BUGATTI HERITAGE — A YEAR OF RECORDS



Classic Bugatti cars achieved record results at auctions in 2020.

Historic Bugatti cars continue to rise in value. Five automotive masterpieces from Molsheim were the five most valuable vehicles sold at auction internationally in 2020. Despite the pandemic, historic Bugattis broke records at the auction houses Bonhams and Gooding & Company: never before have the five most expensive cars sold at auction been produced by a single manufacturer.
Bugatti vehicles have always been exclusive. But as their age increases, so does their value — as shown by an analysis carried out by Classic Analytics, a company specialising in international market analysis and valuation of classic cars worldwide. ''Bugattis from the Ettore and Jean Bugatti era, especially in their original condition and with a history of racing, have always been among the most expensive classic cars on the market. This trend has held steady and in fact even increased despite the general decline in interest in pre-war vehicles,'' says Frank Wilke, Managing Director of Classic Analytics. Classic Analytics belongs to the Hagerty Group, the largest classic car service provider in the USA. The top ten ranking is based on an internal

auction database in which all international classic car auctions over the course of a year are observed and evaluated.

''The current situation has certainly brought about a change in the auction market, from face-to-face to online auctions. But prices for exclusive, classic vehicles remain stable at a high level,'' says Frank Wilke. ''Every historic Bugatti vehicle is unique. Those built between 1920 and the end of the 1930s set standards in both performance and design. But this year's auctioned vehicles were particularly outstanding in terms of history and originality,'' Wilke explains.

''This year certainly presented challenges, but it opened the door for Gooding & Company to create new opportunities to maintain our connection with our automotive community and enthusiasts around the world,'' says David Gooding, Gooding & Company President and Founder. We held our first-ever UK sale which set many new records that include selling the most expensive Bugatti at public auction and selling the top two most valuable lots of 2020; the 1934 Bugatti Type 59 Sports and the 1937 Bugatti Type 57S Atalante.''

''We were honoured and extremely proud to have been entrusted with these exceptional and historic Molsheim masterpieces,'' said James Knight, Chairman of Bonhams Group. ''Both represented superb Type 55S — one a special coachbuilt convertible by Figoni, the other the iconic artistry of the Jean Bugatti Super Sport roadster. As one would expect, both cars attracted multiple bidders. Not surprisingly, the Bugattis won the accolade as the most valuable motorcars sold at their respective auctions. and both also achieved the highest results at auction during Paris Rétromobile 2020 and the 2020 Amelia Car Week respectively.''

BUGATTI TYPE 59 SPORTS (CHASSIS 57248)

A 1934 Bugatti Type 59 Sports with the chassis number 57248 was auctioned for USD 12,681 million at Gooding & Company in London in September 2020. This makes it one of the most expensive Bugattis ever to come under the hammer at a public auction. The Bugatti Type 59 Sports was created as a racing car for the Bugatti Grand Prix factory team and won the Belgian Grand Prix at Spa, later finishing third in the Monaco Grand Prix. Some of the most famous and successful Bugatti racing drivers were at the wheel of this car — including Robert Benoist, Louis Chiron, René Dreyfus, Achille Varzi and Jean-Pierre Wimille. After the successful racing season, Bugatti converted the Type 59 into a sports car. King Leopold of Belgium purchased it in 1937. The vehicle remains in its original, unrestored condition to this day. It is powered by an 8-cylinder in-line engine with a capacity of 3.3 litres and a supercharger. The power output was around 250 PS; other engine variants reached up to 380 PS in the Type 59, which was built until 1936.

BUGATTI TYPE 57S ATALANTE (CHASSIS 57502)

A sum of EUR 10.44 million was paid by the buyer of a rare and highly desirable 1937 Type 57S Atalante with the chassis number 57502 at the Gooding & Company auction in London. It is a genuinely distinctive model that was purchased by British racing driver and Bugatti enthusiast Earl Howe in 1937. The Bugatti Type 57S Atalante is one of only 17 cars that Jean Bugatti fitted with his sensational Atalante body. The power unit is a turbocharged 3.3-litre eight-cylinder engine that delivers an output of up to 175 PS in the Type 57S.

BUGATTI TYPE 55 SUPER SPORT ROADSTER (CHASSIS 55220)

A 1932 Bugatti Type 55 Super Sport Roadster with a factory body designed by Jean Bugatti fetched USD 7.1 million at Bonhams' Amelia Island auction in March 2020. Bugatti produced a total of just 38 Type 55 Super Sport chassis up until 1935. Eleven of the 14 roadster-bodied vehicles built by Jean Bugatti are still in existence today. Victor Rothschild, later the third Baron Rothschild, purchased the Type 55 as a new car and kept it in his collection for many decades. In 1985, Boston professor Dean S. Edmonds Jr. acquired this Bugatti with the chassis number 55220 for GBP 440,000. This made it the most expensive car ever sold in Britain at the time. In Edmonds' ownership, the Bugatti was restored and won first place in its class at Pebble Beach in 1993.

BUGATTI TYPE 35C (CHASSIS 4871)

A Bugatti Type 35C Grand Prix dating from 1928 fetched USD 5.23 million at a Gooding & Company auction in London — a record for the Type 35. This car with the chassis number 4871 was originally built for the Targa Florio 1928. The first private owner was Jannine Jennky, a French racing driver who drove it to overall victory in the first ever Coupe de Bourgogne in Dijon. Now more than 90 years old, the vehicle had only four owners after 1932. It remains in its original, unrestored condition. Up until 1930, Bugatti produced the Type 35C with an 8-cylinder in-line engine and a capacity of two litres. With the help of a Roots-type supercharger, the power unit delivers an output of 125 PS, enabling a top speed of over 200 km/h more than 90 years ago.

BUGATTI TYPE 55 SUPER SPORT (CHASSIS 55221)

A Bugatti enthusiast paid USD 5.07 million for a 1931 Type 55 in Paris last February. This made the vehicle with the chassis number 55221 the most expensive car to be sold at one of the Rétromobile 2020 auctions. This is an outstanding vehicle: Louis Chiron and Count Guy Bouriat-Quintart co-drove it as a factory racing car in the 24 Hours of Le Mans in 1932. The later owner had a unique Figoni body put on the chassis. With this body, the Type 55 remained in the family for over 60 years. Its 2.3-litre 8-cylinder turbocharged engine produces an output of some 160 PS.

The prices paid in 2020 are not surprising to experts. Bugattis are considered the most valuable cars of all time anyway. Between 1936 and 1938, only four of the Type 57 SC Atlantic were produced, three of which still exist after more than 80 years. The fourth Bugatti Type 57 SC Atlantic is considered the Amber Room of the automotive world and is still missing today.. If it were found, its speculative value would probably be much higher.

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