



Cars of Robert Opron

Robert Opron was a designer with primarily an artistic background, though he had sound understanding of the principles of aerodynamics and featured them prominently in his work throughout his career. After cutting his teeth on the Simca concept car, known as the Fulgar in 1958, he was hand-picked by Flaminio Bertoni, to succeed him as the head of design at Citroen. His first job there was the redesign or phase two of the DS. Opron realized that car would benefit from improved aerodynamics so he enclosed and smoothed the headlamps. He also developed swiveling, directional headlights, along with a new shark like nose in 1967. Next Opron did the styling for Citroën's first midsize car, The GS met with instant market acceptance and was the largest selling Citroën model for many years. Next he created the SM in 1970, which is often referred to as his signature work, it was an ultra-luxury sports car featuring a Maserati V6 engine. In 1974, Opron created a new flagship model using some of the fundamental featured of both the DS and GS, but with a much more modern, sleek, aerodynamic body. The new car was designated the CX, and began a production run that would last an impressive seventeen years.

That same year, Citroen went bankrupt, and were taken over by Peugeot. Peugeot chose to dismiss Robert Opron, probably something they would go on to regret, as rival Renault quickly hired him. Opron's first job was a redesign, in this case the Alpine A310. He attempted to retain the classic features of the Alpine, while improving it general appearance. The public liked the new version, as annual sales nearly quadrupled over the original. The Renault Fuego was Opron's next car. It was specifically designed to not only to be aerodynamically efficient, but roomy and also stylish. Opron followed up the Fuego the following year with the Renault 9 and then in 1983 with a hatchback version called the Renault 11. The honors were many including: European Car of the Year in 1982, as well as Motor Trend and Car and Driver 10 Best for the U.S. versions known as the Alliance and Encore in 1983. Renault was desperate for a new flagship, and Opron delivered the Renault 25 which had an interesting mix of old and new, with a highly aerodynamic body with an unusual rear window, that gave the 25 a sedan-like appearance, though it met the need of hatchback buyers as well. The car was a success at home and in the rest of Europe.

Opron then joined Fiat's Design Studio. Where he was responsible for the initial design of a new prototype built in conjunction with Italian coachbuilder Zagato and Alfa Romeo. The SZ, was only offered in one color scheme: Red with grey roof, and only 1036 Alfa Romeo SZs were produced. He then returned to France where he operated his own design consultancy where he regularly consulted with various European manufacturers until his retirement. He is now nearly ninety years of age, and still lives in France. We are honored to show a sampling of his works in this unique display.