

ALFA ROMEO

Almost seventy years of collaboration between Pininfarina and Alfa Romeo.

A collaboration that has quite naturally extended to all the key features of Pininfarina's activities: the construction of one-off specials to the order of individual customers, advanced styling research, design and the production of special low-volume models, all in keeping with and sometimes way ahead of the firm's gradual development.

Alfa Romeo was already a marque with a striking image, one that had come of age and trodden the first of its peaks of fame - a hat trick of outright firsts in the old Mille Miglia - when the stripling Pininfarina was given the chance of adding the supercharged 6C 1750 Gran Sport to its sheaf of prestige creations, along with those for Hispano-Suiza, Isotta Fraschini and Lancia.

The very fact of being able to work on the chassis made by these firms was itself an unusual privilege for an enterprise just making its debut. Giovan Battista (Pinin) Farina would have got off to a much more modest start had he not been able to count right from the beginning on the prestige that was naturally his as the rightful heir to the best Turin school of coachbuilders.

Yet to have confined its efforts to the building of elegant vehicles mainly intended to play the part of show pieces might well have congealed Pininfarina's creativeness for a while by channeling it into that "perpendicular" architecture which the Sala and Castagna works, as well as the Farina works, of course, had already taken as far as they could go even before the end of the Thirties.

This, then, was the formal background against which Pinin achieved the first step along the path to wise thinking. The danger of being conditioned by this background was strong had he not been possessed of the talent to essay a cautious yet profound assertion of a difference in generation, a by no means secondary impulse among those that drove him to desire a firm of his very own. Within the gamut of Alfa Romeo's models, those that first left Pininfarina's hands are perhaps the most calm and collected, those in which elegance clearly lords it over any more sporty tendencies.

Yet it was indeed the strong, light and prestigious frames turned out at Portello that tempted Pininfarina to sin against, or at any rate to update, the accepted canons.

The earliest raked windcreens, themselves giving an oblique slant to the whole composition, are already to be found in 1932-33 on the Alfa Romeo type 8C 2300 chassis, while in 1935-37 the 6C 2300 chassis was made the bearer of oval shapes that were so way-out in the eyes of the taste of those days as to almost be classed as dream cars.

There can be no doubt that the part played by Alfa Romeo's frames in the vast array of marques for which Pininfarina provided bodies in the first twenty years of its existence served as the stimulus for innovation that was not just an occasional whim, but pursued along lines that rested on coherent notions, despite the many experiments they summarised.

The strength of the interaction between Alfa Romeo and Pininfarina in these first twenty years lay not so much in a planned continuity of the company's image as in that inexpressible feeling the several configurations manage to convey, silent witnesses to the class and personality peculiar to these chassis.

In terms of presence and visual impact, this interaction was also to make itself felt in the actual quantity of examples produced when the long-lived 6C 2500 appeared on the scene. This came out in three different wheelbases for different purposes, ranging from the spacious sixseater saloon to the slim Super Sport cabriolet.

The fortuitous set of circumstances that resulted in the 6C 2500 SS (the most prestigious sports car chassis built in Italy during the Forties, and even later, at any rate until Ferrari became firmly established) remaining in production from 1939 until 1953 served to provide a common denominator for a vast range of differing experiments in style.

The number of variants put forward by Pininfarina on this chassis would furnish a catalogue for a good-quality body builder: not that all these versions are equally convincing - some, however, are real master-pieces. A few of the way-ahead innovations are worthy of mention: foldaway headlights, twin headlights, all-round rear windows.

For the new Alfa Romeos that appeared after the war, still full of dash, but simplified in obedience to the new market policy required by Finmeccanica, Pininfarina began by proposing the manufacture of short runs of special versions - the first glimpse of its potential as a veritable automaker.

This approach was somewhat timid at first: only 88 examples of the standardised 1900 C Sprint and barely more than a hundred sober coupes endowed with the same floor pan.

A prototype for a fastback on the type 1900 L, what is more, never went any further.

The real event of the Fifties was the worldwide success of the Giulietta Spider, a small masterpiece that was originally conceived solely with the idea of exporting it to the West Coast of the United States, but was swept throughout the length and breadth of Europe by popular demand. Its industrial gestation was not of the shortest.

The prototypes appeared in the winter of 1954-55, whereas the first deliveries in Italy had to wait until late 1956 (the first 600 examples were in any case set aside for the original customer, the U.S. distributor Hoffman).

This, then, was the model whose more than 17,000 Giulietta and nearly 10,000 Giulia formed the legendary success that changed the destiny of Pininfarina and pointed the way to its future as a manufacturer of whole vehicles.

A success unequalled (bearing in mind the relative proportions determined by the intervening growth of both companies) solely by the Duetto, mass-produced following the application of a styling idea elaborated back in 1956 for the Super Flow prototype and further clarified in the Giulietta SS spider prototype displayed at the 1961 Turin Motor Show.

In its original configuration, the Duetto was presented at the 1966 Geneva Show. Considerably altered and under a different name, it was produced in parallel with the Alfa 33 Giardinetta 4 x 4, for which Pininfarina designed and produced also the mechanical conversion of the four wheel drive transmission.

In 1987 Pininfarina designed the Alfa Romeo 164 Saloon, a great success that marked the relaunching of the Portello brand in the international markets.

Finally, the Alfa Romeo GTV and Spider designed by Pininfarina, launched at the 1994 Paris International Motor Show. Production started in 2000.



pininfarina

In 2003 both the spider and the GTV made their debut in a new version, still designed by Pininfarina.
2006 - In the picture ALFA SPIDER Model Year 2008

The new Alfa Romeo Spider has been created by Pininfarina in cooperation with Alfa Romeo Design Center and manufactured in Pininfarina plant of San Giorgio Canavese since 2006. Sportiness, Italian panache and quality, these are the three characteristics that have inspired the project since the outset, seeking to exalt the typical pedigree personality of Alfa Romeo cars.

Although the front end is coherent with latest generation Alfas, the lines of the new Spider reflect the continuing evolution of the characteristics of vehicles stemming from the long-lasting alliance between Alfa Romeo and Pininfarina.