The first Suzuki car – the Suzulight… ‘Let’s do it!’

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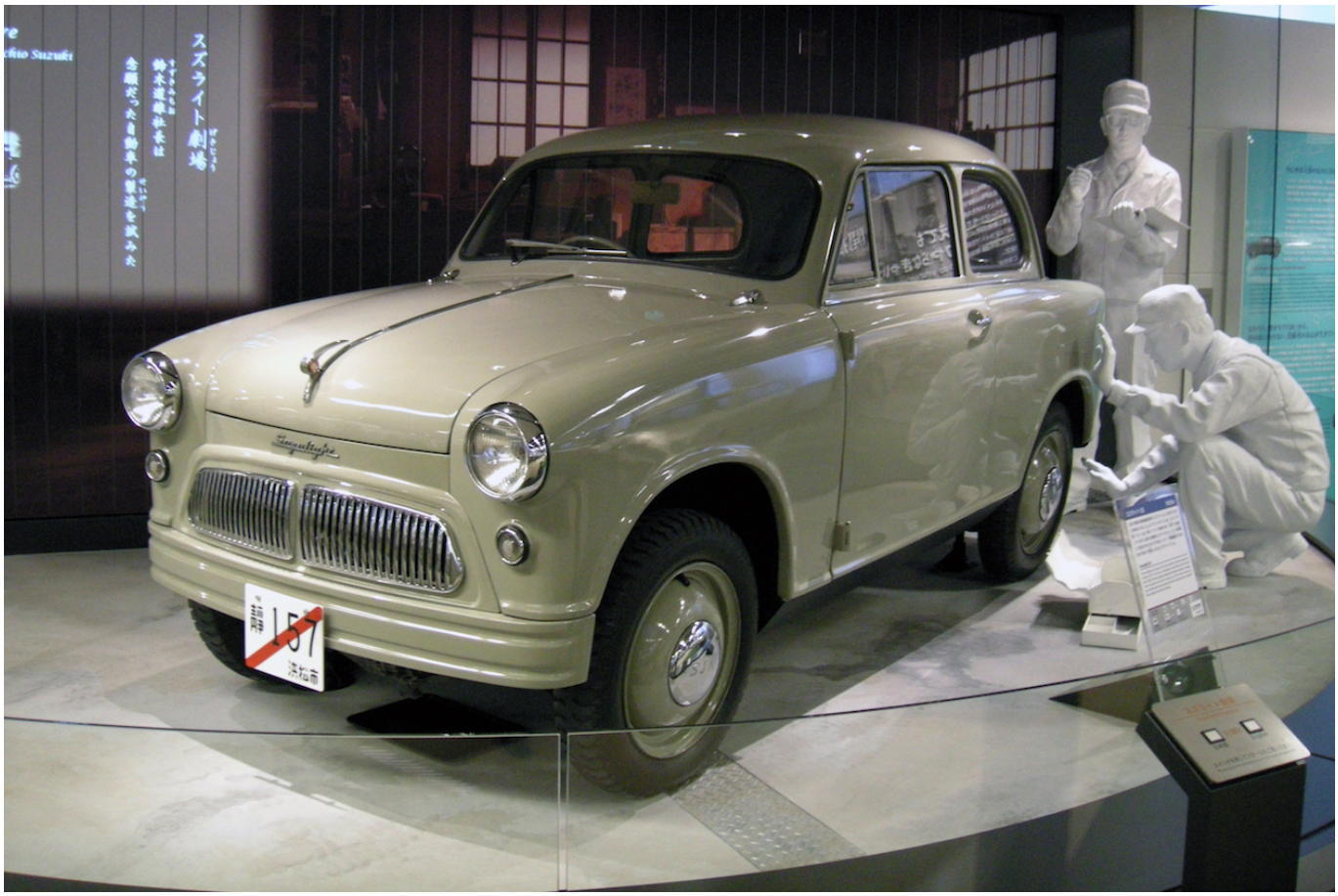

Suzulight – Suzuki’s first car from 1954.

Suzuki’s successful history with compact models continues… and it all began over six decades ago…

Looking back and forging ahead!

Back in 1954, Suzuki Motor Co, Limited was formed and Michio Suzuki designed and

developed his first automobile, together with his young engineering team, many of whom were in their twenties.

Using Suzuki's 'Yaramaika' principal (translated as 'Let's do it') – which was deeply rooted in the Enshu region where Suzuki originated – together with his determination to drive forward, Michio quickly began researching vehicles produced overseas, gaining a wealth of knowledge to build the first Suzuki car, known as the Suzulight.

Suzuki used several European models for benchmarking as well as an Austin 7 from the UK, a popular car of the era and available at a very reasonable cost. The Suzulight was a compact and light vehicle weighing less than 500 kg (approx. 1,100 lb), and was powered by a 360cc, 15 PS two cylinder, two-stroke engine. It was way ahead of its time with independent coil spring suspension and rack and pinion steering.

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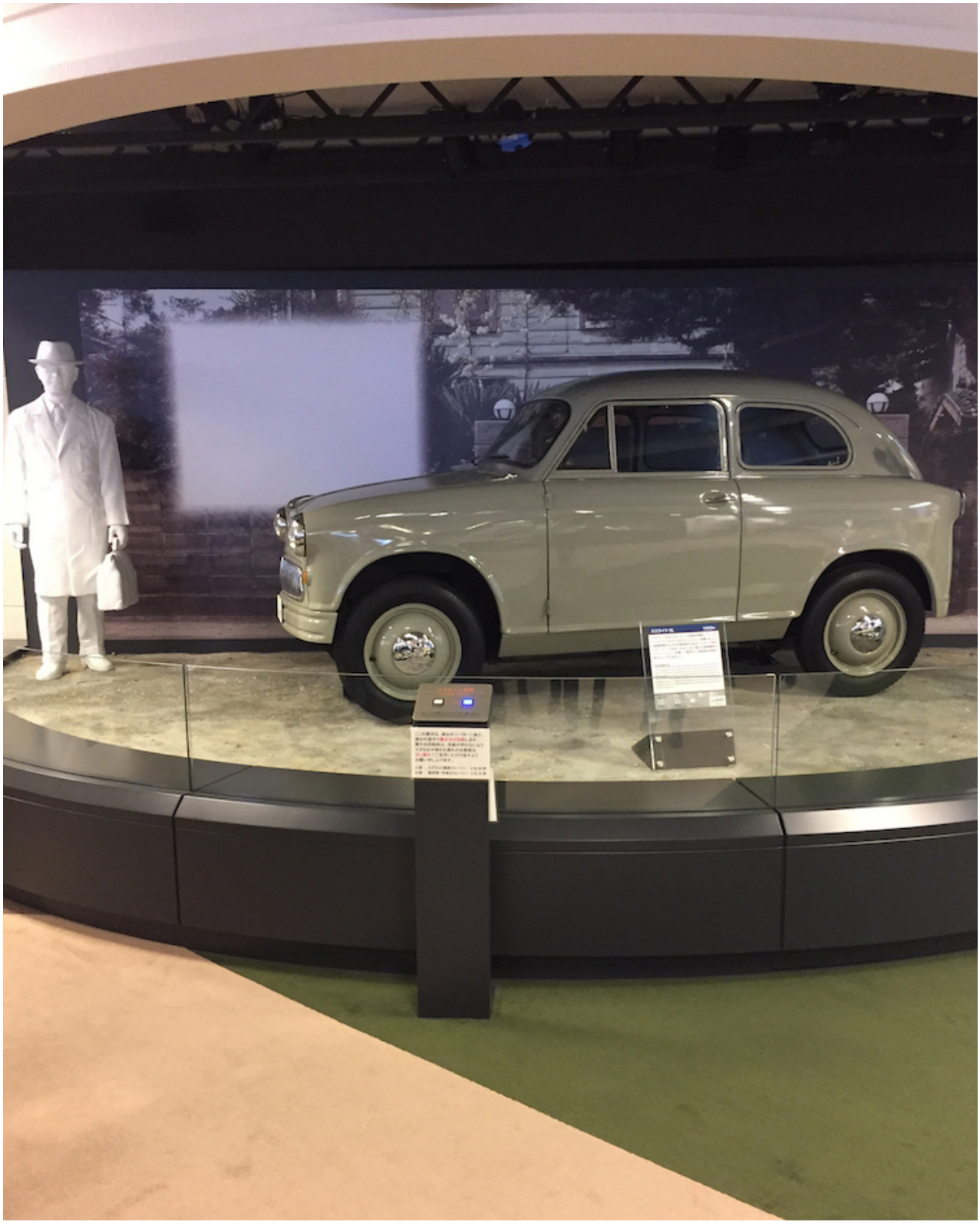
Suzulight easily met the Japanese ‘Keijidosha’ or Kei light car legislation and Michio Suzuki and his team quickly began their first development road testing of it.

As a prototype car, its most memorable early drive was a long trip across the Hakone mountainous region between Hamamatsu and Tokyo, which proved to be a real challenge as the 300 km (about 200 mile) road was not paved at the time. Although arriving in Tokyo very late in the evening, the team arrived to present the car to the President of ‘Yanase Auto’, Japan’s leading authority on automobiles. The President stayed on late to personally greet the team and made his way out to thoroughly test the car.

He returned very impressed some time later and immediately gave Michio and his team full approval to put the car into production. This commenced in October 1955 and Shunzo made his first two deliveries to doctors who used the small and lightweight car on their daily rounds. Initial production was 3-4 cars per month but by early 1956 monthly volume had climbed to 30 units.

It’s rumoured that only one or two of the original Suzulight cars exist now, one of which is in the Suzuki Plaza Museum in Hamamatsu City, Japan.



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Some 64 years later, Suzuki remains globally renowned as the ‘small car experts’ and produces over three million cars per year. Michio Suzuki’s original strategy of the design and production of lightweight vehicles lives on with the latest platforms introduced for Ignis, Swift and Baleno. The next light new model to arrive from Suzuki will be the Swift Sport in June 2018, weighing in at just 970 kg (2,138 lb).

Kim says…

Watch this space… In due course on Wheels-alive we shall be bringing you first driving impressions of the new Swift Sport, and it is hoped that shortly after that we will follow-up with a full road test of the newcomer. This new Suzuki is eagerly-awaited and, based on our experiences with the ‘normal’ Swift models introduced last spring, promises to be fun to drive.