



1932 Bucciali TAV 12 *Berline* Coachwork by Saoutchik

Private Portfolio No. 114



Chassis no.
40048

Price on request

- The only one of its kind in the world
- Bugatti Royale rivaling size and presence
- Exotic V12 engine configuration and drivetrain
- Restored to concours standards and now 'sorted' for driving
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Without doubt one of the most fabled, storied and fabulous automobiles ever built, the Bucciali TAV (*Traction AVant*) 12 *Berline* by Saoutchik, famously known as the *Fleche d'Or*, is the stuff of legends.

Its creator, Paul Albert Bucciali, pipe organ builder, pioneer aviator, wearer of the *Croix de Guerre* with thirteen citations, along with his older brother Angelo devoted much of his life to the creation and perfection of front wheel drive. The TAV 12 is the ultimate conception and expression of their vision and is one of only two surviving complete examples of Bucciali's small, innovative workshop.

A masterpiece of design, the Bucciali TAV 12 employs front wheel drive and independent front suspension of unique design with a transverse leaf spring supplemented by unusual rubber shock/spring units created by Russian/ French engineer Robert Dmitri Sensaud de Lavaud. The universal jointed halfshaft housings function as upper

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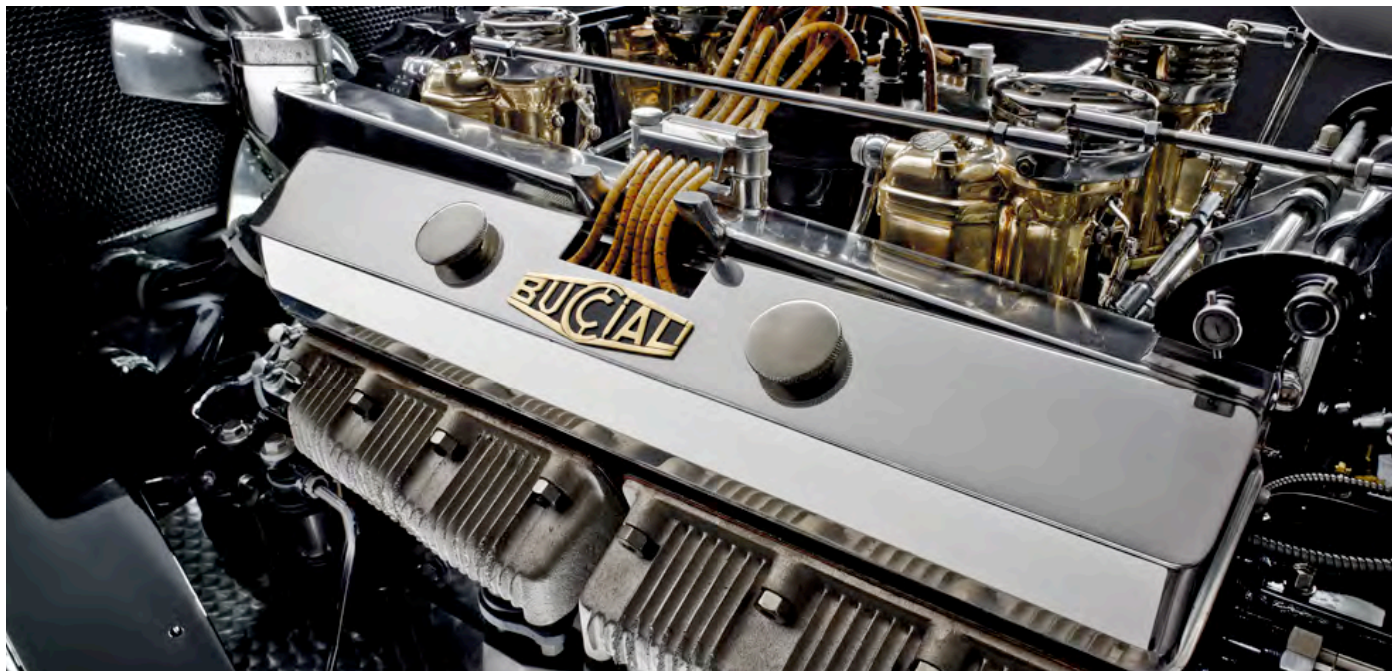
control arms; lateral lower control arms create a parallelogram to maintain the front wheels always perpendicular to the road surface. The live rear axle is suspended from semi-elliptical leaf springs with friction shock absorbers.

Power comes from a Voisin sleeve valve V-12 engine, itself a fine example of quality French automobile concept and manufacture. To enhance its power in the Bucciali chassis it was equipped with a quartet of Zenith carburetors.

Bucciali's suspension design and front wheel drive allowed the frame to be dropped below the wheel centres. As Paul Albert Bucciali commented to historian Griffith Borgeson, "I thought of front wheel drive, of a car into which one would descend instead of mounting." In this the TAV 12 *Berline* succeeded masterfully.

Its lines are stunning, its lowness exaggerated by the huge steel alloy wheels with integral brake drums which were another feature of Bucciali's design. Constructed by Saoutchik, the TAV 12's lines are reminiscent of other Buccialis and come largely from Paul Albert Bucciali's own concepts. The giant 24" wheels are nearly encompassed by tightly fit wings which expose the long sides of the bonnet,

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itself festooned with louvres and graced by the *cigogne*, the stork emblematic of Bucciali's wartime squadron. The wings tower nearly to the top of the bonnet, emphasizing the low roofline and windows that are barely more than slits. Great Stephen Grebel headlights nestle low flanking the radiator grille, complemented by a Grebel spotlight for the drivers use.

The TAV 12s first owner was a Parisian banker, Count de Rivault, who later had the body transferred to a Bugatti Type 46. The Bucciali chassis and running gear were acquired by pioneering French collector Serge Pozzoli in the 1950s.

After negotiating to buy the Saoutchik-bodied Bugatti in the U.S. some years later, restorer Ray Jones was able to acquire the chassis from Pozzoli and even the original front wings from the Bugatti's former owner, Walter Weimer. Tom Perkins, legendary American venture capitalist and trend-setting collector, acquired the complete restoration project in 1976, passing it on to the next owner in 1986 who then completed the restoration with the help of Bucciali historian Bill Lewis.

It is believed that the engine, gearbox, front wheel drive and suspension are original to this car, the only one of its type known to have been built. So, too, are the front wings, body panels and the body's wood framing. The rear wings, firewall and bonnet have been recreated. In a saleroom notice accompanying Christie's 1997 sale of the Bucciali at Pebble Beach, Tom Perkins questioned the authenticity of the frame rails; however Bill Lewis, who examined it many times while owned by Perkins and during restoration, stated he believed the frame rails are Bucciali and may or may not be original to the TAV 12. Subsequent examination during its re-restoration validates Mr. Perkins' caution and we would suggest potential buyers assume the chassis to incorporate some or all new metal. The Bucciali has been shown as an unjudged display at the Pebble Beach *Concours d'Elegance* in 2006 and at Amelia Island in 2007.

Finished in black with claret accents, silver steel stork emblems and wing edging, and upholstered in claret leather with steering wheel, dashboard and interior wood garnish in Purple Heart wood, the subtle livery tastefully and sympathetically complements the sweeping, refined, dramatic lines of Paul Albert Bucciali's and Saoutchik's coachwork. It is as imposing as a Bugatti Royale but its low profile and proportions put its visual appeal instantly in a class of its own. It is absolutely unique and a guaranteed show-stopper wherever it appears.