

1948 Cadillac Series 62 Convertible Saoutchik

After WWII, Jaques Saoutchik went right back into his coachbuilding business and created some of his most flamboyant designs. This Cadillac is a great example, and one of the first American chassis he created a body and interior for.

When the Series 62 chassis arrived in Paris, Saoutchik probably looked at it as an opportunity to try new ideas and expose his work to America. So, he borrowed styling cues from the Cadillac line and used them in a distinctly French way with hopes that the car would gain attention from some of America's major players.

The most characteristic trait of this car is the sweeping two tone fenders that are accentuated by huge chrome accents. These lines help hide the enormous size of the car by breaking it up into several levels. Flanked on the side of the car is canework that was painstakingly applied by paint tube. The same pattern appeared on prewar Fleetwood-bodied Cadillac V16s.

At the front, a serious amount of grill and brightwork was typical for Cadillacs of this era, however the front treatment on this one is more similar to Delahayes over anything else. The front and rear double-decker bumperettes are also a departure from any pre-war practice.

From the outside, the four-seat cockpit is well hidden below a top that lacks any rear windows and a small, heavily raked windscreen. Once inside, the familiar Cadillac dashboard is in place and surrounded by a lavish two-tone interior. Cadillac power fittings were included for both the windows and retractable soft-top.

Only two of these cars were ever made, and both for the American market. The first was finished in black over violet with black cloth soft top and matching black and violet interior. It was first ordered by Paul Kassoff but quickly made it into the hands of Louis Ritter. The second car was much more vibrant with a white and violet paintjob featuring hatch work on the doors. This car was made for Hollywood star Dolores del Rio. It was at the Blackhawk collection for several years and made appearances at the 2003 and 2006 Pebble Beach Concours.

Shortly after these Cadillacs were made, unit body construction rendered Saoutchik's typical body-on-frame work outdated. All future work in his area was limited to prototyping and one-of show cars so Saoutchik was pushed into retirement, but only after an amazing pre and post-war career.

The only "visible" indication of the car's Cadillac heritage is the horseshoe instrument cluster and the steering wheel. . After restoration in the mid-nineties, the car was shown at the annual Rétromobile car show in Paris, in 1996. It was later offered for sale in Scottsdale, AZ, in January 1998, during the annual Barrett-Jackson auction there. It was offered again by the Barrett-Jackson auctioneers in January 2002.

The car was shown again at the Meadowbrook Concours d'Elégance in Michigan, in August 2002. Two of the owners of the extravagant car were Paul Kassoff and Louis Ritter. Mr. Ritter was the founder of Ritter Brothers Furriers of New York; he was a (very) wealthy eccentric known for his extravagant wealth and flamboyant lifestyle. The Saouthchik body was mounted in 1948 and the car shown at the Paris Salon that Fall.

The story goes that the first owner drove the car out to Hollywood and used it there for only a few months before tiring of it and selling it. It was then acquired by a mid-western business man (Harold McLean) from Santa Barbara whose wife's favorite colors, it seems, were lilac and purple. It got repainted a less flamboyant white color probably in the seventies but retained its original canework and lilac lower body; it was seen at various old car meets over the next 10-15 years. It is currently (2002) in the Blackhawk Collection (Don Williams, owner), Danville, CA and has been advertised for sale a number of times on the Internet.