

# FERRARI 512S MODULO

Unsurpassed—a futuristic design study

Over 50 years ago, the world saw a glimpse of tomorrow with a concept car that was more starship than automobile, more extreme than any design since. It is difficult to think of the Ferrari Modulo as an automobile, but a peek at its wheels brings it back down to Earth. There had been wedges before: car design had been tending toward angles for the latter half of the 1960s, and some of the greatest designers in Italy already had begun an arms race to see who could out-speculate the others.

The wedge-shaped design hinted at future themes of velocity and space exploration. At the 1970 Geneva Motor Show, an event already filled with seemingly impossible visions, Pininfarina managed to upstage the Lancia Stratos Zero and even Alfa Romeo Carabo with such an outrageous fantasy.

The Modulo was built on the chassis of the Ferrari 512S endurance racer, which had won the 12 Hours of Sebring that year while rivaling the Porsche 917s at Le Mans. But as rule changes rendered the 5-liter cars obsolete, Ferrari donated the surplus cars to design houses with *carte blanche*: to see how designers could experiment with the transformative mid-engine layout.

Paolo Martin began with a design sketch that was shaped like an eye, with two arcs meeting at points. The middle sections were sharply pinched, and black shapes stood in for both the cabin as well as the painted bodywork to match. Yes, people were meant to sit in it—and to accommodate two passengers, the entire midsection of the car lifted up, then slid forward on rails. Flexibility was a requirement for entry.

In Martin's design, nothing could compromise the continual streak of red that encircled the Modulo—not even the wheels, which were hidden behind removable panels and gently peeked out from the top. This belt-line acted as the focal point, and visually stretched the Modulo even further like it was a rubber band, constantly expanding and contracting, depending on what angle you approached it. The Modulo's design is full of subtleties, like the shape of the rear wheel arch to accommodate those huge tires, capable of more than 200 mph (322 km/h) down the Mulsanne Straight.

The Modulo took the world's imagination by storm. At the 1970 Osaka Expo it was center stage at the Italian pavilion. It was shown in Mexico City, at the Louvre in Paris, at the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance in California. It won 22 international design awards for, as Pininfarina puts it, "pure formal research, in its intentional geometricity." When Pininfarina celebrated its 75th anniversary in 2005, the Modulo once again toured the world to astonish a new generation.

Despite the racing pedigree, the concept was never meant to run. With the bodywork fully installed, even the front wheels couldn't turn. In 2014, racing team owner James Glickenhaus purchased the Modulo concept from Pininfarina at auction for an undisclosed sum, and he had just one intention: to ensure that it could drive. It took five years and a few seven-figure sums but he succeeded. Today, the 5-liter V-12 engine residing underneath the 24 upward-pointing intake outlets roars to life, driving the dreams we had all hoped it would 50 years before.

