THE ROYALE'S INFLUENCE ON A CENTURY OF BUGATTI



Only six BUGATTI Type 41 ROYALEs were ever built, yet few automobiles have left such an enduring mark on the marque's history. Conceived by Ettore Bugatti as the ultimate expression of luxury, the ROYALE influenced far more than the world of automotive design. Its engine powered a new generation of high-speed rail travel, its coachwork gave Jean Bugatti his first great creative canvas, and its legacy can still be traced through the design, engineering and craftsmanship of BUGATTI hyper sports cars, up to TOURBILLON[1]. A century later, its spirit continues to shape the work of BUGATTI in Molsheim.

The influence of the ROYALE extends far beyond its extraordinary presence. As Ettore Bugatti's most ambitious creation, it established many of the principles that continue to define BUGATTI.

Some of its most enduring contributions are visible at first glance. The elegant division of color across the ROYALE's bodywork, exemplified by the dual-tone Coupé Napoléon, inspired one of the most recognizable signatures in modern BUGATTI design: the sweeping curve that defines the side profile of the car. Prominent on both VEYRON and CHIRON², it evolves once again on TOURBILLON, where it traces a more dynamic path around the lower roofline, creating an even greater sense of movement and purpose. Appropriately, the Coupé Napoléon itself was first finished in black and yellow, Ettore Bugatti's favored color combination.

The ROYALE also marked the emergence of another defining figure in BUGATTI history. It was through the model's coachwork that Jean Bugatti first demonstrated his remarkable talent as a designer, creating the celebrated Roadster for Armand Esders in 1932. Its flowing proportions and sense of elegance would define a new era for the marque, influences that soon appeared in the Type 55 Super Sport and, shortly thereafter, the iconic Type 57 family.

Yet the ROYALE's significance extended beyond its form. At more than six meters in length, it was created without compromise, combining engineering excellence with an unprecedented level of craftsmanship and luxury. Every detail reflected Ettore Bugatti's pursuit of perfection: walnut steering wheels, dashboard controls crafted from whalebone, a richly upholstered passenger cabin separated from the chauffeur's leather-trimmed compartment. On each radiator stood a nod to Rembrandt Bugatti's famous ''Dancing Elephant'' sculpture, a symbol that remains unique in the marque's history, with the ROYALE still the only BUGATTI ever to carry a mascot.

Ettore's vision of luxury also drew upon the finest artisans of his time. For the 1929 Weymann-bodied ROYALE, Hermès created a bespoke pigskin-covered luggage trunk, seamlessly integrated into the car. A few years later, Ettore commissioned Breguet — inventor of the tourbillon complication — to create a series of chronographs mounted at the center of the ROYALE's steering wheel, uniting the worlds of haute horlogerie and automotive craftsmanship in a way that was unprecedented for its era.

That connection continues today in TOURBILLON. Named after watchmaking's most celebrated invention, BUGATTI's new hypercar elevates this historic relationship to an entirely new level. Developed with the expertise of Swiss master watchmakers, its instrument cluster is comprised of more than 600 components crafted from titanium, sapphire and ruby. Fixed in place while the steering wheel rotates around it, it transforms a functional element into a work of mechanical art, echoing the same obsession with beauty, engineering and craftsmanship that first defined the ROYALE.

Yet the ROYALE's influence was never confined to luxury alone. Beneath its long hood lay an engine whose origins reached far beyond the world of automobiles.

Around 1915, Ettore Bugatti developed his first aircraft engine, an advanced straight-eight that reflected the pioneering spirit of early aviation. He would later combine two such eight-cylinder units to create powerful sixteen-cylinder engines, establishing engineering principles that ultimately found their way into the ROYALE itself.

Introduced in 1926, the ROYALE's vast straight-eight drew upon this aviation-inspired expertise. Its overhead camshafts, three valves and two spark plugs per cylinder, and crankshaft running on nine plain bearings made it one of the most sophisticated powerplants of its era. Like the car that surrounded it, the engine was conceived without compromise.

But its story did not end there. Ettore adapted the ROYALE's straight-eight architecture to power a new generation of high-speed railcars, each equipped with between two and four BUGATTI engines. In total, 88 were built, and in 1934 one became the fastest train in the world, reaching almost 200 km/h. Their success supported the continued growth of the Molsheim factory throughout the 1930s, helping create the environment in which Jean Bugatti would shape some of the marque's most celebrated creations.

Nearly a century later, the same spirit of engineering audacity endures. When BUGATTI unveiled TOURBILLON in 2024, three historic models stood as its guiding inspirations: the Type 35 for performance, the Type 57SC ATLANTIC for beauty and the Type 41 ROYALE for luxury. Yet the ROYALE's influence extends beyond its elegance and craftsmanship. Following two decades defined by the W16, TOURBILLON introduces an all-new naturally aspirated V16 engine. In doing so, it echoes the sixteen-cylinder aviation engines developed by Ettore Bugatti, reconnecting the marque's latest hypercar with one of the boldest chapters in its engineering history.

> "The ROYALE was Ettore Bugatti's vision of luxury in its purest form. It embodied limitless ambition and a refusal to accept compromise. More than a century later, that same spirit continues to shape every BUGATTI."
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[3] Tourbillon: This model is currently not subject to directive 1999/94/EC, as type approval has not yet been granted.

[3] Chiron: WLTP fuel consumption, l/100 km: low phase 44.6 / medium phase 24.8 / high phase 21.3 / extra high phase 21.6 / combined 25.2; CO2 emissions combined, g/km: 572; efficiency class: G

[3] Veyron: