MOLSHEIM
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SALON RÉTROMOBILE: BUGATTI CELEBRATES 80TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE TYPE 59 GRAND PRIX



With the chassis of one of the first three Type 59 Bugatti Automobiles celebrates the 80th anniversary of this legendary model. The Salon Rétromobile takes place from February 6th to 10th in Paris and is one of the world's most prestigious collector cars exhibitions bringing together collectors, dealers, brand representatives, auctioneers and enthusiasts from all over the world. For the third time Bugatti Automobiles and Bentley Motors join forces and welcome customers and VIPs in a lounge, in which each of them are showing a historic masterpiece of their brand.
The first three Type 59 race cars had been built in 1933. The chassis on display at the Rétromobile is one of these first three cars and was referred to in the Molsheim factory books as 'Voiture Moteur No. 3' ('car engine number 3'). The Bugatti Team's debut of the Type 59 took

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place at the Spanish Grand Prix at San Sebastian in September 1933 where they participated with three cars. This exhibited chassis was registered in the name of Ettore Bugatti Automobiles with the number 4619 NV 2. It was participating in race No. 26 and driven by René Dreyfus who finished in 6th place.

From 1934 onwards Grand Prix race cars were only allowed to weigh up to 750 kg, with the result that the three Bugatti Type 59 were overweight and had to be modified. They got large holes in their chassis frame side members to shed some weight. These modifications have even been put on record in the factory books. The engines were also upgraded from the original 2.8 litre capacity to 3.3 litres by fitting the 100mm stroke crankshaft of the newly introduced Type 57 in the same year.

In 1934 the exhibited chassis entered its first Grand Prix of the season, the Monaco GP together with three further Type 59. 'Moteur No. 3' was still in 2.8 litre disguise and was allocated to Robert Benoist. He had been the fastest in training, but damaged the car and could not take part in the race. After the car was repaired in Molsheim, it was kept as a spare car and finally sold together with the other three Type 59 race cars to a quartet of British amateur racing drivers: Earl Howe, Brian Lewis, Lindsay Eccles and C.E.C. Charlie Martin. These cars were later known as the "four English Type 59s" and had received the chassis numbers 59121, 59122, 59123 and 59124. The price was the at that time enormous sum of 220.000 FF, almost double the price of a Type 35B.

The car on the stand carries the chassis number 59121. After having been in several hands in the UK it has been bought in 1949 by the passionate Bugatti collector Stafford East from the UK who kept the car for 56 years. In 2005 it was sold at Bonham's Goodwood auction to its present owner, who himself played a major role in Bugatti's recent history.