

service station australia

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OVERSEAS NEWS

Italy

Old Gasoline Pumps Fire Up Collectors, Give Status to Service-Station Relics — Roadside Nostalgia Drives 'Petroliana' Trend; Snaring Mussolini's Personal Machine

PALAZZOLO MILANESE — Two decades ago, Guido Fisogni sneaked home over the Swiss border into Italy in a pickup truck with clandestine cargo: a water-cooler-size iron gas pump dated 1892.

It was one of many journeys Mr. Fisogni has taken to assemble one of the largest collections of gas pumps in the world. His 8,000-piece assortment of 150 gas pumps and other service-station relics includes a 1930s pump used to service Italian Fascist leader Benito Mussolini's private fleet of cars; a 1940s natural gas pump used for cigarette lighter refills; and hundreds of road signs, posters, oil cans and neon gas globes.

"The pumps are like pieces of art," said Mr. Fisogni, a stocky, bespectacled 71-year-old, on a recent morning as he toured a warehouse on the outskirts of Milan that houses his pumps of different shapes and colours.

Mr. Fisogni is among a growing group of collectors of antique memorabilia from the oil and gasoline industry, or petroliana as it is called. There are thousands of enthusiasts in North America, Europe and

Australia, and their collections are displayed and sold at international trade fairs and auctions organized by big auction houses such as Christie's.

Many collectors "grew up during the golden age of automobiles, so roadside nostalgia was contemporary for them," says Jerry Keyser, a petroliana collector himself and publisher of *Check The Oil!* magazine, which has a database of about 16,000 names. In those days, "the car trip itself was part of the adventure."

At the first 1986 petroliana convention in Colorado Springs, Colo., seven collectors showed up, says Mr. Keyser. More than 500 people attended last year's show, in Columbus, Ohio,

including young people who are snapping up collectibles on the Internet.

"Antiques are for the dead, while petroliana is for the living," says Illinois-based Dan Matthews, who organizes about 15 auctions a year. Mr. Matthews owns about 100 pieces, including globes that illuminate his home.

Mr. Fisogni began collecting in 1966, while he was zigzagging around Europe as the owner of a company that built and repaired gas stations. As he visited a sand quarry one day that year, he noticed an abandoned 1931 gas pump. He couldn't let it lie.

From then on, Mr. Fisogni would drive with one eye on the road and the other on the side of the road, scouting for abandoned service stations. He would also look for industrial plants that had pumps reserved for internal fleets of cars. In-house gas pumps, he says, were easily recognizable because they didn't have a price indicator, just a mark for litres or gallons pumped. Whenever he found a piece he liked, he would lug it onto his pickup truck to take home.

*Nicolò Fisogni, Fisogni museum of the petrol station
Via Bianchi 23, Tradate (Italy) 25/10/2012*

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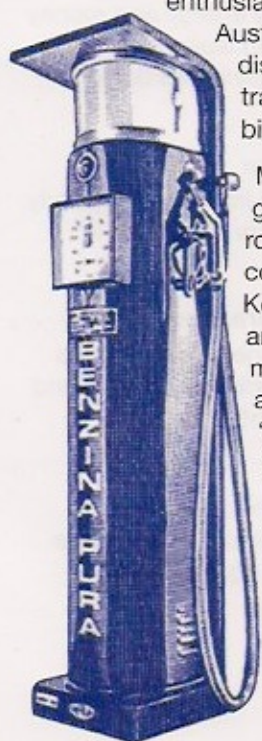
The US Justice Department has accused oil giant BP of "gross negligence and willful misconduct" in the massive 2010 Gulf of Mexico oil spill, court documents show.

In its strongest language yet against BP, the Justice Department levelled the accusation in a 39-page document, released on Wednesday and that were filed with a US district court in Louisiana, in response to a proposed \$US7.8 billion (\$A7.66 billion) settlement between the oil company and victims of the disaster.

It accused the British company of promoting a "culture of corporate recklessness," and of giving the court a "misleading presentation" of the explosion that sank the Deepwater Horizon offshore platform.

"BP did not act alone, by any means, and its gross negligence and willful misconduct are inextricably joined with the acts and omissions of Transocean," it said, referring to the owner of the offshore rig.

But it said: "The behaviour, words, and actions of these BP executives would not be tolerated in a middling-sized company manufacturing dry goods for sale in a suburban mall."



Mussolini's gas pump