The history of Laurin & Klement (Skoda since 1925), recorded for posterity by an enthusiast in Bulgaria

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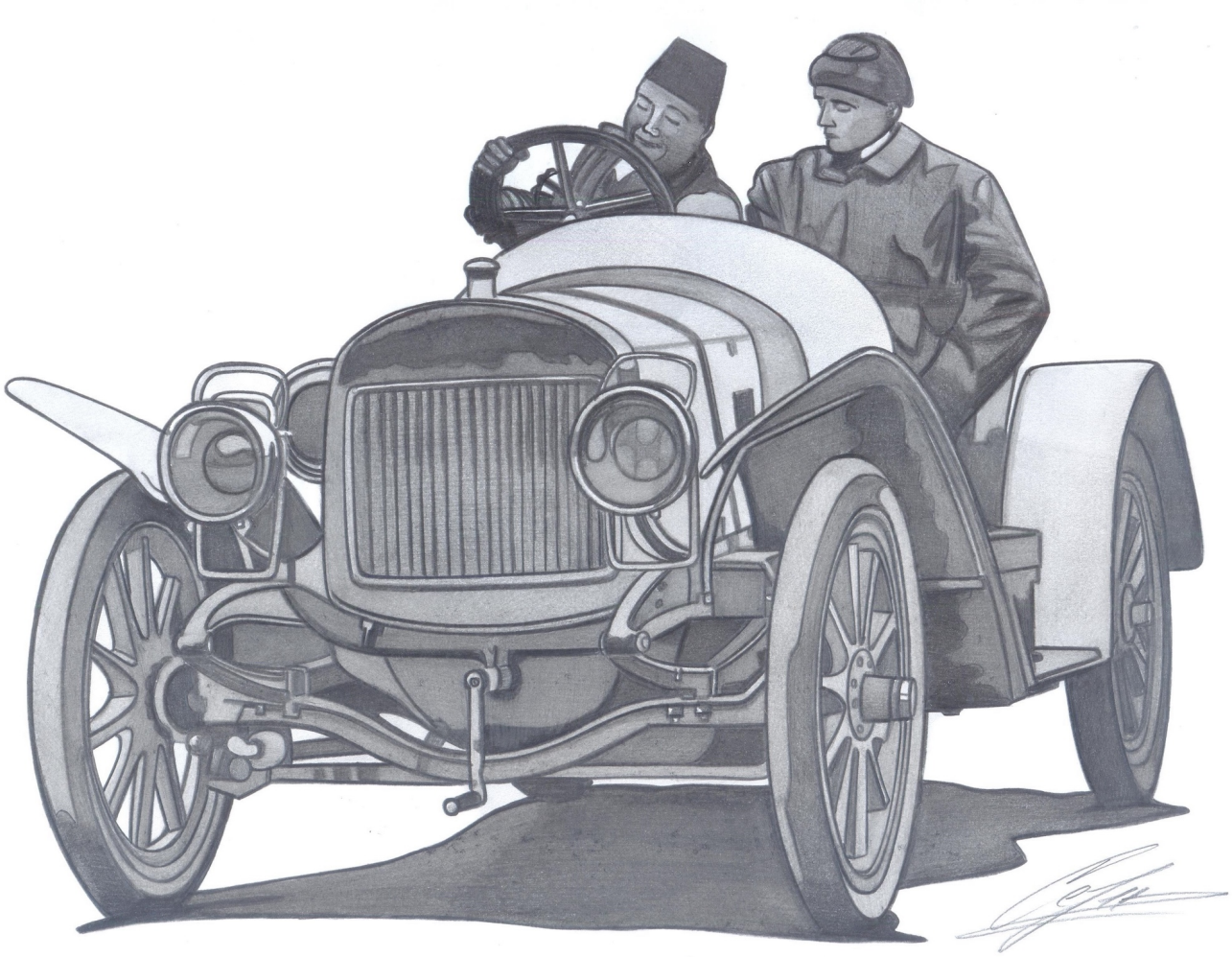


Laurin & Klement type FC at the start of the Bosnian Rally 1908.

Wheels-alive reports on a remarkable story of an automotive passion, determination and artistic skill… Kim writes, “Over to Stefan Ivanov, who contacted us with his fascinating true tale”…

(All words and images © Stefan Ivanov).
Kim adds: The images included within Stefan’s text represent a selection of Stefan’s drawings, chosen by him and shown here in chronological order for the models depicted.

My name is Stefan Ivanov. Born in January 1987, I am from the small and quiet town called Dryanovo in the centre of Bulgaria.



For 20 years I have been doing something never done before; I am creating the whole history of Laurin & Klement (Skoda since 1925) auto company by illustrating it.

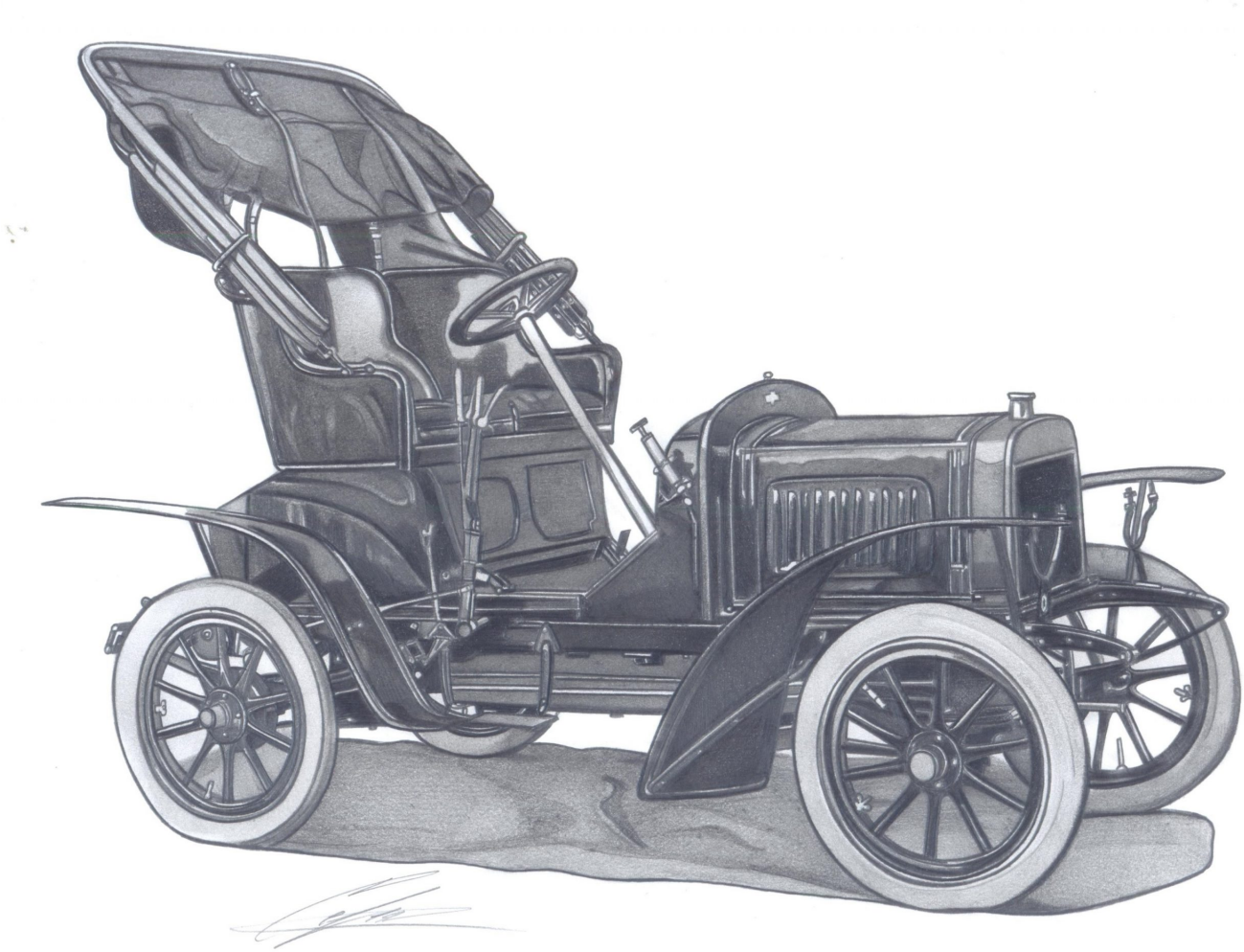
The personal story behind this is as unusual as my hobby…

In November 2005 I crashed with motorcycle. I spent two weeks in a coma with two skull fractures, back and neck injuries, partial loss of memory and many more secondary injuries.

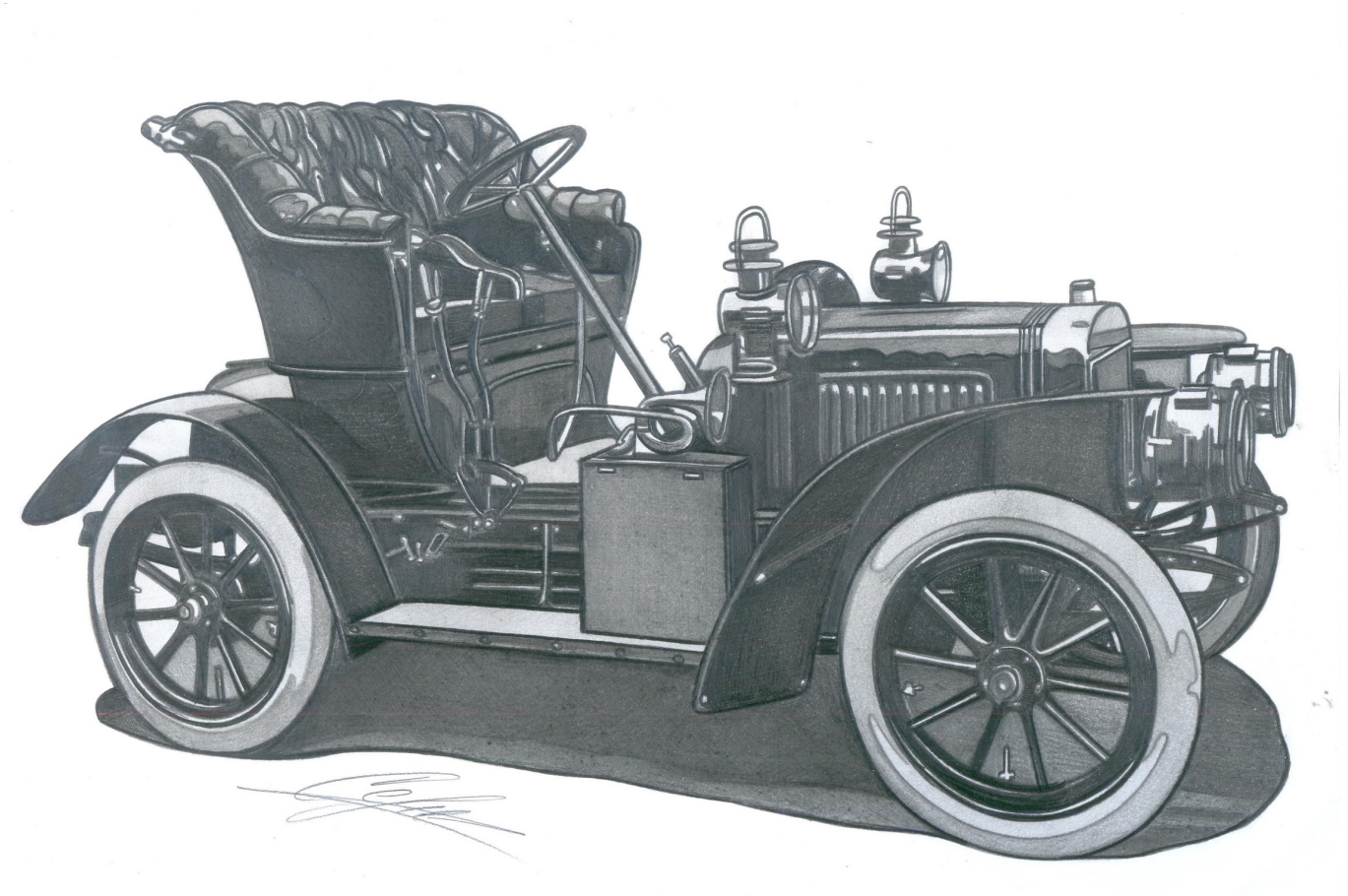
After that I spent most of my time in bed in my home, thinking about life and how in a moment everything goes upside down. Before the crash I was two times national champion in athletics, and athlete of the year for 2001 in my town, so I never quit, always fighting my way out.

Six months after the crash I started drawing to improve my brain and motor functions. Since the summer of 2006 I have never stopped drawing.

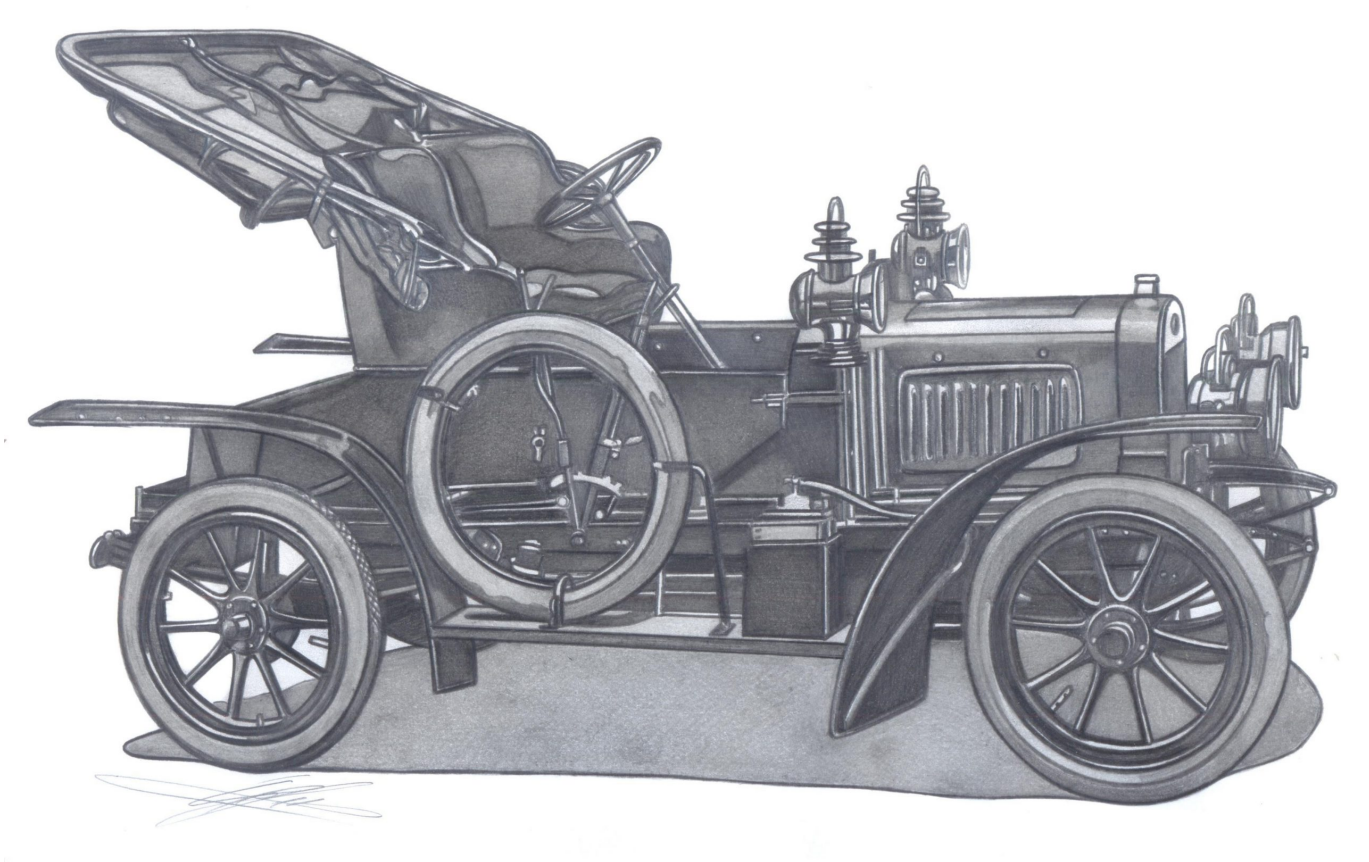
Along with the drawing I started researching Laurin & Klement history and became something of an amateur expert of the Czechoslovakian auto industry. L & K have a very interesting story, which shaped the face of European auto industry. I was fascinated by it.



Laurin & Klement Voiturette type A 1905.

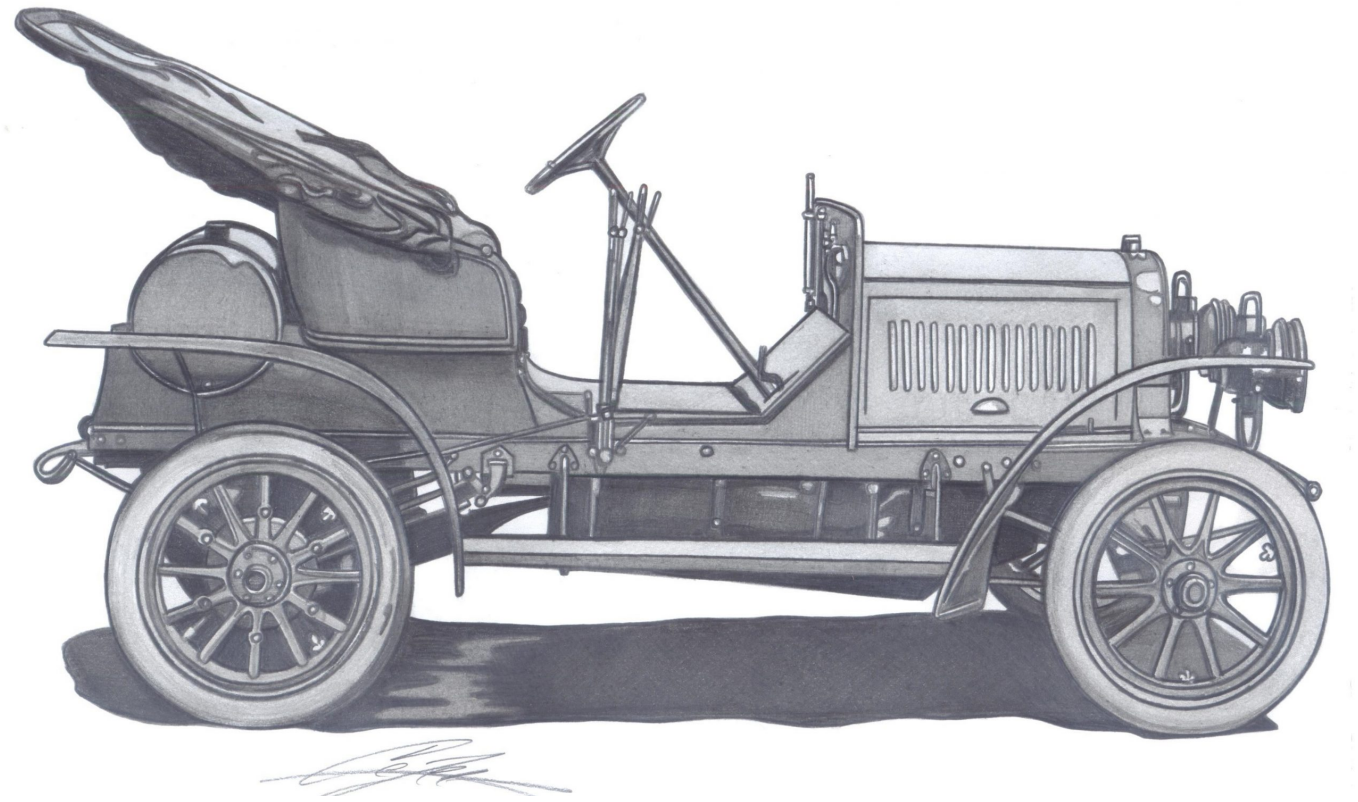


Laurin & Klement type B 1906-1909.

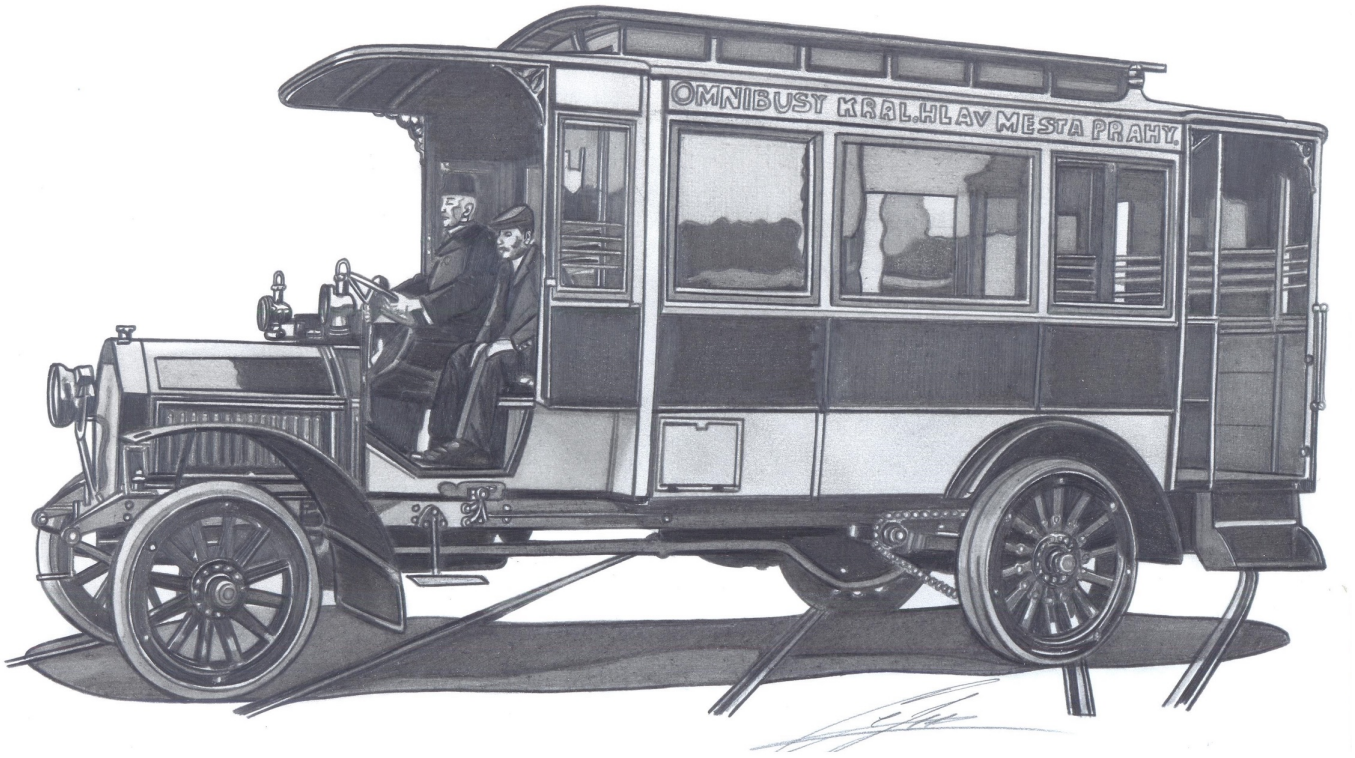


Laurin & Klement BS 1907-1908.

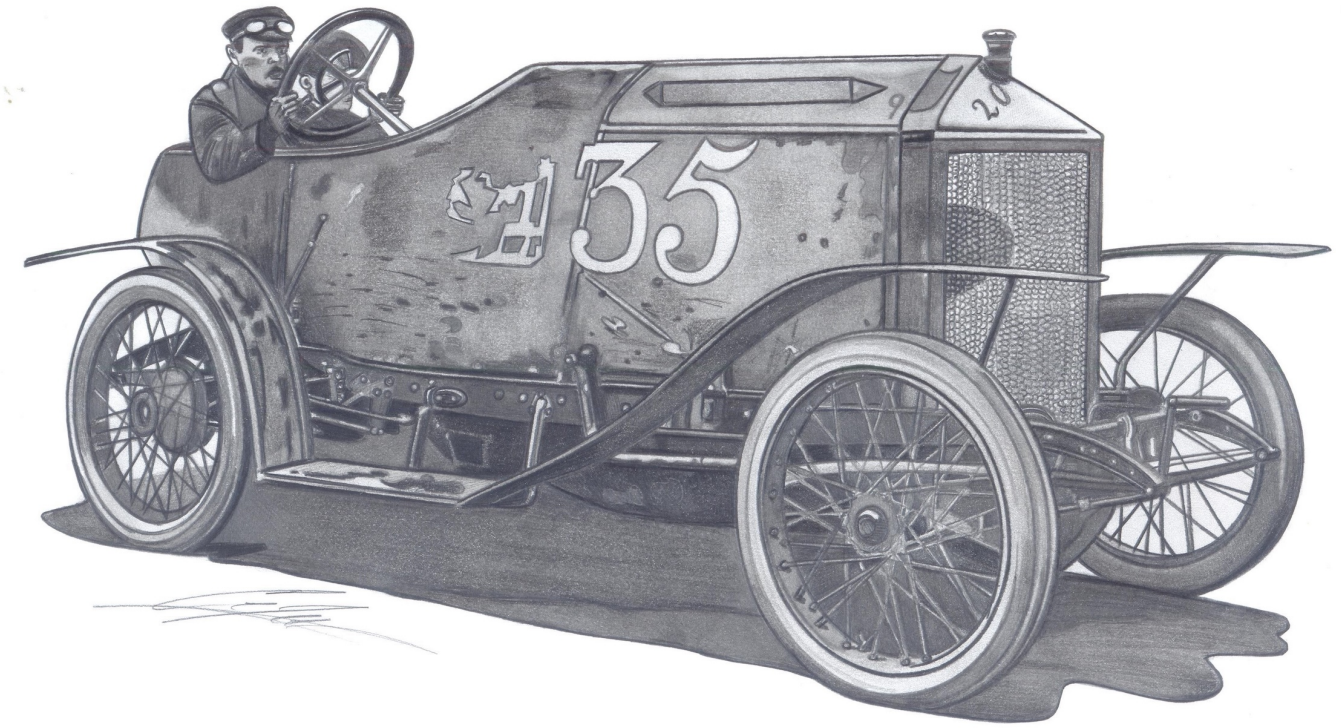
Unfortunately this brand is well forgotten so I dedicated many years to my cause so that people could see and hear about one of the pioneers of the automobile industry, and about countless race winnings.They were racing in the Austro-Hungarian empire, Germany, France, Italy and Russia.



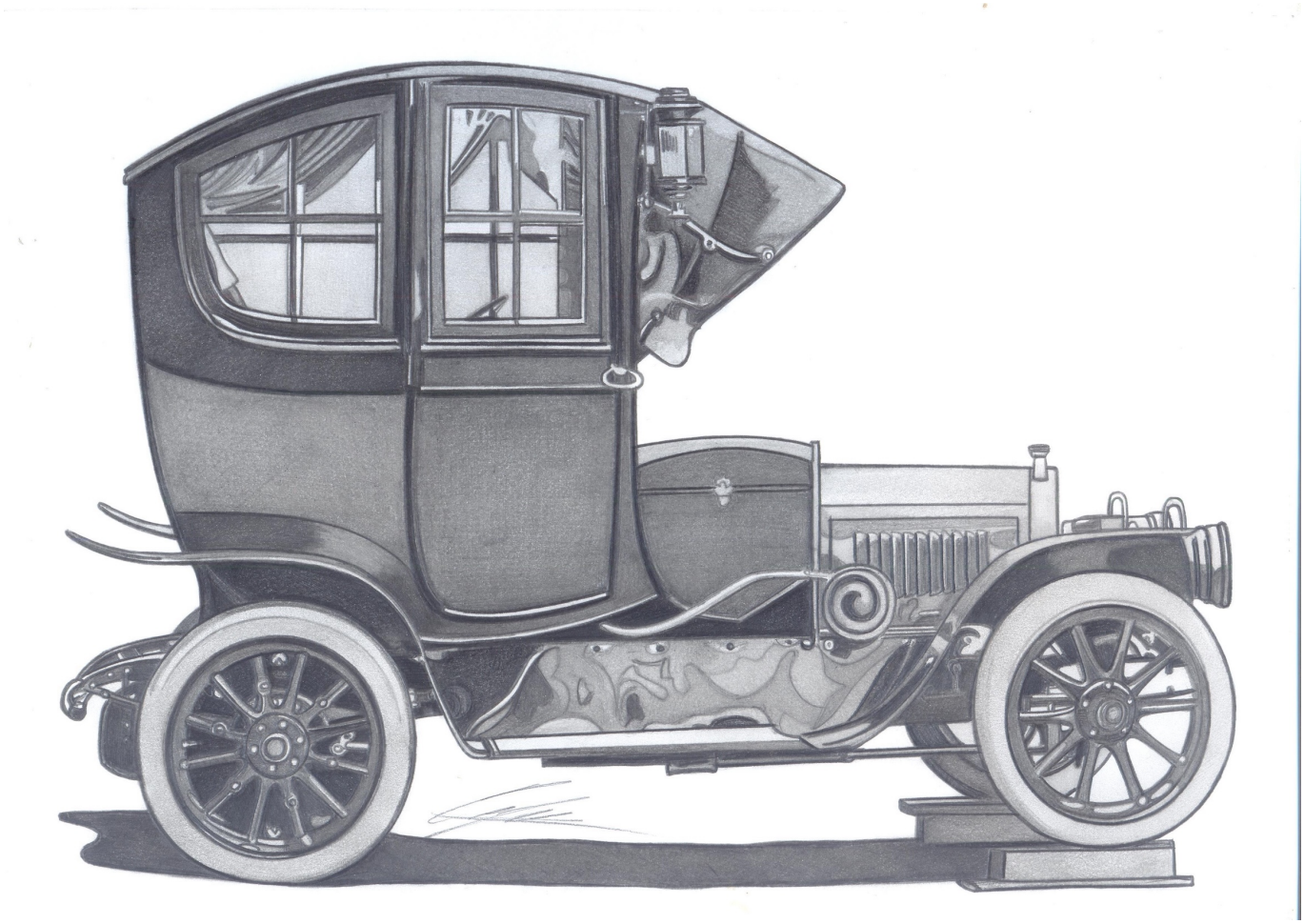
BSC Sport Car 1908.



HOP 1908.



FCR 1909.

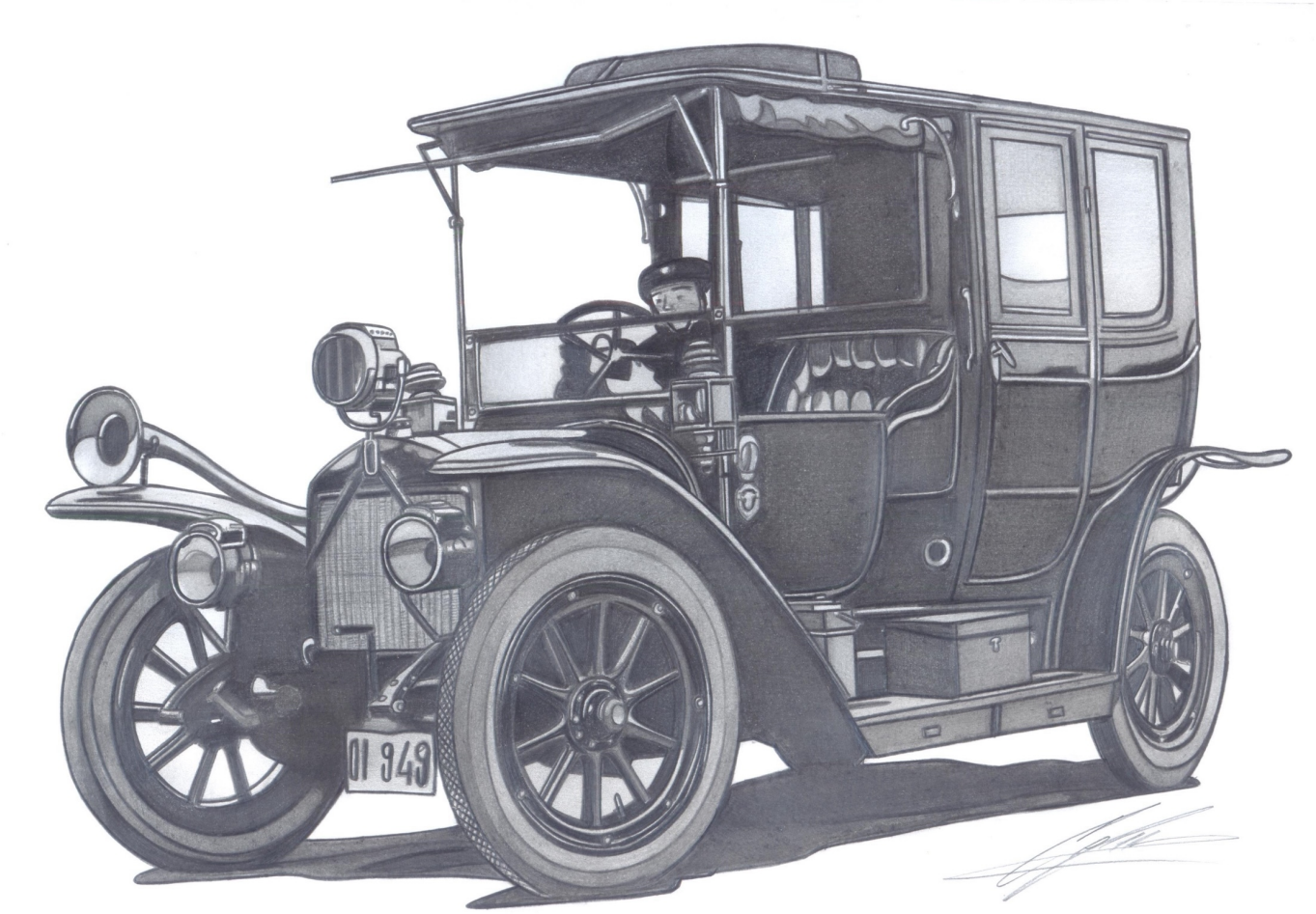


Laurin & Klement type G2 1909.

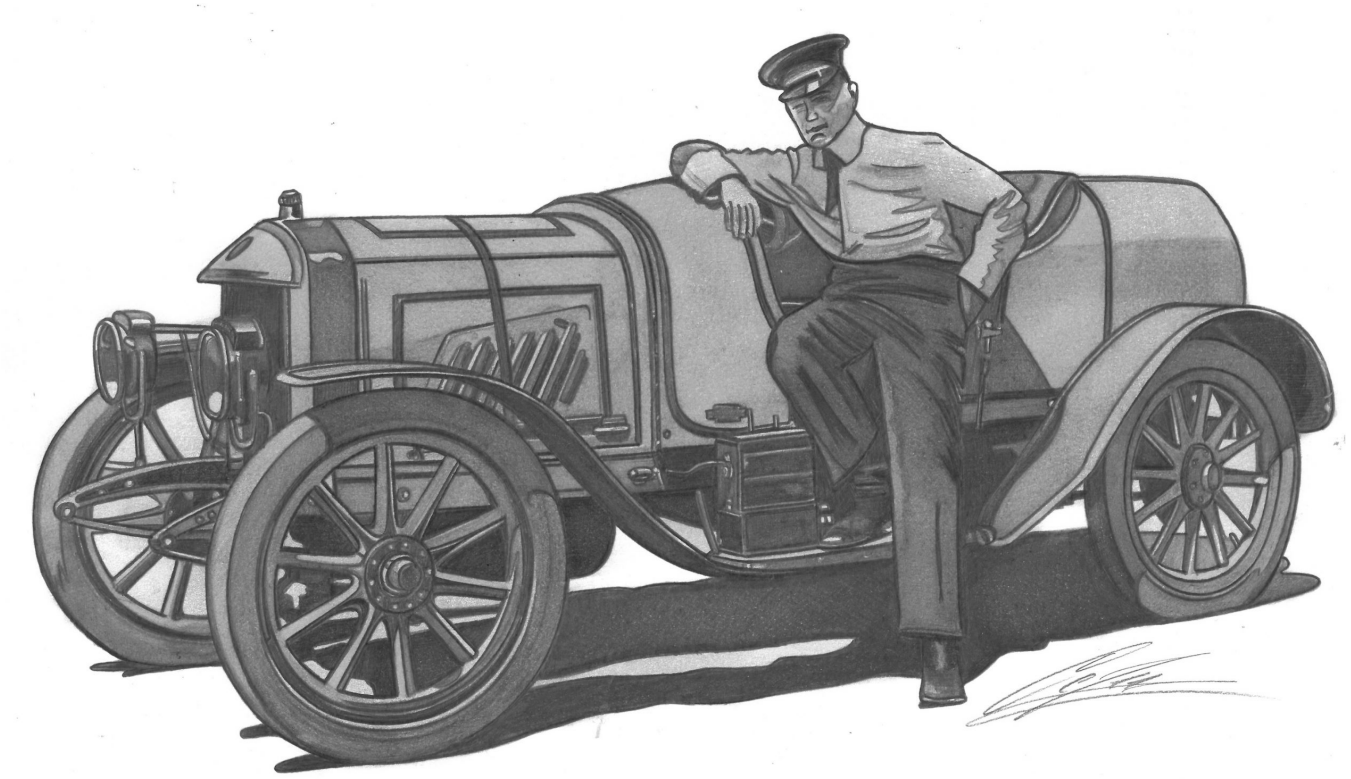
Notable milestones in the firm's story include production of the first in-line eight cylinder car in central Europe, their first hybrid in 1908, military vehicles, and they were the first company to export cars to the empire of Japan (and the mayor of Tokyo had one).

Further significant aspects of the firm included the fact that one third of their production was exported for Russia before the First World War, and they broke the speed record in their class on the Brooklands race track in England.

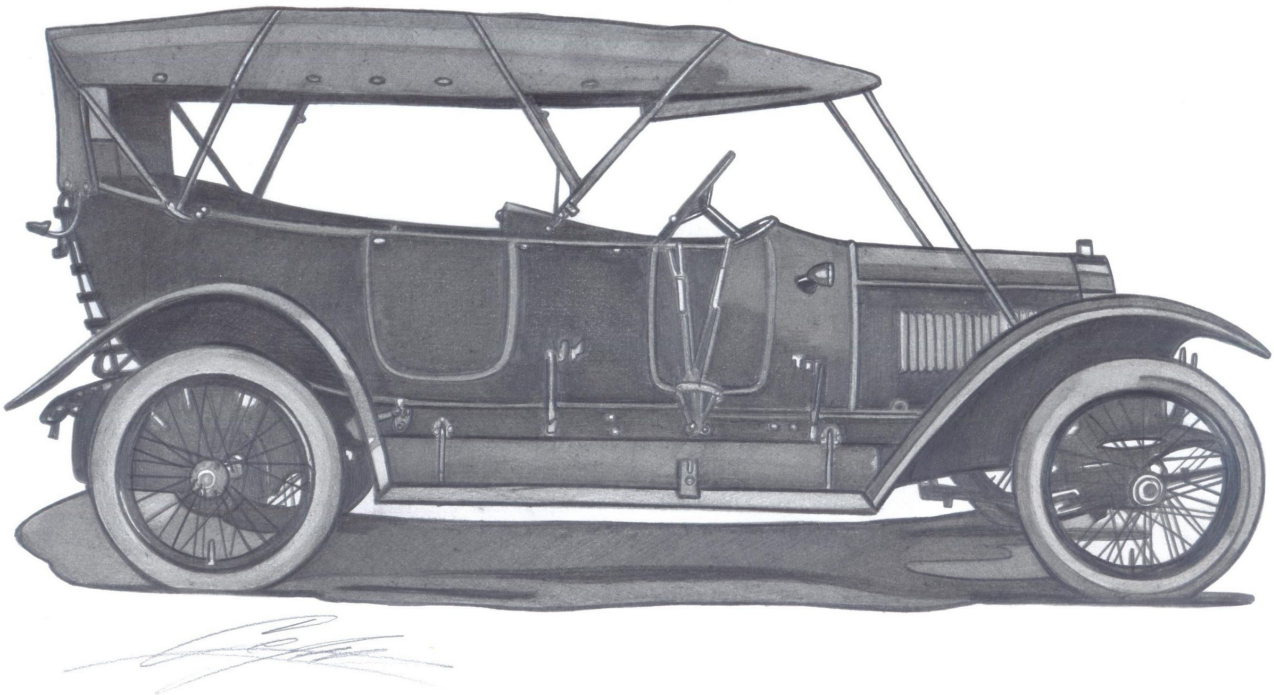
L & K also produced trucks, delivery cars, vans, autobuses, fire trucks, ambulances and aircraft engines.



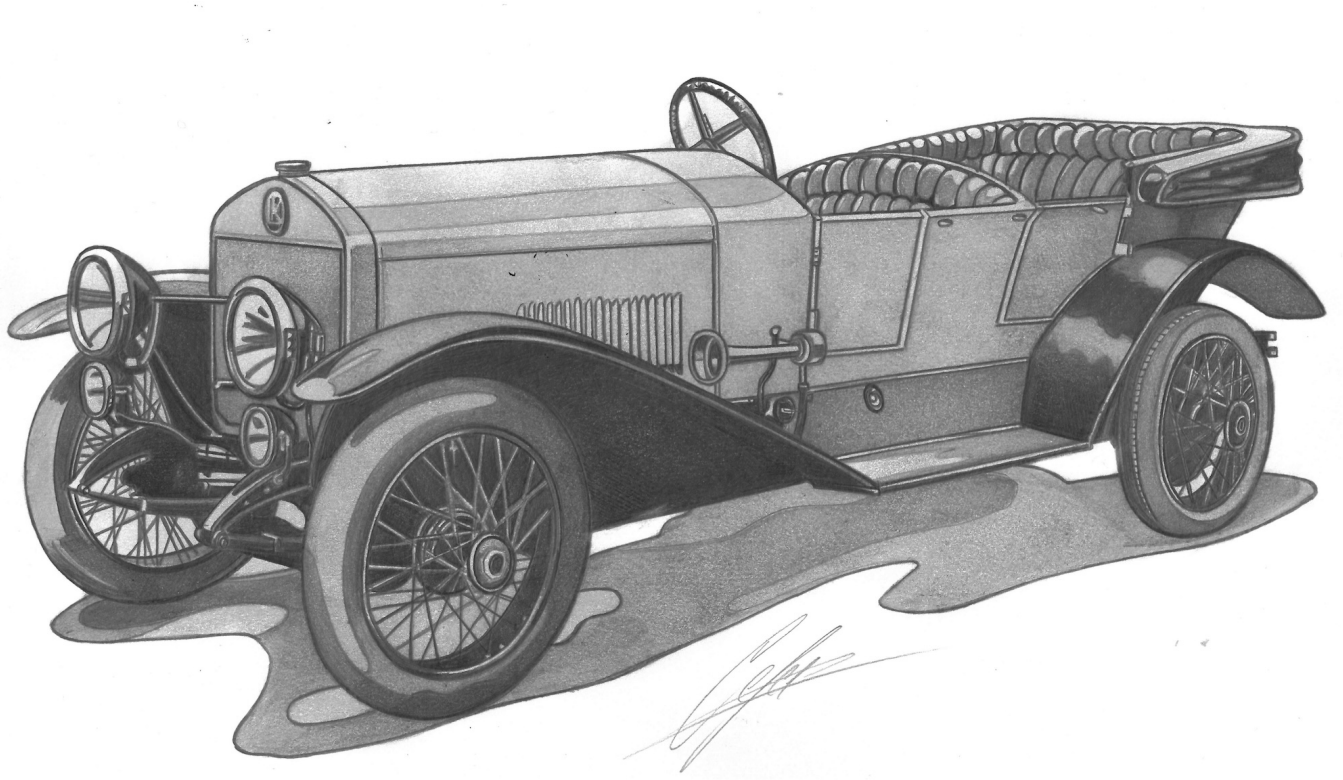
Laurin & Klement type ENS Limousine 1910-1911.



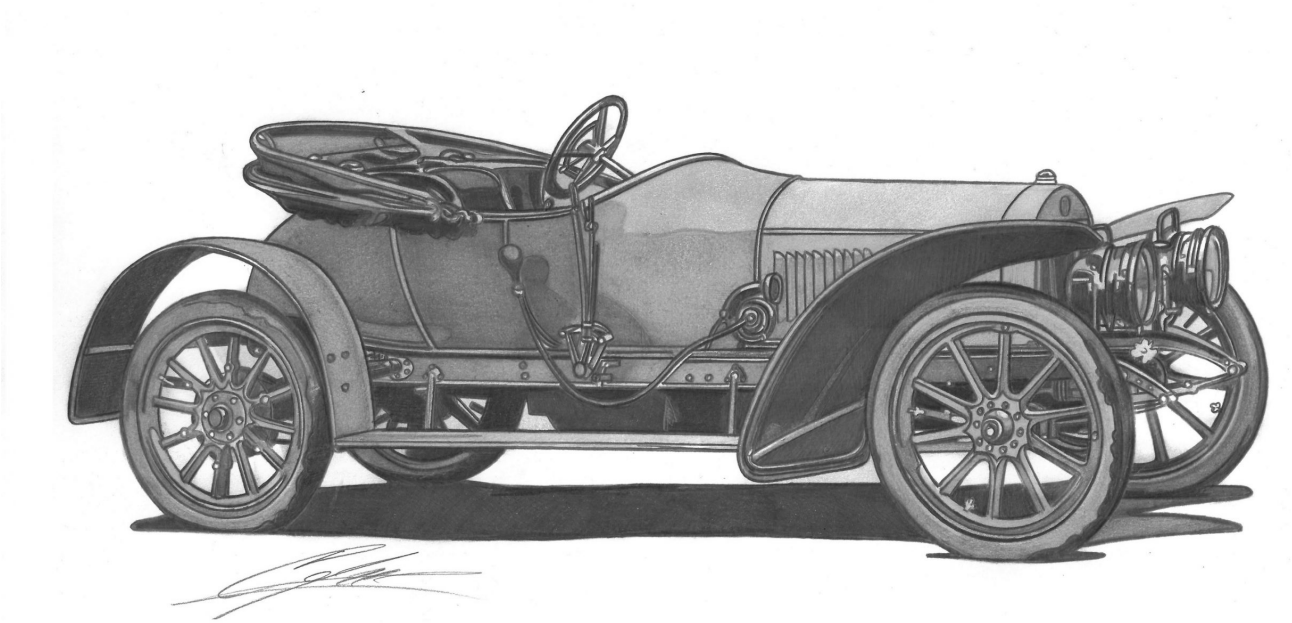
FCS with Karel Jan Hora in Japan 1911.



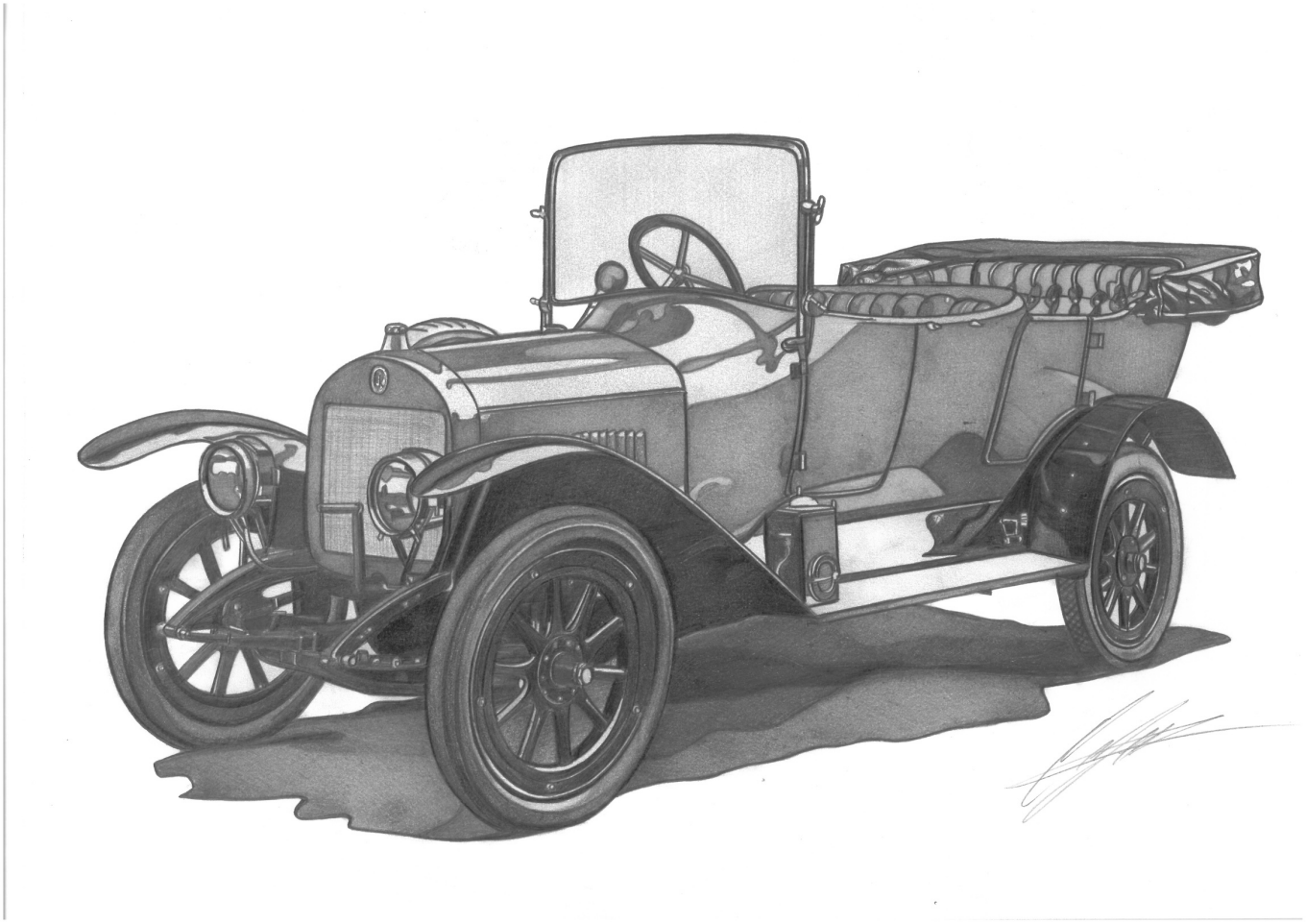
Laurin & Klement type K4 Torpedo 1911.



Laurin & Klement type RK 1912.

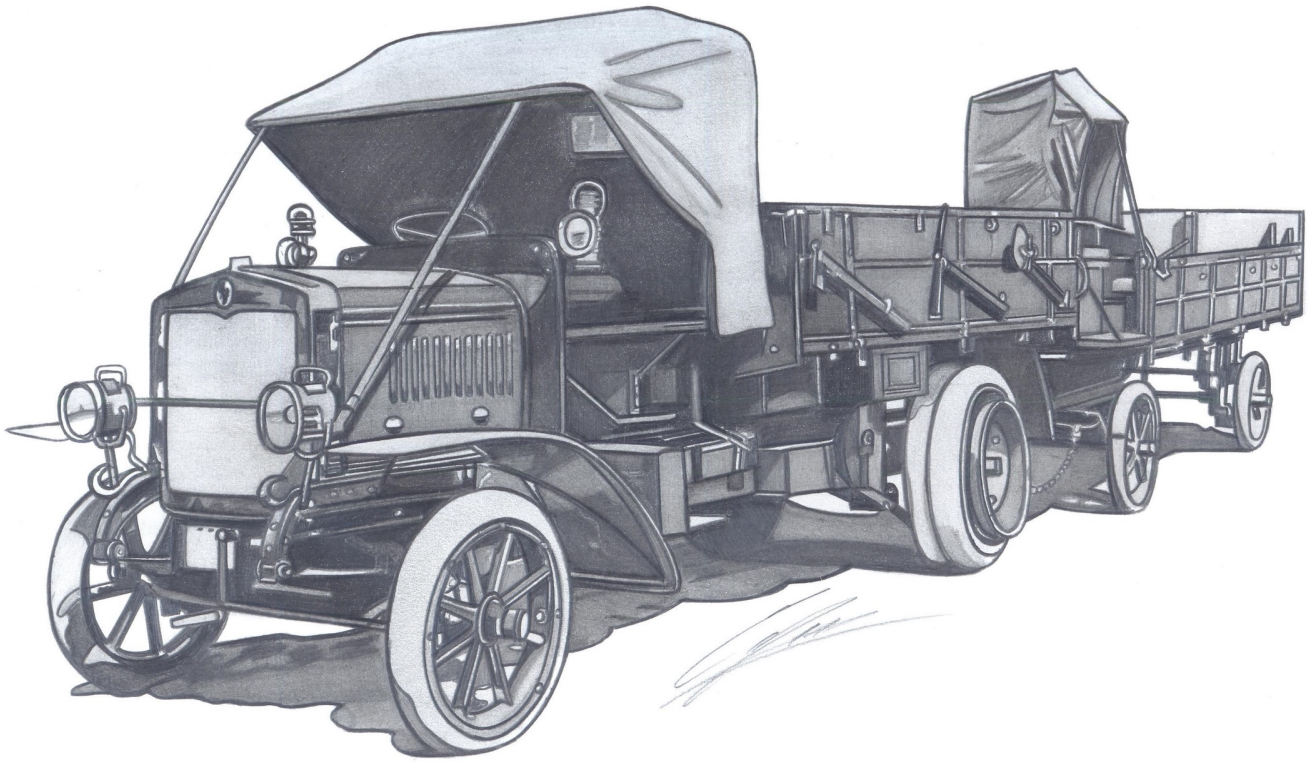


Laurin & Klement type DN 3 1912-1915.

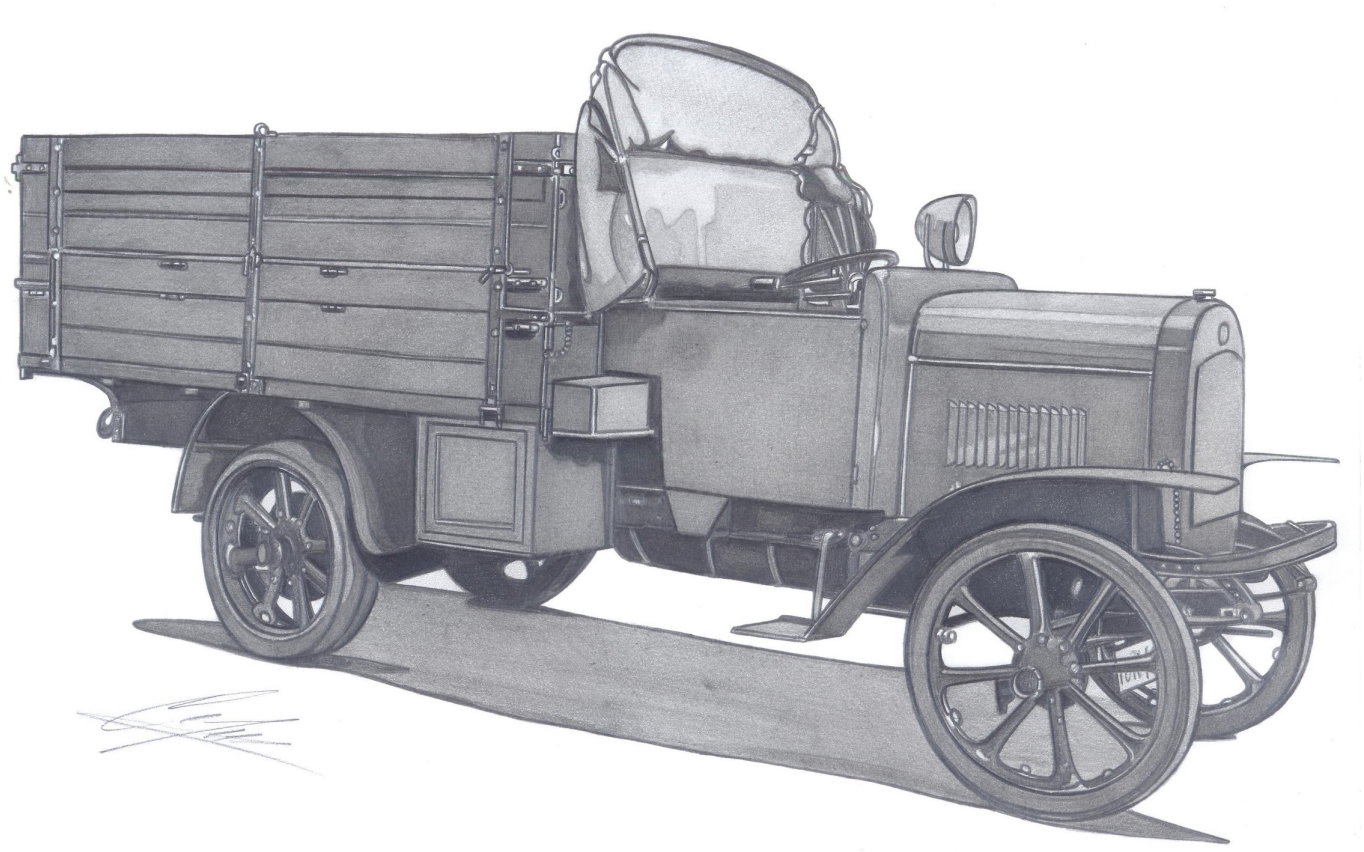


Laurin & Klement type Se 1913-1917.

Vaclav Laurin and Vaclav Klement started in 1895 as a small workshop for bicycles. Later they presented their first motorcycle which was called the Laurin & Klement-Slavia. Ten years later their first car was presented – the Laurin & Klement Voiturette A.
Since that moment L&K was established as one of the leading car manufacturer in the Austro-Hungarian empire.
After WW1 Austro-Hungary existed no more and new countries were established. The new countries like Czechoslovakia were in crisis as the car manufactures suffered from lack of materials and man power, forcing some factories to close. Meanwhile other manufacturers like Tatra, Praga and Laurin & Klement were slowly recovering.

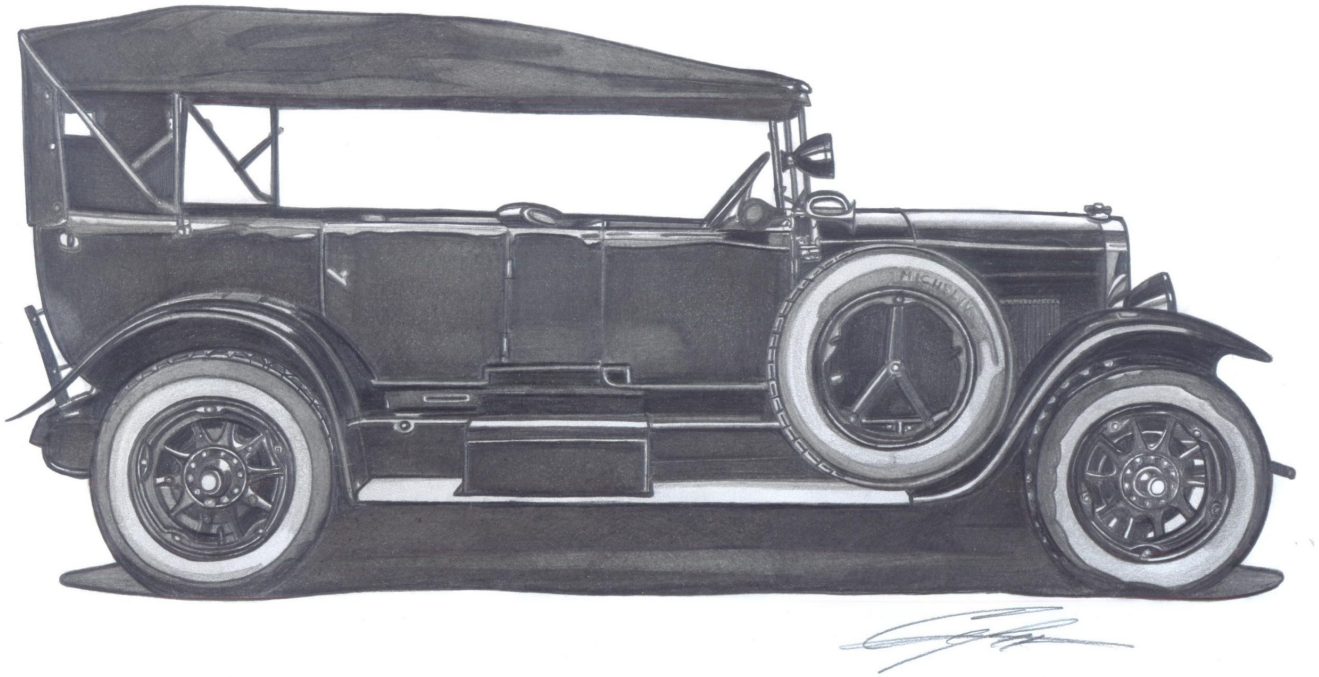


Laurin & Klement type MS 1914-1920.

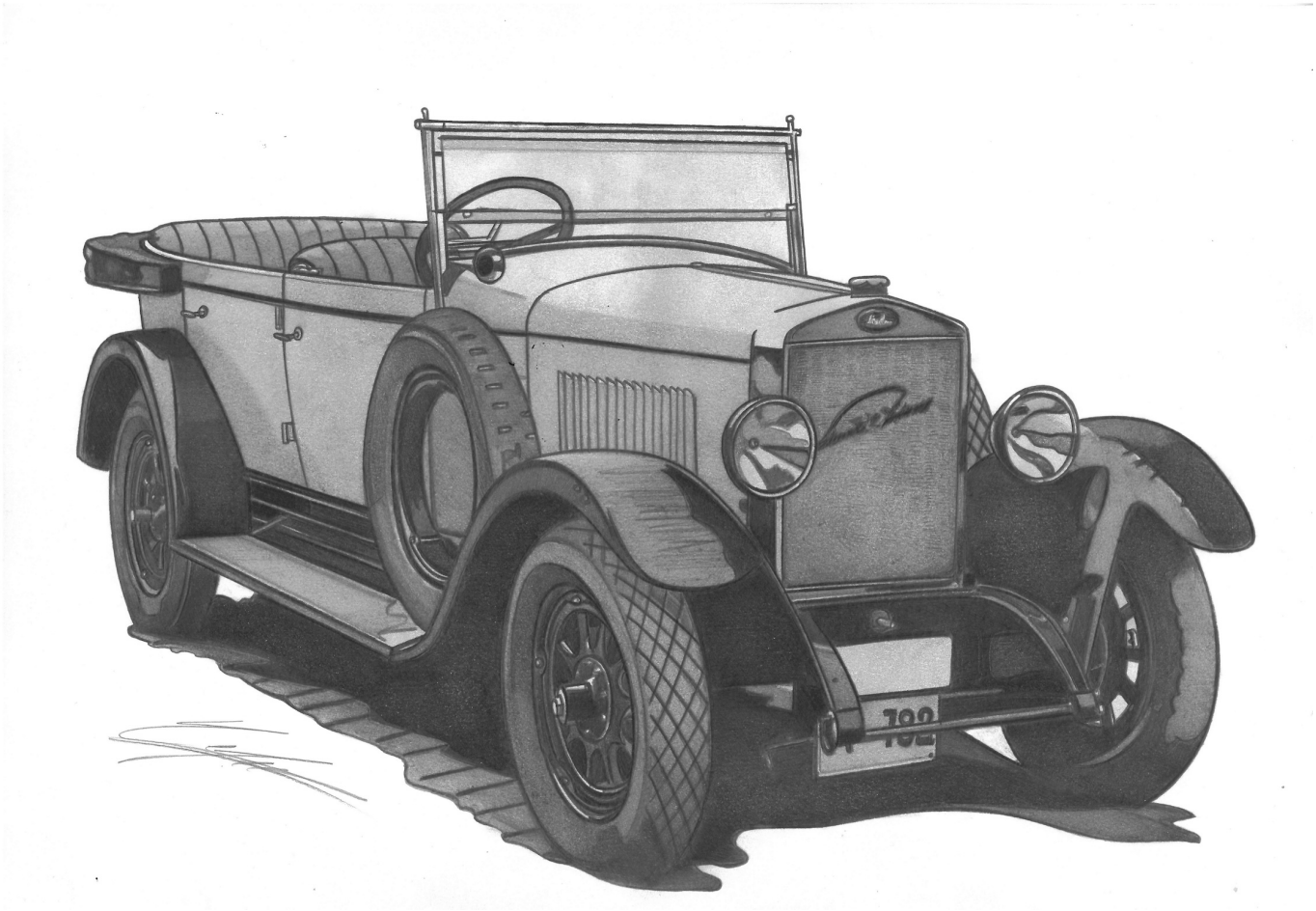


MS Military Vehicle 1914-1920.

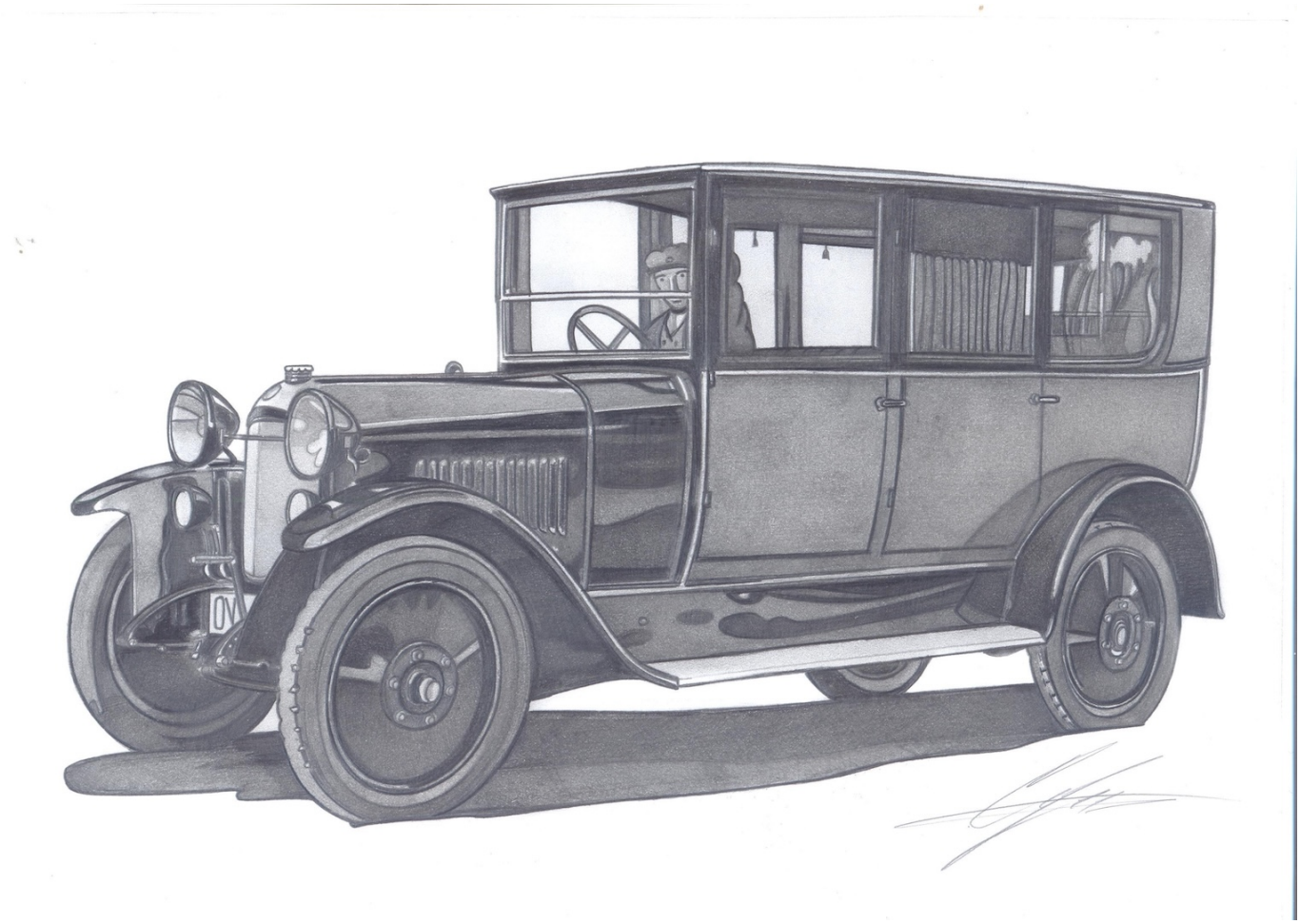
In 1924 the L&K plant was affected by a fire which caused a lot of damage and loss of materials. The firm had to find a strong partner so that they could survive. Meanwhile the industrial giant Skoda Works from Pilsen, an arms manufacturer and multi sector concern, sought to enlarge its non arms manufacturing base and acquired Laurin & Klement in 1925. It also started manufacturing cars in cooperation with Hispano-Suiza.



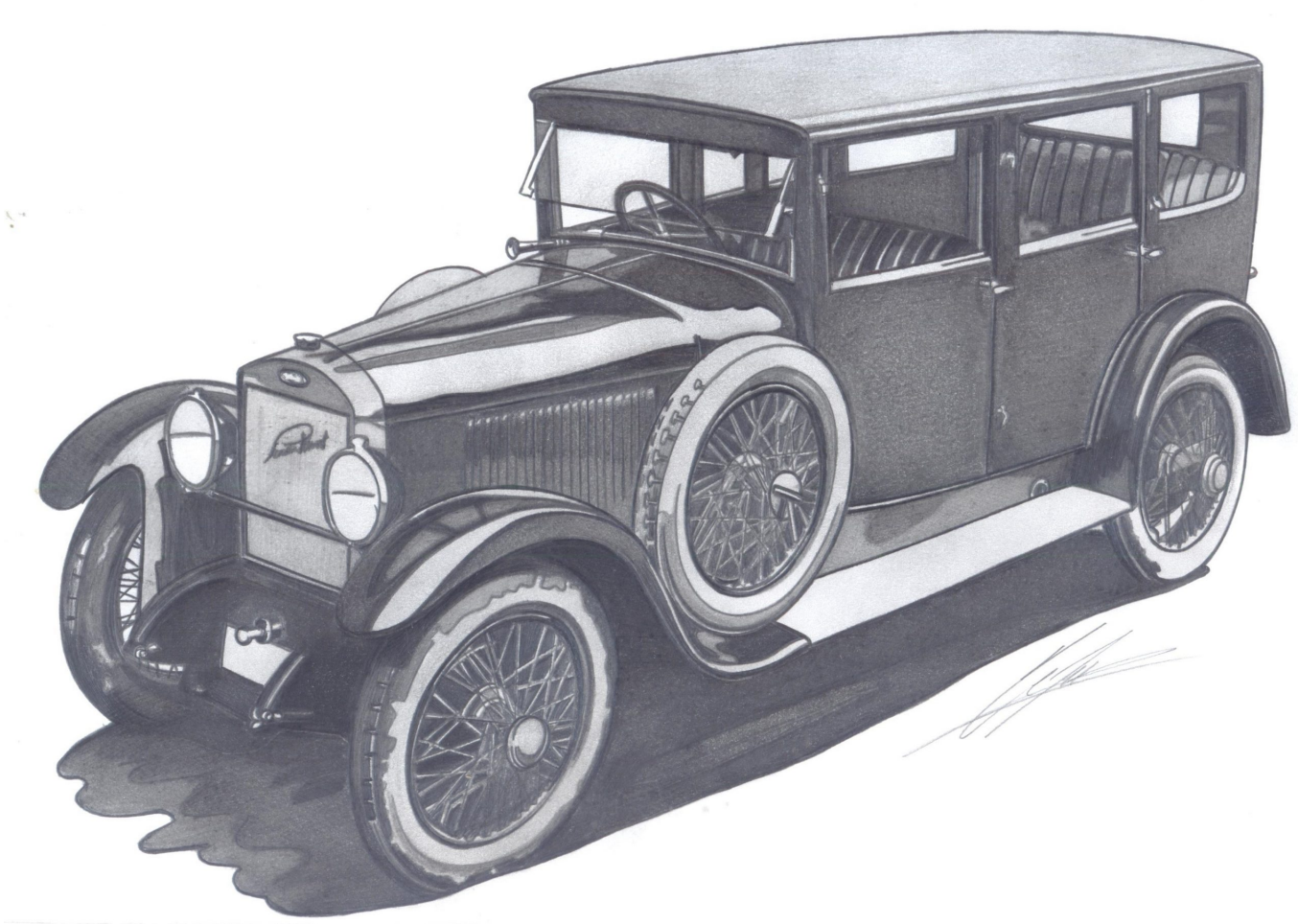
Laurin & Klement-Skoda 120 1925-1928.



Laurin & Klement- Skoda 110 bodywork by Brozik 1925-1929.



Laurin & Klement type Si Limousine bodywork by Sodomka 1926.



Laurin & Klement-Skoda 350 Limousine bodywork by Koller 1927-1927.

In 2023 I opened two exhibitions in Bulgaria; one in a private classic car museum called “Zlaten Rozhen” and one in the National Poly technical museum in the capital city Sofia. In March 2024 I opened an exhibition in the Czech Republic, in L & K’s hometown, and it was on display for Bulgarian and Czech society there.
I was very well accepted there, and while there I visited the aeroplane museum as well as the Skoda museum and part of the Skoda factory. It was a very exciting event.

I wish to have the opportunity to open exhibitions around the world, mostly where people would appreciate my work. In Bulgaria my work receives hardly any support despite the fact I am the first and only person to do such a job, so I have to search for other horizons, far from here.

In the past four years my artworks have become familiar in classic car societies, mostly in Bulgaria and the Czech Republic, but also in small circles in Germany, England, The Netherlands, Italy, Spain, Pakistan, Botswana, Argentina, Australia, Mexico and the USA.

I have been in touch with several automobile magazines, interested people and classic car museums. Some museums in America have expressed interest in mutual events in the near future (I hope). I am looking out for sponsors, who would believe in my work and dreams and support me if/when the opportunity for big events comes.

I became a member of the “Guild of Motoring Artists”in England in 2024. In 2025 I was selected for the “Book of One Hundred Artists in Europe”, by a cultural organisation from Palermo, Sicily.

I also have the idea of creating an automobile institute in Bulgaria, like in the countries from Central and Western Europe, the USA, Japan, Dubai and more.

It is very important for automobile history to be studied in the universities. Some students might later become automobile historians. We can’t know our modern history if we don’t know the automobiles which traversed our lands.


ŠKODA 120
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