



## **From the creative flair of Marcello Gandini to the Bauhaus of the new millennium: automobile styling shapes Italian design history**

The Lamborghini Technical Department, made up of a team of more than 250 professional engineers, creative designers and model-makers, holds the brand's most precious secrets and contributes with the company's other offices to the design and production of the best sellers launched in recent years by the House of the Bull.

These departments and offices work together in synergy in a process that begins with the first line drawn on drafting tables and continues right through to starting the engine mounted in the first production car, all performed at the Sant'Agata Bolognese production facility. The concepts for new models are developed by the Technical Department's Style Center, which was renewed in 2004 and is the driving force behind the cars created first by Peruvian-Belgian designer Luc Donckerwolke (who led the Style Center until 2005), followed in recent years by the models developed by the team led now by Filippo Perini since. And to judge from sales figures and the critical success of new generation Lamborghini cars, it has clearly been a very successful strategy.

Automobili Lamborghini's first foray into the market was the presentation at the 1963 Turin Motor Show of the 350 GTV, created by visionary designer Franco Scaglione and produced in aluminium by coach-builder Sargiotto. Its futuristic styling, while perhaps too edgy for the period, nevertheless came to symbolise the essence of the supercar concept and went on to disrupt this segment of the market.

The task of making the model introduced at the first motor show attended by the company more "presentable" for the market was assigned to the Milan-based Touring Superleggera, under the supervision of the then twenty-five year old Giampaolo Dallara, Technical Director at the Sant'Agata car manufacturer. The Milan-based coach-builder "refined" Scaglione's modernist excesses to create the 350 GT and 350 GT 2+2, as well as building



the bodywork for all the the models produced through to the 400 GT. But Automobili Lamborghini owes its legendary place in the history of Italian design to the talented hand of Marcello Gandini, a new recruit in Carozzeria Bertone who took the place of Giorgetto Giugiaro (who left to establish Italdesign) and was tasked with “dressing” the frame of this strange car with a cross-mounted rear engine.

As is explained by Marcello Gandini, who was born and brought up in Piedmont, the Italian region which more than any other has transformed the history of automobile styling because of its tradition for the finest craftsmanship: “Bertone suggested that I give as much emphasis as possible to the potential of the car’s unprecedented mechanical arrangement. It was a winning approach: the Miura was a car that everyone liked immediately, because it was perfectly in tune with the collective imagination of the period”.

As reviewers wrote at the time: “The Miura represents a highly referential model compared with the technology it contains: an ideal link between its smooth, interconnected and fluid lines and their gradual hardening that went on to accentuate the aggressive physiognomy of Gran Turismo cars in the following years”. It was such a successful and innovative design that it has earned a place of honour at the MoMa in New York, where it is still exhibited today.

And if the Miura is positioned as this link, the creative flair of Marcello Gandini was to be the source of a series of models in the coming years that would take Italian design one step further, including the futuristic Marzal which, despite its triumphant opening lap at the Monte Carlo Grand Prix in 1967, never entered production but introduced the gull wing door opening mechanism, accompanied by a futuristic and partly transparent cockpit. Then there was the Espada, Ferruccio Lamborghini’s favourite, and the Jarama, an elegant four-



seater with a sharp, pointy design like the bullfighter's weapon from which it takes its name. And the Countach (a generic exclamation in the Piedmont dialect equivalent to something like "my goodness!"), which was the first car in its segment to make a clean break with the past and to introduce an approach to styling that people had never seen before. As Gandini recalls: "It was a culturally alien shape and people's tastes had not been educated to appreciate it. But in the space of a few short years it became a symbol and remained in production for 17 years". The Countach threw the entire automobile language of the time into discussion, by brutally refusing to accept compromises, as was commented on by several journalists at the time.

The Diablo was the star of the years leading up to the new millennium, from 1990 to 1999. Another product of Marcello Gandini's creative genius, the design was mellowed by the Styling Center run by Chrysler (owner of the brand at the time) before being put on sale. Its compact wedge shape broke away from the past and, although Ferruccio Lamborghini was not a great admirer of the car, almost 3,000 were sold.

The Lamborghini supercars of the new millennium, designed in their entirety at Sant'Agata, are based on an approach that requires every car to be surprising but nevertheless immediately recognisable, in which form follows function, and in which the world of military fighter planes represents a constant source of inspiration. The new models have also introduced a new language that is clearly distinct from the one used by other vehicles in the segment. It is a cleaner language, more compact and more Bauhaus, one that conveys a subliminal perception of general solidity on which Automobili Lamborghini can rely as its 50th anniversary draws near.