

CLASSIC DRIVER

We snuck into the world's most secretive classic car concours

Lead

The Classic Days at Schloss Dyck are well known to automotive enthusiasts across Europe. But only a few know that, against the serene backdrop of the castle, a secretive concours takes place. As the exclusive partner of Masterpieces & Style, we were able to experience the unique event first hand...

A Mercedes-Benz 710 SSK with bodywork by Corsica, a Bugatti T50 'Le Mans', a Fiat 'Otto Vu' and a Maserati 5000 GT belonging to Aga Khan - these were just a few of the special entrants in this year's Masterpieces & Style concours competition. Over 60 exceptional classics turned out - divided into 15 classes including 'Ready to Race' and 'Flamboyant Years' - to vie for the prestigious 'Best of Show' award.



Marcus Herfort, who organises the popular (and public) Classic Days at Schloss Dyck, got the idea for Masterpieces & Style after talking to collectors who wanted their own private and more relaxed automotive beauty contest. The idea was made a reality thanks to the Honorary Association of the Classic Days and the Schloss Dyck Foundation in the Rhineland. Experienced chief judge Chris Kramer was entrusted with coordinating a jury to preside over a competition featuring the best of the best classic cars from around the world. Originality, rarity and design were the foremost criteria for those judging the concours, which was granted the highest accolade available by the *Fédération Internationale des Véhicules Ancien* (FIVA) once again.



The gathering began on Thursday evening, with a 'car-be-que' in beautiful summer weather. Friday saw the entrants presented to the judges in the beautiful orangery of Schloss Dyck. Though Saturday's proceedings in another section of the castle grounds were plagued with rain, it could not dampen the atmosphere for the owners, who were all keen to show off their machines.





In this idyllic setting, visitors were treated to a journey through the golden era of the automobile. An Alfa Romeo 6C 2500 SS Villa d'Este sat alongside the red foliage of the Japanese maple tree, for example, while two participants shot the breeze about the Touring-bodied beauty. If the atmosphere was special, the quality of the entry list was truly exceptional. Where else can you see the most important 'Kompressor' models from the 100-year history of Mercedes-Benz? We were stunned to see a 710 SSK, two 630Ks with Erdmann & Rossi and La Baule Transformable bodies, a 540K Sport Cabriolet and a 770K - and there were more. Marcus Helfort persuaded collectors from around the world to bring their cars to Schloss Dyck, and ultimately had the unenviable task of narrowing down over 100 applicants to just 60. His preparatory work at many collectors' discussions, his extensive network and the widespread enthusiasm for the Classic Days certainly helped him secure the calibre he sought.



The work of the international jury, which included Classic Driver's own Philip Rathgen, is different to that in other concours. Chief judge Chris Kramer instructed each smaller judging team to reach a comprehensive verdict after just 60 minutes spent inspecting the cars. Alas, it wasn't quite that straightforward, but ultimately the 'Best of Show' trophy was awarded to the Mercedes-Benz 710 SSK with its unusual bodywork by Corsica. 'The world's most pristine Masterpiece' award, for the most original car in attendance, was given to the Bugatti T50 'Le Mans' from a German collection.



This event, however, was much more than 'just' a concours with some fantastic classic cars. It was a successful and enjoyable meeting of passionate enthusiasts, who all share great enthusiasm for automotive heritage. Thanks to the privacy of the setting, attendees were able to relax and engage in good conversation - a pleasant counter from the seemingly omnipresent hype surrounding inflating values in the classic car market. One could almost suggest that the participants arrived as strangers, and left as a family - a family of which Classic Driver intends to remain a part in the coming years.

Fotos: René Hey / cannoneer.de

Gallery

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