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One of the biggest highlights of the Villa d'Este Concorso d'Eleganza was the world premiere of the Ferrari 575 GTZ, a car specifically built for "gentleman drivers" along the lines of the historic 250 GTZ from 1956.

"The launch of the Ferrari 575 GTZ is important for two reasons," commented Zagato's Paolo di Taranto at the exclusive Italian event. "Firstly it marks one of the first coachbuilt cars in recent years to be able to officially be sold using the Prancing Horse badge. Secondly it also marks Zagato's return to building coachbuilt cars, something which we wish to expand on over the coming years. Zagato is a coachbuilding house and, like in the past, our creations need a brand. Currently we are developing concepts and within the next five years we'll see many interesting automobiles being launched bearing the famous Z badge," he added.



The aluminium coachwork on the 575 GTZ is a sublime work of rational modern design. No panel remains untouched, with the car body being completely custom-built from aluminium. Zagato's last coachbuilt cars were based on Aston Martin DB7 and Vanquish platforms. With these cars, Aston Martin's design chief at the time, Henrik Fisker, had a hand in creating the bodywork. "The Ferrari 575 GTZ is a 100% Zagato design, which is also very special. At Zagato we have around 15 designers who also work on product design. If one of the designers has a good idea on a car, then he can work it out.



"With the 575 GTZ, the first talks started about one year ago. The final car took around five months to construct in our workshops, but each successive car will take closer to two months to build. The first car is always the most difficult and demanding in terms of construction."  
The interior of the 575 GTZ remains largely based on the 575 M Maranello, however it has been exquisitely re-trimmed in custom leather. Technically the car remains the same as the standard 575 M, a requirement laid down by Ferrari for the car to carry the Prancing Horses badges.

"The Villa d'Este Concorso d'Eleganza is an ideal event for the launch of this car. For a start, it is in Italy, in a beautiful setting and it's outside under natural sunlight where the car looks the best and is the most photogenic. On top of everything else a lot of our potential customers have their eyes cast on this event."

By James Granger









***the Elasis built Alfa Diva 'moving laboratory' was one of the big stars at Villa d'Este***

Just under two months ago, the Alfa Romeo Diva made its debut at the Geneva Motor Show as a combined effort between Fiat Auto's engineering arm Elasis, Centro Stile Alfa Romeo and the Espera design school run by Franco Sbarro. Directly after the Geneva Motor Show, the concept car was rebuilt by Carrozzeria Granturismo in Arese, Milan to a higher quality standard. The rebuilt prototype made its first appearance last weekend at the Villa d'Este Concorso d'Eleganza.

The prototype represents a moving laboratory, with several technical partners involved in the project including ATR Group for the carbon fibre tub construction, Tubistyle for the exhaust, as well as Momo for the innovative steering wheel. Like the Ferrari FXX, the Alfa Romeo Diva will form a test bed for technology, materials and control systems, with integrated computer aided and experimental tools which will be used to develop high-performance Alfa Romeo sportscars in the future.

A bare, race bred two-seater sportscar, the Alfa Romeo Diva contains many innovative systems very different to the current model line-up. It has been developed purely for performance, with Alfa Romeo's key brand values included: sophisticated engineering, powerful engines and a design which represents the sportive tradition of the brand. The engineers at Elasis worked extremely hard to obtain an ideal weight distribution with the car's bespoke mid-engine layout, with all the main masses being concentrated between the front and rear axles. In short, this car had to be an excellent driver's car without compromise. Many different materials and construction techniques were applied to the chassis. The rear section comprises of a steel tubular frame, whilst the front and central chassis section makes use of a sheet steel space frame. ATR Group supplied the carbon fibre sub-frame, which serves both structural and aerodynamic purposes.

By using advanced CAD / CAE technology, the chassis was topographically optimised similar to the approach employed on the Sportiva Evoluta chassis project by Centro Ricerche Fiat. This approach optimised the chassis shape and material thickness, whilst remaining within pre-defined constraints. The lightweight, carbon fibre tub integrates the aerodynamic requirements of the project along with optimising dynamic behaviour as well as guaranteeing stiffness of the suspension points and of course a very low overall weight.

Constraints which were laid down for the Diva included using carbon fibre and car body interfaces (suspension fastening points and steering system). The objective of the project was also to achieve a 40 percent reduction in weight, close component integration and aerodynamic efficiency.

The front and rear suspension features double-wishbone architecture with the majority of components being fabricated from aluminium. In particular the car features genuine sportscar “pushrod” type spring damping. Dynamic controls include VDC, ABS and ARC.

The 3.2-litre V6 engine is mated to a 6-speed Selespeed gearbox, with paddle shifters. The carbon fibre engine and gearbox mounting brackets were proposed and designed by SRS Engineering & Design and assure an elevated dynamic stiffness as well as a low weight. The variable geometry exhaust system was built by Tubistyle out of Inconel 600, a nickel-based alloy that guarantees lightness and maximised performance. Noise levels are controlled by two special exhaust valves and a bypass pipe that interconnects the two inlet pipes. These new innovations give a highly exotic exhaust note, as was demonstrated at the Concorso by Elasis engineers. At low revs the noise levels fall within required legal limits. New microcast exhaust flanges allow much thinner diameter pipes to be used, thus further reducing weight. Onboard displays as well as data acquisition and processing are collated via hardware supplied by Digitek, who make race-proven systems. A Momo-developed steering wheel with optional steel, alloy or magnesium centres, and either polyurethane, high quality wood and leather or carbon fibre, is fitted with a series of controls that enhance safety and allow a greater ease of use.

With a design by Alfa Romeo’s own Centro Stile, located only 30 minutes away from Lake Como, the Diva builds on Alfa Romeo’s racing heritage with the immortal Tipo 33 Stradale being its main source of inspiration in terms of form. The front section proposes an interesting solution with a raised aerofoil linking the wheel arches to the traditional Alfa Romeo grille. The headlights incorporate the latest LED technology, which we will eventually see on Alfa Romeo production cars.

The Diva’s lithe handling and raw performance is expressed in the bodywork, which is sharp and simple rather than being elegant and refined. Compared to the 8C, the Diva is no beauty-queen, but that would be missing the point as it is a competition car rather than a boulevard cruiser. The cockpit is accessible via gull wing doors, with clear sections which wrap around into the roof, giving the low slung interior a more airy atmosphere. The interior is functional and simple with a perforated sheet steel central console, simple leather dashboard and an aluminium control panel complete with toggle switchgear. The look is no-nonsense and as a result is also aesthetically pleasing. Forged alloy wheels designed by OZ Racing and produced in Italy are shod with Michelin Sport tyres. The open alloy sports wheels amply show off the drilled disc brakes and red calliper assembly sourced from Brembo. The rear end is finished with dual round taillights, an open mesh section revealing engine and exhaust details behind an beautifully engineered cross member, and the Tubistyle exhaust which protrudes high up underneath an integrated spoiler





***One of the first sportscars to attract attention of visitors to this year's Villa d'Este Concorso d'Eleganza was the new Bizzarrini Ghepardo, a car which was first unveiled in its preliminary specification last year***

One of the first sportscars to attract attention of visitors to this year's Villa d'Este Concorso d'Eleganza was the new Bizzarrini Ghepardo, a car which was first unveiled in its preliminary specification earlier last year at the 75th Geneva Salon. Finished in a glossy metallic dark blue, the car's muscular shape immediately stood out, the seductive lines of its all-aluminium coachwork clearly inspired by the Bizzarrini GTs from the past, of which one, a 5300 GT Strada, could be found parked next to the new Ghepardo. Certain details on the front end of the Ghepardo can also be traced to the 1993 Bizzarrini GT study designed by Giotto Bizzarrini and his son Beppe Bizzarrini. The Aluminium bodywork material is typical of Bizzarrini cars, and is the distinctive characteristic which separates the Bertone built Iso-Grifo and Bizzarrini Strada, the former cars bearing all-steel bodywork.

Although Bizzarrini cars have from a historical perspective typically been true competition models, particularly when compared to the original Iso-Grifo A3C which had more luxurious fittings, the new Ghepardo interior is padded out in style, with comfortable cream leather trim and polished metal details. In typical fashion, the finishing touches to the Ghepardo were completed the evening before presentation at the Villa d'Este Concorso d'Eleganza. Intense development work has been carried out on the prototype ever since its original unveiling in 2005. Not only the engine, but also the suspension layout is now entirely new.





The Ghepardo's engine, a 4.1 litre block derived from the Renault designed engine used in the GP2 single-seater motor racing series, is set as far back in the engine bay as one could imagine, resulting in an ideal weight distribution, and also providing useful space for the highly effective new front suspension layout. The high-revving engine, "capable of 10,000 'giri'" confirmed the interior designer with a grin on his face, incidentally sounds unlike any other V8 engine found in a road car. When fired up, its roots become clear, with a high idle speed matched with the finely-timed acoustics of extraordinarily light-weight moving parts, the latter resulting in an instantaneous throttle response. The 32-valve engine delivers 550bhp at the red-line, and 470 nm of torque at 7,500 rpm.

Classic Bizzarrinis always had an enormous amount of power, and encountered problems with the delivery of the power to the ground through their skinny 15" tires. On the new Bizzarrini Ghepardo, this attribute has been eradicated by a unique set of custom built extra wide Pirelli PZero Rosso tyres, measuring 335-385/30 ZR 20 at the rear. Power is delivered through a 6-speed manual gearbox with central gear stick.

The name "Ghepardo", is Italian for Leopard, a member of the cat family which relies on stealth, attacking its prey by stalking it, followed by a short rush of speed. Under a burst of full power, the Bizzarrini Ghepardo is capable of completing the 0-100 km/h sprint in less than 3.8 seconds, whilst the top speed is over 360 km/h.

Lake Como was the ideal setting for the presentation of the Bizzarrini Ghepardo, with the rich mountainous surroundings reflecting elegantly in the gleaming bodywork of this thoroughbred. The Ghepardo is an interesting and exciting alternative for those who seek a distinctive performance sports car.





***An exclusive custom-made version of the Ferrari 612 Scaglietti, commissioned from Pininfarina by collector Peter Kalikow, was one of the star exhibits at the 2006 Villa d'Este Concorso d'Eleganza***

An exclusive custom-made version of the Ferrari 612 Scaglietti, commissioned from Pininfarina by the American car collector, Peter Kalikow, was one of the star exhibits at the Villa d'Este Concorso d'Eleganza held last weekend. Peter Kalikow, Chairman of the New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), asked Pininfarina to design, engineer and build a

special version of the Ferrari 612 Scaglietti, through a Style development aimed to enhance the car's own elegance and exclusiveness.

The Ferrari 612 Scaglietti, whose "Granturismo soul" perfectly matches with class and elegance, is currently the most exclusive car within Ferrari models. For these reasons, the Style activity performed for Peter Kalikow has been accepted by Ferrari as an enhancement of its own myth and tradition and as a strengthening of the relationship with Pininfarina, established at the time when the Turin coachbuilder created exclusive models for car enthusiasts all over the world.

The whole Project has been based on some clear and simple wishes expressed by the customer: "The car should be totally re-bodied, but the Style changes should be so slight and fine to allow to no more than 10% of Ferrari experts to catch them at a first glance. The customer has personally followed the Style development and has actively contributed to the selection of the car features and to the choice of colours and materials. Peter Kalikow special Ferrari 612 Scaglietti has been developed as a real custom-built car.





The car has been equipped with a series of accessories specifically required by the customer to enjoy the maximum comfort during the daily use. The work has been managed by Pininfarina Special Projects Division and has been totally carried out at the company ateliers in Cambiano; the result for this activity is a unique car, modern and classic at the same time and perfectly fitting with the spirit of Peter Kalikow's collection.

The main special features of the car are the front grille, reminding of the fifties and sixties models; a glass roof with a combination of liquid crystals and photovoltaic cells; a wide air outlet on front fenders, evolving from the side panel volumes; fins enveloping the rear backlight and inspired to the most beautiful drawings made by Pininfarina; rear lights recalling Ferrari Enzo. Interiors have been modified according to the customer's wish and have been equipped with devices allowing him to comfortably feel and drive in a custom-made compartment, where all details have been conceived and designed exclusively for him.

Pininfarina work underlines the company's choice to provide its selected customers with the unique opportunity of designing, engineering and building their "dream car". By keeping constantly focused on the product and on its demanding customers, Pininfarina aims to stress its tradition of excellence and the values that brought the company to be a model in the automotive field. Style, quality, the special features and the very limited volumes for Pininfarina Special Projects make each car a cult object that will grant unique emotions to its owner.





***PDRELASIS001-2006: The first three letters of the Diva chassis number stand for "Prototipo di Ricerca"***

***The Alfa Romeo Diva 'prototipo di ricerca' was put through its paces at Balocco after a successful appearance at the Villa d'Este Concorso d'Eleganza***

Engineers at the Elasis engineering arm took full advantage of the location of Villa d'Este Concorso d'Eleganza event, to take the Alfa Romeo Diva prototype to the nearby Balocco high-security test-track for a set of high-speed trials on Monday last week. Situated under an hour away from Arese, and merely 108 km from Cernobbio, the Balocco test track presented a clear temptation to the team of engineers.

The Alfa Romeo Diva represents a true collaboration of effort between Elasis, the ESPERA design school of Franco Sbarro, Centro Stile Alfa Romeo, and the Arese based Carozzeria GT who prepared the prototype for the Villa d'Este event. "The car received a notable amount of approval from the public, and buzzing interest on the part of the specialised press," commented Elasis after the event.

"On Monday the 24th of April, numerous laps were driven on the circuit of Balocco (Vercelli), during which the sports two-seater reflected excellent performance, including sprightliness, manoeuvrability, and steering precision – a typical characteristic in the Alfa Romeo tradition." No doubt also that the prototype showed tremendous braking capability with the car sporting twin calliper rear brakes. The Alfa Romeo Diva is not a concept car in the strictest sense, but rather a research prototype used by engineers as a physical test bed to evaluate components. The Alfa Romeo Diva is the latest car in a string of projects which have focussed on light weight construction techniques, following the likes of the Centro Ricerche Fiat Alfa Romeo Sportiva Evoluta, the Sportiva Latina, and the Alfa Romeo 8C Competizione which will be presented in production format next year at Paris. It is anticipated that the experience that is being gained with these projects, particularly in the field of light-weight metals and carbon-fibre composites, will be reflected in performance versions of current Alfa Romeo models, including the Brera and 159 GTA variants.

Alongside light-weight parts, the Alfa Romeo Diva also showcases the use of LED lighting, a technology which is becoming increasingly popular in production cars and which is expected to feature on the next production Alfa Romeo family car. LEDs are the future of automotive lighting, providing automotive manufacturers with a far higher degree of styling flexibility due to the small footprint of the LEDs. Several automotive manufactures already use LEDs for rear lighting. From a safety perspective, LEDs turn on instantly, reducing braking response time by 2/10th of a second, which equates to 5 extra meters of stopping distance at motorway speeds. The Alfa Romeo 8C competizione uses LEDs for its rear lights, whilst the Diva has LED front lights. LEDs also last 100 times longer than conventional bulbs, thus do not require replacement, and also perform better in poor weather conditions.