

Arrayed in a semi circle in the courtyard between Macaluso's two garages were a brace of Lancia sports car including the Group C LC2 prototype raced by the famed Martini Team in endurance events in the early 1980s. To the right of the prototype racer is a 1979 Ligier JS11 Formula One racer driven by Jacques Laffite. (Jan Tegler)



BY JAN TEGLER

The REAL THING

The racing champion behind Girard-Perregaux & JeanRichard is *la cosa reale* (the real thing)

As 2007 draws to a close, the watch industry is displaying a vibrancy not seen in decades. Hundreds of brands, new and old, seek to distinguish themselves in a variety of ways, from design to image and lineage. Connections to watchmaking tradition and association with a range of lifestyles and sporting/historic endeavors are emphasized—both to portray the story behind each maker and act as marketing tools.

Few brands however, can claim a true connection to tradition and image. Girard-Perregaux and JeanRichard can. The former has a proud history, and when it comes to image both brands can call on the distinctive personality

of the man who guides them. Luigi “Gino” Macaluso is “la cosa reale” (the real thing), a champion in the world of rally racing and a leader in the world of horology.

Racing against the clock

Thirty-five years ago, Gino Macaluso was preparing to strap into a 1972 Fiat 124 Sport Spider 1600, a special Rally version of the well-known roadster. The Austrian “1000 Minutes Rally,” the final round of the European Drivers Rally Drivers Championship, was next up on the calendar. It was a race he would finish second overall in, co-driving with well-known fellow Italian hot-shoe, Raffaele Pinto. The second place finish

secured the championship for the duo in a season which saw them win outright at six other events and bring Fiat second overall in the World Rally Championship for Manufacturers.

Rally racing is an exercise in extremes—winding public streets and racing cars, high speeds on slow roads, running on tarmac, gravel or snow in all weather conditions over all kinds of terrain (mountains, flatlands, deserts). Harkening back to the earliest period of automobile racing, rallying is—in its simplest form—a question of time and distance. The car and drivers who complete a prescribed distance in the lowest elapsed time win.



A view of the more modern rally cars in Gino's collection including (in the foreground) Fiat Cinquecento and Seicento Sporting rally cars driven by Stefano Macaluso (Gino's son). (Jan Negler)



In the modern postwar era, professional rally racing has been conducted primarily over closed stages—lengths of public road closed to normal vehicular and pedestrian traffic and reserved for rallying. The best time on any given stage wins that stage. The best time over a number of stages in an event wins the rally overall. The difference between victory and defeat can be seconds. Errors in driving and navigation (via pace notes) add up. Winning requires speed, technique and preparation. The management of performance in the interest of time is paramount.

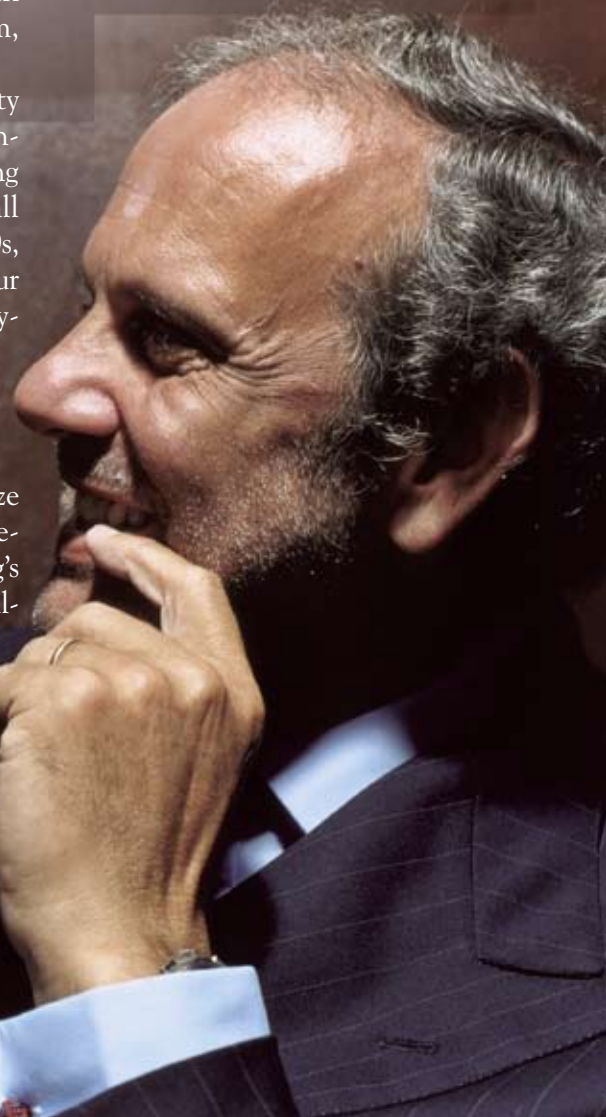
Motorcycling

It's ironic that Gino Macaluso's professional life should begin in a sport that places a premium on the management of performance in the interest of time. It could be said that is just what the watch industry requires of him today. But in the mid-1960s, Macaluso wasn't thinking of horology. He was exploring the delights of speed and competition atop a Gilera motorcycle, racing in enduros and regularity tests around northern Italy.

"I was 16 years old when I began racing. I raced motorbikes, especially Gileras. That was one of the motorbikes I raced with the most satisfaction. This kind of specialty was very popular in northern Italy, France, Belgium, England and Germany too."

Rallying was another specialty which captured Macaluso's attention. The sport had been growing since the end of World War II all over Europe and by the late 1960s, an increasing number of amateur and professional drivers were trying their hand at this terrifically challenging form of racing. Greater coverage of the sport drew the interest of automotive manufacturers eager to capitalize on the publicity that could be derived from success. Rally racing's rise in popularity and professionalism was palpable but the sport was still in its infancy, a long way from the pressure-cooker that is today's World Rally Championship (WRC).

It was amid this atmosphere that Gino took up the rallying just short of his 20th birthday. →





Taking center stage in the garage that holds Macaluso's fabulous collection of Rally racing cars is the Fiat 124 Sport Spider 1600 in which Gino and Raffaele Pinto won the 1972 European Rally Drivers Championship. (Jan Tegler)

Bottom: The World Rally Championship-winning Alpine 1800 of 1973. (Jan Tegler)



"I moved to cars, to rallies when I was 19. It's difficult to say what interested me. I was attracted by motorsports and the people inside it. Formula cars for me were something far away. I always liked cars with closed or covered wheels, not single-seaters. I liked endurance races like the 24 Hours of Le Mans and sports cars. I also liked rally cars. Rally racing in that period was not only a technological challenge, it was a question of logistics. You could win in that period with a simple but very good organization. It's different than today. Today rally-

ing (WRC) is more like Formula One - short and very expensive."

Three years spent learning the craft of rally driving and navigating while belted into the cockpits of Ford Lotus Cortinas, Ford Escorts and Mini Coopers paid off when Italian automotive giant Fiat took an interest in rallying as the 1970s dawned. The talents of the young native of Turin were duly noted by the Turin-based manufacturer and as the company made preparations

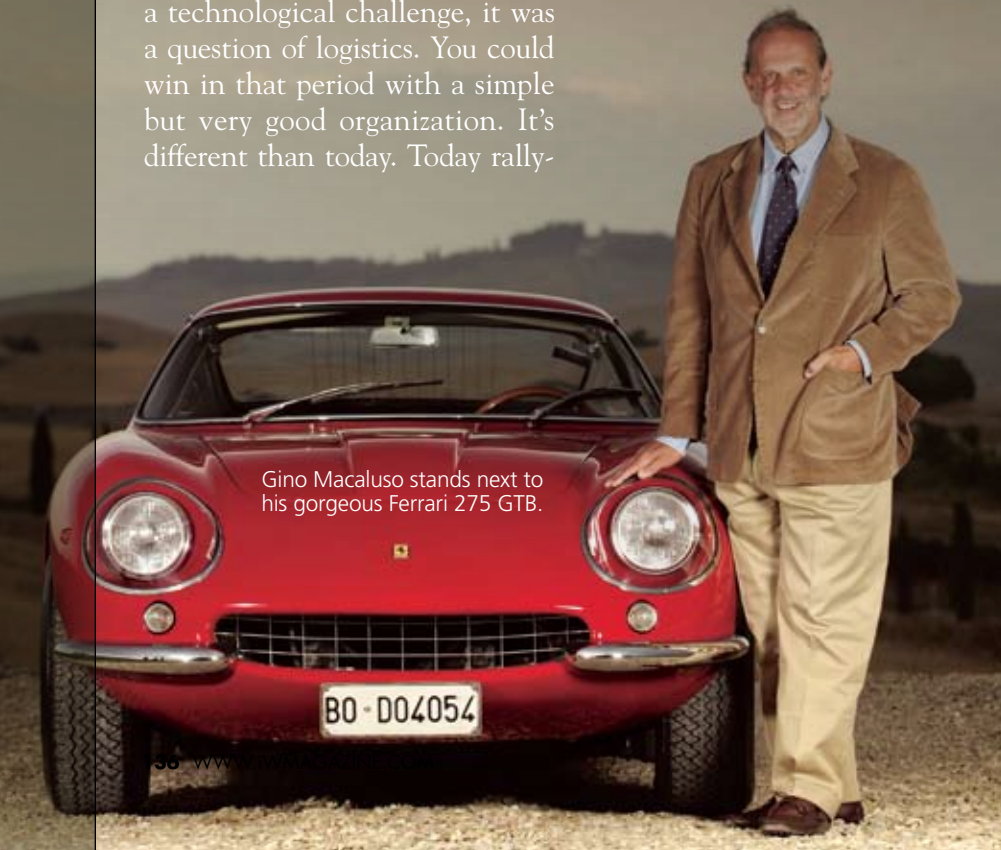
to launch a works-rally team, Macaluso was tabbed to be a part of the effort.

Fiat calls

"At the end of the 60s, roles were a lot less clear-cut than they are today. For three years I ran with several friends alternating driving and co-driving, there wasn't really a pilot and a co-pilot. I then decided that what interested me enormously was also to do development work on prototypes for Fiat, Pirelli and others. At the same time, Fiat realized that they needed a driver and tester for the team. They asked me and I said, 'Why not?!' It was a dream!"

The dream was a unique opportunity, a chance to be in on the ground floor a corporate racing team and to gain valuable experience, the kind of knowledge that still serves the Sowind Group President well today.

"It was a fantastic period. I learned a lot, also for my personal culture, my personal point of view. It was an extremely good school for learning as a human being. I was very young. It was perfect because it was an international



Gino Macaluso stands next to his gorgeous Ferrari 275 GTB.



Right: Stefano Macaluso (on left) sits next to his father Gino Macaluso at the pre-SIHH preview of the Laureato USA-98 edition watches in Turin. (Jan Tegler)

experience in Europe. You are going to France and Germany and England and seeing a lot. I was also in a very young but very important team for Fiat.”

At first, the organization functioned as an unofficial “service” for customer teams that wished to race Fiats during the 1971 season. Then in 1972, the unit went racing with backing from the manufacturer. Macaluso and Pinto’s victories and results in the driver’s and manufacturer’s championships convinced Fiat that the time was right to become officially engaged in rallying.

In 1973 Squadra Fiat came onto the scene with a new more specialized version of the Spider 124 Gino and Raffaele had raced the previous season—the Fiat Abarth 124 Rally. The team also featured an impressive roster of drivers, co-drivers and team members including current Ferrari CEO and Scuderia Ferrari executive director, Jean Todt, and Fiat President, Luca Cordero

di Montezemolo. Both men are among the wide circle of friends and contacts Macaluso maintains in the world of motorsports today.

After three action-packed years with the Squadra Fiat, Luigi Macaluso stepped from the cockpit of the racing cars that had inspired him in his formative years and looked outside of racing to pursue other interests. One ambition he pursued was the study of

architecture at Turin University.

“I was always very interested about a lot of things. My dream was to design cars and that’s why I studied architecture. I was absolutely interested in cars and art and everything that is emotion.”

Emotion played no role in Macaluso’s decision to leave professional racing. Rather, it was the realization that winning required a level of commitment he was not interested in sustaining. This and his fascination with the wider world helped form a philosophy he applies to this day.

“I enjoyed the competition in racing. It’s important in every job and if you really like your job it’s natural that you should try to be excellent. Without any poetic sentiment, if you have a competition, it’s necessary to win. If you just participate, it’s not the same. I stopped because I was no longer as motivated as you have to be. When you are a professional driver, you have to be extremely focused on winning, not just on taking part.” →



Right: Another look at the Lancia Group C LC2 prototype.
(Jan Tegler)
Bottom: Lancia's awesome Stratos rally car. In the early/mid 1970s these racers dominated world rally racing.



Working with time

If the early years of Gino Macaluso's professional life were focused on the challenge of racing against the clock, the rest of his career has been about finding harmony with time, purveying and crafting time-pieces which put time in artistic and functional context.

Design is a passion for Macaluso. The question—"what is good design?"—was one of the themes explored at a gathering of journalists and friends hosted by the Sowind Group President in Turin last March. The meeting also provided a pre-SSIH peak at the latest additions to GP's BMW Oracle Racing collection (the Laureato USA 98 editions).

Long-time friend Andrea Pininfarina (the son of legendary automobile designer Sergio Pininfarina and grandson of company founder Battista Pinin Farina), the CEO of Pininfarina S.p.A. was on hand for the discussion along with a guest speaker from London's Design Museum.

Pininfarina's presence, representing one of Italy's oldest and most respected automotive design

firms, was another indication of the terrific connections Macaluso has to the past, present and future of the automobile world. That connection has served him well, providing discipline in his early life, maintaining his involvement in motorsport today and providing a measure of perspective.

"Racing was much different yes and a lot of fun in the early 70s. We all knew each other, the teams, the drivers. In fact, I represented the Abarth brand for Fiat in the Geneva [Auto Salon] show two days ago (in March 2007). [Luca di Cordeiro] Montezemolo, the President of Fiat, invited me because we raced together in the Fiat team. We are almost the same age. We are very close. We met Colucci. [Mario] Colucci was the engineer for the (Fiat Rally) team and [Renzo] Avidano was the managing director for Abarth at the period. I said to Avidano, 'You taught me in a very serious way and it was then very helpful for my life.

"When you are very young and you race, there is a lot of pressure, not the same pressure that a Formula One driver has to-

day," he continued. "There was a lot of emotion. Young drivers today are educated to cancel their emotions. I thanked Avidano for what he taught me. He was a strict team manager and taught you about working in a disciplined way. I am a disciplined man so for me it was good. It was a great moment in my life."

With racing behind him, Macaluso did what any young man fresh from university does. "I looked for a job! I started working in the world of watches after having completed my studies in architecture. A great opportunity came up and I had always been fascinated by watches as a product."

That opportunity came from SSIH, a firm which would later be melded into the Swatch Group. Macaluso first served in the company's advertising department where the experience and many connections he had made in sports proved useful in helping him market the brands (including Omega and Tissot) in the SSIH portfolio. Gradually, he rose through the company ranks to become head of SSIH operations in Italy. →



Peeking over the shoulder of Macaluso's Lancia Beta Montecarlo Turbo at the other Lancias in the Sowind Group President's fantastic collection. (Jan Tegler)

As the 1980s began, Gino struck out on his own, founding Tradema, a distributorship for watch brands Girard-Perregaux, Breitling and others in Italy in 1982.

Adhering to the idea that in business as in sport, "it is necessary to win," he built a successful firm with a fine reputation. Simultaneously, he sowed a personal and financial relationship with Girard-Perregaux that led to a twenty percent ownership stake in the watchmaker by 1987. Shortly thereafter, Macaluso bought G-P.

At the time, the firm was considered a bit behind the times.

But by bringing the focus that he learned on the roads of Europe in racing cars to GP, Macaluso turned the company around. He brought the same energy and spirit of competition to a new firm, Daniel JeanRichard, which he founded in 1988 (the firm dropped the "Daniel" several years ago).

Ferrari

Macaluso's appreciation of art, architecture and design has had much to do with the success of his two brands but his intimacy with the automotive world has also paid dividends. In 1992, as the revitalization of G-P was underway, Macaluso made a move that is now commonplace among fine watch brands. Through his many connections with Italy's most famous sports car maker (including a lifelong friendship with Piero Ferrari), he concluded an agreement for Girard-Perregaux to become the offi-

cial watch partner for Ferrari. The pairing was a success. GP's Ferrari collection timepieces replete with the famous prancing horse logo became classics that are still prized.

The firm worked with Ferrari until just a few years ago, when Panerai began its current affiliation with the brand. "When I saw a lot of other watch brands start to associate themselves with automobile manufacturers I decided that my time was finished," he explains.

Today, the logos of other automotive manufacturers appear on the dials of a wide variety of watch brands. Many have executed their partnerships well but few can claim a genuine link to the image their partnerships seek to create. Macaluso is the real thing and in this sense, his background confers an authenticity to such partnerships for Girard-Perregaux and JeanRichard that others do not enjoy. →

Macaluso stands among the terrific road-going sports cars in collection including a Ferrari F40, Bizzarini Strada, Ferrar 275 GTB and Aston Martin DB5.



Interestingly, while GP and JR maintain links to motorsports in their collections today (GP's Rallye Monte Carlo Historique collection and JeanRichard's Sebring, Colorado Grand and MV Augusta limited editions), the companies have gone in a different direction than other makers.

"I think the difference is that the car for me is not a passion. It's a part of myself, my experience. Maybe I have other passions like architectural art, but the car is part of myself, like watches. It's not a job (being a watch manufacture). If I realize it's a job I don't have the same attraction for it."

It's likely that Macaluso has a similar notion about racing. As ever, it is a part of his experience, although these days his involvement is focused on the development of young racing drivers. In 2005, Macaluso was appointed as the President of the FIA's International Karting Commission, the CIK-FIA, a key rung on the ladder of international motorsport.

"I find it particularly interesting to be involved where the young drivers are. This is where the next generation of talents comes into the sport."

Contemporary art

Macaluso has always appreciated and collected art. I was fortunate



to see in person a collection he has shown only rarely. Spread among two large garages north of Turin is his fantastic collection of vintage road and racing cars. He also enjoys contemporary art and the challenge it presents. Perhaps, like racing, it's the focus that one must bring to modern art to appreciate it that inspires Macaluso.

"Art today is not aesthetic. It is especially complex—very difficult to share and very intimidating. Everyone likes the art of the 16th century and I like it too. But I like contemporary art because it's very intellectual. I like to go a little bit further in my mind."

Going a bit further is something Macaluso continues to do with Girard-Perregaux and JeanRichard. He is the real life champion behind the brand and has a champion's outlook.

"It's good to be a champion but you don't need to be the quickest driver in the world. First you need to be a champion in life." ☺