Volume 31 (1926), Issue 3

the BUGATTI revue

# The 1/43 Bugatti Course 35C miniature by RAMI J.M.K.

**By Bart Oosterling**

***Probably* the first "mass produced" diecast Bugatti scale model.**
**Its co-creator, Henri Malartre. And the original car it was modelled from.**




**Henri Malartre ca. 1989 and a model from the final production period and regular cardboard box, with an illustration of a 1895 Panhard & Levassor (author).**

## Introduction

As early as 1958 Henri Malartre, with the participation of two partners, Leon Jarry and Emile Koch founded a company manufacturing 1/43 scale model cars. RAMI was the brand name, short for Rétrospectives Automobiles MIniatures (Retrospective Automobile MIniatures); J.M.K. were the first letters of the 3 men's surnames and the manufacturer of the models.
The RAMI models produced were primarily of veteran and vintage cars, predominantly French and from Henri Malartre's own collection and museum in Rochetaillée-sur-Saône. Nearly 40 different models of pre-war cars were produced in metal and plastic, intended for collecting rather than as toys.

## Henri Malartre, member of the French resistance, automotive museum pioneer and Bugattist



Henri Victor Louis Malartre was born December 19, 1905 in Saint-Joseph (Loire) as the son of Victor Malartre, an automobile enthusiast who ran a local boiler-making and steel frame business. Henri began his professional career in 1928 as a seller of reclaimed and reconditioned spare parts salvaged from cars delivered to the scrapyard at the Rue Grillet in the 7th arrondissement of Lyon. The business was successful and gradually expanded to a new building on 136, Avenue Berthelot. His car collection started in 1931, when Malartre decided to preserve and restore an 1898 Rochet-Schneider Type M170, originally destined to be scrapped for metal. He was married with madame Josserand (later divorced) and had 1 daughter, Régina. He later married Renée Gilles, who had been his secretary, typist, and accountant since 1936. Slowly his collection of veteran cars grew to 17 cars, which were hidden partially dismantled and disguised as scrap, in rural Saint-Barthélemy-de-Beaurepaire from the Germans invaders at the beginning of WW2. In 1939 Malartre fought in the Battle for France. Following the French defeat and the subsequent armistice in June 1940, Malartre returned to civilian life in Lyon. From 1942 Malartre was part of the Médéric network in the French resistance, active in transporting members, weapons and

printed papers of the Mouvements unis de la Résistance (United Resistance Movements) under the command of Auguste “Alban” Vistel. But Malartre was arrested by the Gestapo on March 14, 1944, interrogated and tortured at the local medical school and imprisoned in Fort Montluc (cell 123) and then transferred mid-April via Compiègne and deported to Buchenwald where he arrived on May 14, 1944, as prisoner 51729. Registered as a mechanic, he was assigned to work in several camps, among them the infamous camp Mittelbau-Dora where he was registered on October 29, 1944. In the camps he kept his focus on his cars and ambitions for a future museum, which helped him survive mentally. Malartre managed to escape early April 1945 during the evacuation of prisoners when the Germans retreated on the advance of the liberation. But he had suffered badly in the camp.
Malartre’s business at Avenue Berthelot was destroyed by the Allied bombing of May 26, 1944, but he restored and expanded it and resumed his work in salvaging parts. His hidden collection of cars had survived and he passionately continued collecting and restoring his expanding collection of veteran and vintage cars, motorcycles, bicycles and other related items. From 1952 Nazare Toti was his talented and loyal mechanic and friend for over 40 years. The cars in his collection were regularly exhibited in the following years. In 1956, Malartre founded the club des Amateurs d'Automobiles Anciennes (AAA) (Association of Classic Car Enthusiasts) together with his brother Jean Malartre, Paul Melot, his childhood friend Philippe Ville and historian Lucien Loreille. The association was a pioneer in the preservation of vintage cars in France and organized outings, exhibitions, and rallies such as the "Belle Époque" rally, which was established in Lyon in 1958. In his new premises Malartre displayed some sixty vintage cars from his collection, in the atmosphere of the Paris Motor Show in 1905. The new mayor of Lyon, Louis Pradel, was enthusiastic and asked him to extend the exhibition for the duration of the Lyon Fair. In November 1959, Malartre bought the Chateau de Rochetaillée-sur-Saone and its 3.5-hectare park to house his collection in the necessary setting. The museum was inaugurated on May 31, 1960, and claimed to be the first official automobile museum in France. Gradually the Museum specialised in car makes from the Lyon region. In the Museum a separate room is used to display the RAMI J.M.K. models and their story. Many veteran and vintage cars went through Malartre’s hands and were also passed on to other museums, like the Mahy museum in Belgium.

In 1972, wishing to perpetuate his collection and the museum, and influenced by the declining health of his wife Renée, the museum became the property of the city of Lyon, and Henri Malartre retired but continued to reside for several years at the castle, near his beloved cars. In 1989 Malartre wrote a retrospective book “Henri Malartre, coup dóeil dans mon retroviseur” (a quick glance in my rearview mirror).




**A sticker of the car parts/ salvage business, when employee/partner Raymond Toti (son of Nazare) ran the business.**

After the heyday in the 1960s and 70s, the museum's visitor numbers gradually declined. From 160,000 visitors in 1978 and 115,000 in 1987, the number dropped to below 40,000 in 2006 and continues to struggle to win back visitors. Several times it was discussed in the politics if the city of Lyon should continue to support the museum or sell it off.

Henri Malartre died on November 13, 2005 in Lyon, He was almost a century old. He is buried in the Guillotière Nouveau Cemetery in Lyon. For his resistance efforts he was awarded the French Resistance Medal with rosette. He was appointed Knight (1952), promoted to Officer (1967) and Commander of the Legion of Honour (decree of December 4, 2000). His wife Renée died May 15, 2024.
His unique museum and his legacy survive to this day.




**A relief in the museum in memory of its founder, Henri Malartre.**

## Henri Malartre's 35C and other Bugattis

On February 28, 1958 Malartre bought a Bugatti type 35, chassis 4944. When new this car was raced for the Bugatti factory piloted by the famous René Dreyfus. During Malartre's ownership it featured a characteristic side exhaust instead of the regular location on the underside of the car. In this form it was used as a base for the RAMI scale model. Also the red seat colour would also be replicated in the model. After Malartre's ownership the car was owned by André Binda who sold it to Adrien Maeght. The car was stolen in 1983 from storage in Nice awaiting transport to the Adrien Maeght 's new Musée de l'automobile at Mougins, and never recovered - bar the engine. It is said it was probably cut up and dispersed in parts.
In his lifetime Malartre also owned several other Bugatti's: chassis 674 (Type 22), 1720 (Type 23), 2146 (Type 23), 4442 (Type 30), 4882 (Type 35), 38347 (Type 38), 40300, 40533, 40633 and 40653 (Type 40's), 44530 (Type 44), 49158 and 49330 (Type 49's), 57213, 57366 and 57597 (Type 57's).

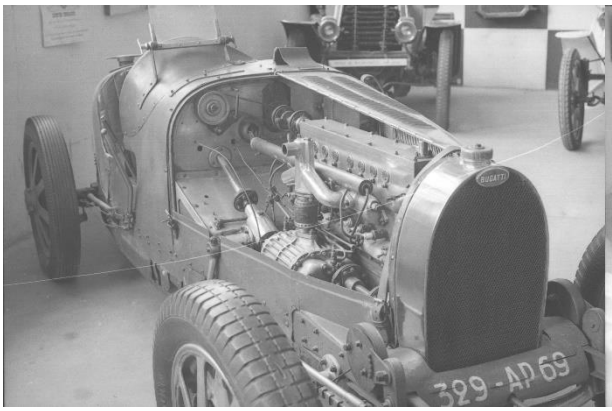
At some point 37342 (Type 37) and 49244 (Type 49) were exhibited in the Museum.
49505 (A Gangloff Type 49) is or was recently the only Bugatti in the museum.

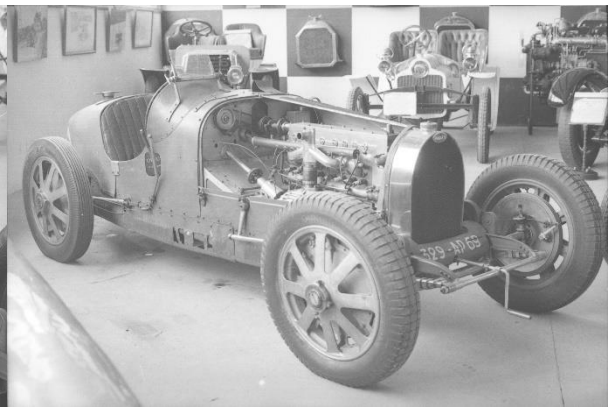


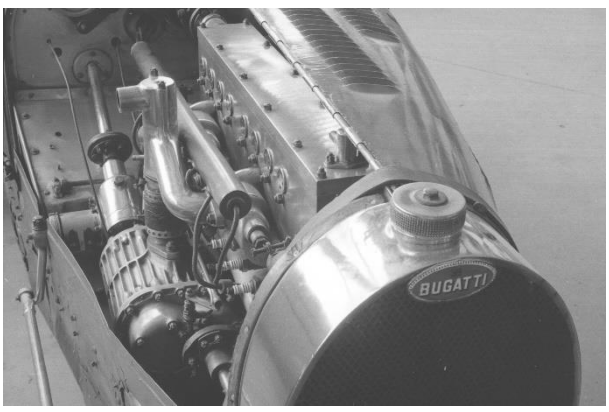




**(Left) A photo of the real car (4944) which was used as template for the RAMI model, on the grounds of the museum. (Right) A photo of (strangely) another Bugatti (37342) outside the museum: this photo was later used in the RAMI JMK catalogues of 1966 and 1969. And on a postcard sold in the museum.**




**3 photos of the real car inside the museum, ca. 1970. (creative commons: https://numelyo.bm-lyon.fr/)**

## The RAMI factory

RAMI J.M.K. hired Monsieur Rivoire, a craftsman from Villeurbanne near Lyon, to make scale prototypes in wood. From those the diecast moulds were made by Société Oyonnax at Oyonnax. Production of the various metal parts was by S.I.M.E.B. (Société d' Injection de MEtaux Blancs) in Fougerolles (Haute-Saone). Painting of the different parts of the models was done at the J.M.K. factory, first in 5 rue Antoine Boisson and Rue du Stade in Lure, and later at 1 rue Pasteur in St.-Claude. Assembly was farmed out to families in the region as work from home. Packaging, and possibly some quality control, was done at the J.M.K. factory.
The RAMI brand ended in 1969 following the death of Mr. Koch in 1962 and Mr. Jarry's retirement in 1965. Other French model (toy) car makes like Solido and Norev had taken over. The Eligor brand had yet to be founded.

## The RAMI J.M.K. Bugatti Course type 35C model

Released in June 1959, the Bugatti model by RAMI was the 6th model released in their range of models, thus predating the popular Matchbox Yesteryear Bugatti 35 model by 2-3 years. It was the only Bugatti model made by RAMI and the 3rd "youngest" model in the RAMI range.
It consist of 17 parts: 4 wheels and 2 axles, a black baseplate, 2 front springs and a crossmember, the body, front windscreen and 3 or 4 spoked steering wheel, the seat, a brake/gearlever and the exhaust. The wheels, tyres, steering wheel and windscreen are plastic*. The steering tube is invisible when assembled. The model is held together by 3 rivets through the baseplate. The baseplate reads "BUGATTI course Type 35 C" and "RAMI MADE IN FRANCE" and has 2 rivets for the body and one for the seat.
During the models' production there were basically 3 evolutions. The earliest models have the whole radiator painted silver, as per the real car. This is also the main difference in the variations during production. Aside the radiator the rear view mirror and fuel cap are also painted silver. The blue colour of the body of the car only has slight variations, as has the red seat. The early models have a slightly yellowish blue body and brownish seat. Exhaust and front springs are in metal, the exhaust chromed like the wheels. The springs and lever besides the cockpit are not plated. A dot of red paint marks the location of the Bugatti badge on the radiator. The 3 spoked steering wheel is very dark grey.



**An early production model with the radiator painted as it should.**

In later production, only the front plane of the radiator was painted. Also the blue is a brighter, purer blue and the seat more red. The 3 spoked steering wheel is changed to light grey.
(*) In the final phase of production, the metal front springs were replaced with chromed plastic front springs resulting in better chrome, also on the wheels. The now 4 spoked steering wheel is bronze/brown, on a slightly longer hub.

## Quality and accuracy of the model

The accuracy of the model is okay. The front of radiator has the correct horseshoe shape. There are louvres, but no studs for the body that the smaller Matchbox Yesteryear Bugatti model did have. The cockpit side cut-outs are almost circular. A plinth for the rear view mirror is present and the fuel cap

is in the right location. The supercharger hole is not present and there are no bonnet straps, no drop link and steering arm. Only one (gear/brake) lever is present, mounted through the designated hole in the body: the lowest part of the lever is cast in the body and also repeated in the same position on the left side of the model. The plain dashboard has no detail. There is no separate cowl. Two blue window pillars hold a tiny transparent plastic window. There are no decals.
During production, the casting seams between the top and side of the body had to be sanded or ground down: the quality of this work varied from almost invisible lines to almost or not finished at all. The latter strongly reducing the accuracy of the models' presentation, making the body look square where it should be smooth and the horseshoe radiator deformed. It seems mainly later production models were affected. Maybe it was enhanced by progressive wear of the casting moulds.



**A later production model with badly finished casting mould seams which spoil the appearance and accuracy of the model. The "wave" behind the rear wheels is a normal feature of the model but it is unclear why it is there.**

## The boxes

Models were available in a cardboard box (page 1) , adapted to the required size for the model within: The boxes featured one standard design for all models and a print on the sides which model the box contained. There were also "deluxe" plastic display cases with an inserted cardboard with printed background décor.




**(Left) "deluxe" plastic display case with background décor: (Right) Promotional version for Mobil petrol. Note better chrome.**
**Both with casting lines between the top and side of the body not ground down properly, creating a shadow effect.**

## Rarity and pricing

All variants are relatively easy to find and demand about €10-50 depending on condition, and if a decent box or display case is with the model.

## The RAMI catalogues

Catalogues in were issued in French (some editions combined with basic info in German and Spanish), German, Italian and Japanese.




The cover and the model in a page of the 1960-64 French catalogue.







Curiously in the German catalogues the Bugatti is nr. 8, not the usual nr. 6.

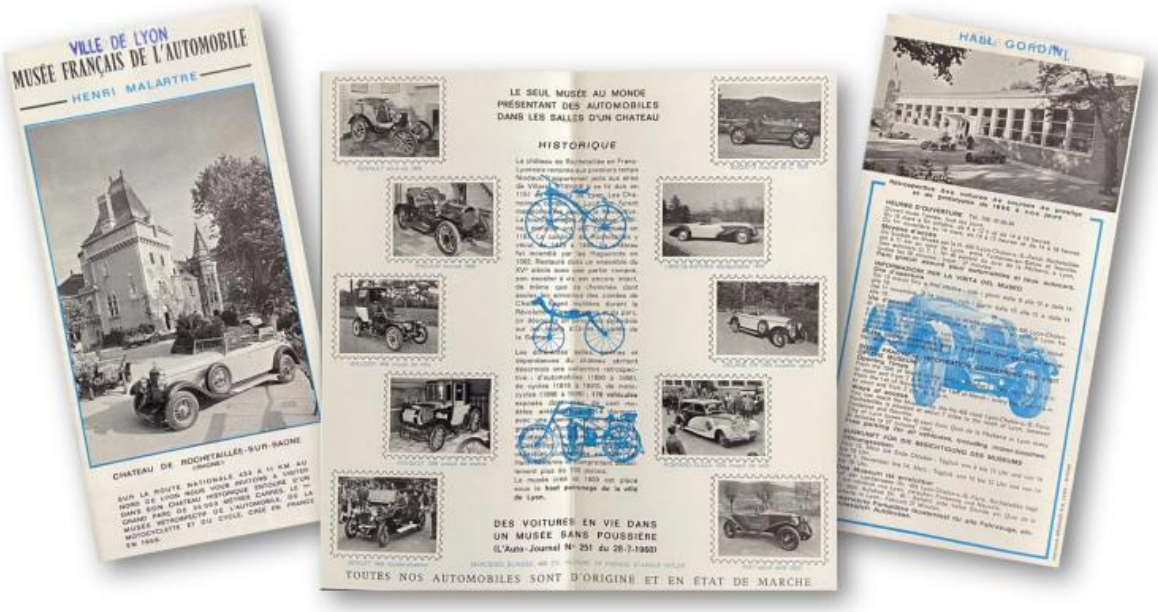



From the Italian catalogue (1964; also model number 8).



From the Japanese catalogue (1966; without model number)

## The museum leaflet




**A post 1972 leaflet of the museum, the Bugatti in the upper right corner of the middle image.**

## Souvenirs from the museum

Aside from the models, several souvenirs depicting the cars and models were available from the museum shop. There were postcards, memorycard games pins, key chains, stickers. In 1961 Malartre was also involved in the design of a series of post stamps featuring 14 veteran cars, issued in Monaco.




**(Left) A metal drinks coaster souvenir depicting the real car, sold by the Malartre museum: with wrong information (1927, 4 instead of 8 cylinders, 1500cc)**
**(Right) Another (porcelain/plastic?) drinks coaster souvenir depicting the RAMI model sold by the Malartre museum (dated 1928)**

A photo of the real car in the museum (on page 3 below) was also issued in series of photos called “classic cars through the years” printed on a metal plate (by Ifamétal-Paris), as a promotional / collector item, which you received as a gift/which you could save for at Coop grocery stores in France, and Sterovita Dairy products in the Netherlands. And possibly others. Again with the wrong information of the type 37 on the reverse side. The plate had tabs which should be folded to make the photo stand up like a frame.




**Front (left) Reverse sides of the promotional metal collector’s photo**

**Further information / Sources:**

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Coup dóeil dans mon retroviseur, Henri Malartre, Lips, 1989
Memoirs of a Bugatti Hunter, Antoine Rafaëlli, Maeght Éditeur, 1997. (p. 203)
La Conquête automobile Regard sur le Musée Henri Malartre, Rodolphe Perrin & Nigel Heed, 2000
RAMI les autos miniatures made in Lure Histoire et monographie, Jean-Marc Barthélémy
”L’encyclopédie” autos miniatures RAMI, Jean-Marc Barthélémy

**Modifications**

Some collectors like to modify the original models. On this page a collage is made of modified models found on the WWW. There is also an instruction how to modify the model into a slot racing car availible.



**Thank you for contributing:**

Jeroen Vossen

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