

THE LINK BETWEEN PAST AND PRESENCE

110 is a significant number in Bugatti's history. On 15 September 1991, Romano Artioli honoured Ettore Bugatti's 110th birthday by presenting the EB110 to the public. The most luxurious supercar of its era ultimately formed the spiritual link between Bugatti's past and present.

"I was mesmerized. All the cars around the Chiron just blended into the background." The words uttered by Romano Artioli the first time he saw the Bugatti Chiron in the flesh. The man responsible for reviving the Bugatti brand in the late 80s had previously only seen images of the super sports car from Molsheim.

Although it was flanked by several high-calibre supercars at an industry event in Italy, Artioli only had eyes for the Chiron. As well as enjoying the opportunity to reacquaint himself with a brand he has loved passionately since childhood, Artioli also revelled in the chance to talk shop with none other than Head of Bugatti Design Achim Anscheidt.

"This car could not possibly be anything else but a Bugatti," enthuses Artioli, the sheer delight clearly evident in his expression. "What Achim has done here is nothing short of a miracle."

Achim Anscheidt feels honoured about Artioli's reaction to the car. "Particularly given the crucial role he played in the brand's history," explains Anscheidt, but, "his reaction and the first impression he is describing are most important to us for our customers. The car has to look authentic and so distinctively like a Bugatti that it will still inspire this kind of reaction 50 years from now. There are good reasons why this car looks the way it does – relating to performance, of course, but also relating to the DNA that represents the Bugatti story."

And it is that story, linked inextricably with the Bugatti family and infused with art, inspiration and tragedy, that forms part of the intricate weave of the present-day Bugatti brand. Moreover, there can be no doubt that, during that



Achim Anscheidt (left) and Romano Artioli discuss design, conviction and the human spirit that created the Bugatti brand.

pivotal time in the 90s, the Artioli family, and Romano Artioli in particular, became an intrinsic part of that fabric. Looking at the link formed between Bugatti past and present by Artioli's EB110, Anscheidt's thinking does not immediately turn to the product itself. "I would look first towards the human spirit. The Artioli family truly lived and breathed the same ethos that Ettore Bugatti and his family lived at the Molsheim premises."

Prior to their meeting, Anscheidt had paid a visit to the Campogalliano factory built by Artioli to produce the EB110, and was clearly inspired by what he saw there. "The spirit of Romano's creation was very much in tune with that of Ettore, his family and his workers. It was a family that believed in a single vision and an attitude towards life and towards art." For Anscheidt, the EB110 and the EB112 concept were the natural outcomes of this ethos.

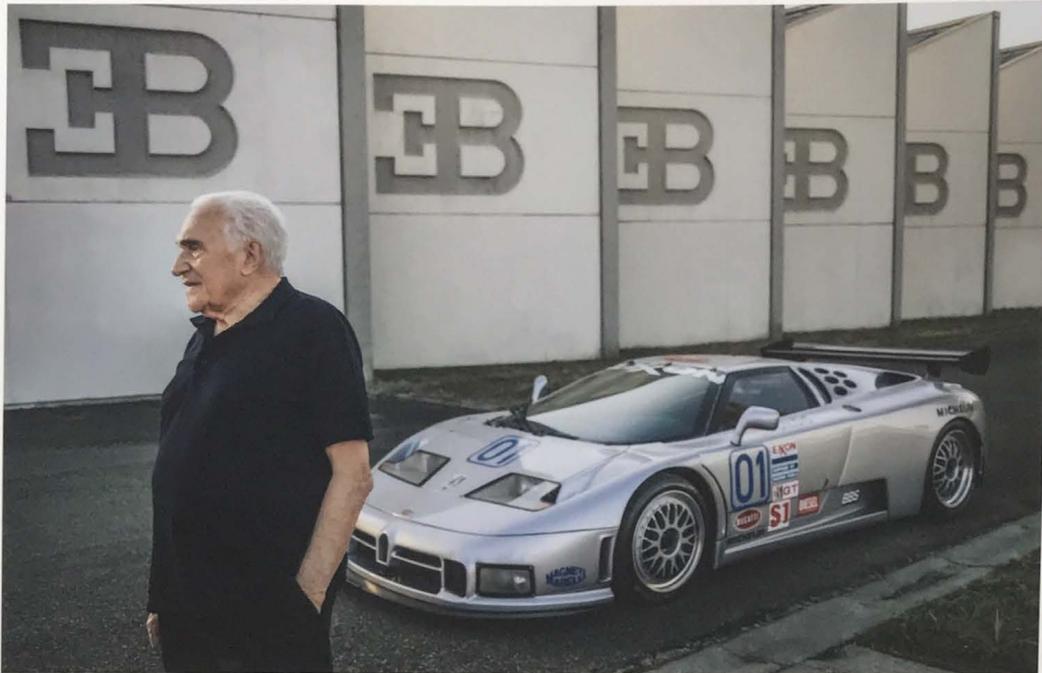
But natural outcomes are not easily achieved. How do you go about resurrecting a brand that, by the late 80s, existed purely in a state of preservation, maintained by the memories of past glories, the passion of a loyal but dwindling fan base and, of course, the design of its most iconic models – the Type 35, the Type 41 Royale and the Type 57S Atlantic?

Romano Artioli was 20 years old when the original Bugatti company ceased business in 1956. For him, the acquisition of the Bugatti brand in 1987, and with it the launch of the EB110 in 1991, was far more than a business venture, it was about the culmination of a life's work. "I worked like a lion for 40 years to do this. I worked to make the money I needed to one day be able to bring Bugatti back to life."

Artioli's vision for the design of the EB110 was to imagine the evolution of Bugatti as if it had never ceased trading, to examine the social and technological advances that had been made in that time, and to apply the Bugatti thinking to them, the principles of "Art, Forme, Technique".

But other people had different ideas. The concept created by Marcello Gandini and former Lamborghini engineer Paolo Stanzani fell short of Artioli's expectations: "It had nothing to do with Bugatti," laments Artioli. Running out of time, Artioli turned instead to his cousin, the architect Giampaolo Benedini, who had been commissioned to design the new Bugatti production





Artioli's architecturally striking factory in Campogalliano paid homage to the powerful legacy of Ettore Bugatti.

facility in the heart of Italy's Motor Valley around Modena. "He was passionate about cars, so we asked him to work with our boys to modify the Gandini plans to come up with something that was rounder and more aerodynamic."

What Artioli was striving to see was a modern-day interpretation of the flowing, curvaceous, organic forms that were fundamental to the artistic heritage of the Bugatti family, something he feels was ultimately far better expressed in the EB112 limousine concept unveiled in 1993 and created by Giugiaro, who drew his inspiration from the Type 57S Atlantic.

Unfortunately, the EB112 concept would never make it into production. With sports car markets slumping in the USA and Europe, and industry consolidation progressing at breakneck speed, Artioli lacked the backing of a strong investor to ride out the storm. His company entered bankruptcy in 1995. Looking back at the often turbulent path that ultimately led to the present-day company and to the Bugatti Chiron, Achim Anscheidt points not so much to the design as the link between Bugatti models of the past and present, but to the aforementioned role of the Artioli family in resurrecting the spirit of Bugatti in the 1990s.

"This thinking, this approach links the Bugatti family with not only the Artioli family, but also with the Piëch family," says Anscheidt. "Ferdinand Piëch had a similar vision for Bugatti. It may have been within the framework of the overall Volkswagen Group, but it still took the vision of one man to implement a philosophy for the modern-era Bugatti." Anscheidt describes Bugatti as a "small island where you can cherish a philosophy that fits this unique brand". The decision to buy the premises and land around Molsheim was part of a clear strategy to create a spirit similar to the one nurtured by Ettore Bugatti.

The two men agree this is the legacy now lived and breathed so compellingly and, indeed, defiantly by Bugatti. Having found voice first in the Veyron, the authenticity and sheer mastery of the Chiron's consummate form has succeeded in transcending the notion of design as a three-dimensional object in space, to become the expression of an ideal and approach to life that embraces the human instinct to seek greater meaning in all that we are and do.

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While Artioli himself admits that it is difficult to draw stylistic parallels between the design of the EB110 and the Chiron, he still observes similarities in their Bugatti Design DNA: the carbonfibre monocoque, four-wheel drive and an engine with four turbochargers are links to all Bugatti hypercars, past and present. When Anscheidt mentions the EB110's period World Speed Record of 218 mph, Artioli returns once more to the stylistic direction taken with the EB112 concept. He still considers it a stylistic masterpiece to this day and you can see a moment of sadness in his eyes that this masterpiece never made it into production.

To him a timeless authentic design is more important than a speed record. He recalls the impact the EB112 concept had when it was unveiled at the Geneva Motor Show in 1993: "The whole show came to a stop. I remember Mercedes design boss, Bruno Sacco, coming to see it about ten times, bringing all his designers with him."

Romano Artioli is glad that the brand was revived and has established itself in the 21st century. He is also grateful for having realized at least part of his dream, producing more than one hundred EB110s and the two EB112 design studies. And while his era lasted less than a decade, he is convinced the cars from this period will find their rightful place in Bugatti history. **EB**

Around 140 EB110s were produced from 1991 to 1995. Powered by a quad-turbocharged 3.5 l V12 engine, it sent 560 HP (600 HP in the SS model) and 637 Nm through a 6-speed manual gearbox to its four driven wheels and reached 62 mph in 3.2 seconds.

The strongest visual influences from the early Bugatti era were actually more evident in the EB112 concept designed by Giugiaro.

