standard BMW 507, two BMW 328 Roadsters and various Ferraris, Lancias and Bugattis, had his unique new purchase restored and repainted in red. In 2001, the BMW 3200 Michelotti Vignale was acquired by the Blackhawk Collection based in Danville, California. Then, in August 2004, it was discovered by BMW Mobile Tradition workshop manager Klaus Kutscher at Pebble Beach, California with a "For Sale" sign in the window. Kutscher quickly notified



Michelotti's drawing of the 3200 Michelotti Vignale, 1957.

BMW Mobile Tradition boss Holger Lapp of his discovery and the decision to buy was made without further ado. The Blackhawk Collection soon received a satisfactory offer and, by the end of 2004, the car was on its way to Munich. Between 1986 and 2004, the BMW 3200 Michelotti Vignale covered just 550 kilometres. This extraordinary one-off car made its debut appearance on German soil at the Techno Classica vintage car show in Essen in April 2005, where it lined up alongside a BMW 507 prototype, and was on display once again for the Concorso d'Eleganza held at the Villa d'Este estate later that month.

Prototypes and anniversaries

The main theme of Techno Classica 2005 was the 1950s, a decade representing a major watershed for BMW. The second major focus was the theme of "30 years of the BMW 3 Series" with exhibits from the first generation to the new BMW 3 Series launched at the beginning of 2005.



By Martin Lohr

It is the contrasts between an Opel Commodore, a swish 1930s Rolls-Royce and a BMW 501 that have always defined the unique ambience of the Techno Classica in Essen. Once again, the previous year's statistics were surpassed. Over the same exhibition area of 110,000 square metres, this year's show featured more than 1,000 exhibitors. Around 2,000 exhibits were on display spread across 19 halls: clear evidence that the Techno Classica remains the largest event of its kind in the world.

In 2005, the BMW stand in Hall 12 once again proved the main attraction for lovers of historic vehicles. The two anniversaries "BMW and the 1950s" and "30 years of the BMW 3 Series" provide the stand with a wealth of

interesting exhibits, many previously unpublished original photographs and rare documents. Many current motifs from the communication campaign on the theme of "30 years of the BMW 3 Series. Unequalled right from the start." were also featured.

Based on the anniversaries of the launch of the BMW 507 and the BMW Isetta, BMW Mobile Tradition focused on this key decade for the company. The BMW 501 marked the resumption of automobile production after the Second World War in 1952. The popularity of the "Baroque Angel" was further enhanced by

the television series "Isar 12" in which it played a leading role as a police patrol car.

The BMW 501 and its "sister model" 502 manufactured in the early 1950s were too expensive for the mass market and failed to generate the anticipated success. The previously pros-

Holger Lapp, Director of BMW Mobile Tradition, opened the event focusing on "BMW and the 1950s" at the Techno Classica 2005.

