



PLATE 02  
 JOHN CHAMBERLAIN  
*Coo Wha Zee, DIA 2019*

*Detroit Style: Car Design in the Motor City, 1950–2020*, celebrates the often-overlooked artistry of the designers and stylists who shaped American cars. Appropriately, this exhibition and catalog would not have been possible without the support and wisdom of people throughout the city and region who generously contributed their expertise, made accessible their collections, and refined the ideas that follow.

The project began with the encouragement of two people. The late Robert Edwards, an artist, historian, and consummate collector of automotive designer drawings, planted the initial idea at the museum. William B. Porter, retired car designer, instructor, and historian, acted as a consulting curator and font of design history throughout the exhibition. Bill and his wife Patsy graciously opened their home to me and together we spent many hours discussing automotive history and examining drawings.

At the development stage, an advisory committee was formed that helped to refine and focus the ideas in this volume. Its members included Teckla Rhoads and Susan Skarsgard from General Motors; Brandt Rosenbusch from Fiat Chrysler; Craig Metros from Ford Motor Company; Matt Anderson from The Henry Ford; Tom Roney from the College for Creative Studies; David McIntosh from the League of Retired Automobile Designers; Ed Welburn, former vice president of global design at General Motors; and collectors Julie Hyde-Edward and Robert Edwards.

Colleagues throughout the DIA contributed immeasurably to the exhibition's physical and intellectual form. Salvador Salort-Pons, director, president, and CEO, provided important support and advice at every stage. Interpretive planner Megan DiRienzo played a foundational role in giving shape to its abstract ideas. I am grateful for the help in realizing the project provided by director of exhibitions Jennifer Paoletti, executive director of strategic initiatives Felicia E. Molnar, exhibition project manager Elena Berry, exhibition coordinator Sabrina Hiedemann, director of registration Terry Segal, registrar for exhibitions Kimberly Dziurman, director of collections management Terry Birkett, collections management senior technician James Johnson, paper care specialist Douglas Bulka, conservator of paper and photographs Christopher Foster, manager of photography Eric Wheeler, research library director Maria Ketcham, curator of American art Kenneth Myers, chief development officer Nina Holden, director of development Rosemarie Gleeson, and senior major gifts officer Edward Maki-Schramm.

The exhibition would not be possible without generous loans of cars, designer drawings, and paintings provided by public institutions and private individuals. Those lenders include the General Motors Heritage Collection, with special thanks to Michael Simcoe, Susan Skarsgard, Christo Datini, Natalie Morath, and Shelly Joseph; Fiat-Chrysler Automobiles, with special thanks to Ralph Gilles and Brandt Rosenbusch; Ford Motor Company; Moray Callum; Jody and Tara Ingle; Fred Kanter; the Hood Museum of Art; Whitney Museum of American Art; Mattatuck Museum; The Henry Ford; Peter Marino; Bill and Patsy Porter; Brett Snyder; Robert L. Edwards and Julie Hyde-Edwards; Dennis Burke; Taru Lahti; Milton Antonick; Robert Hubbach; Roger Hughet; David McIntosh; William Michalak; Buck Mook, and others. Alexandra May and Jane Holzer deserve special thanks for their tireless work in helping to arrange important loans.

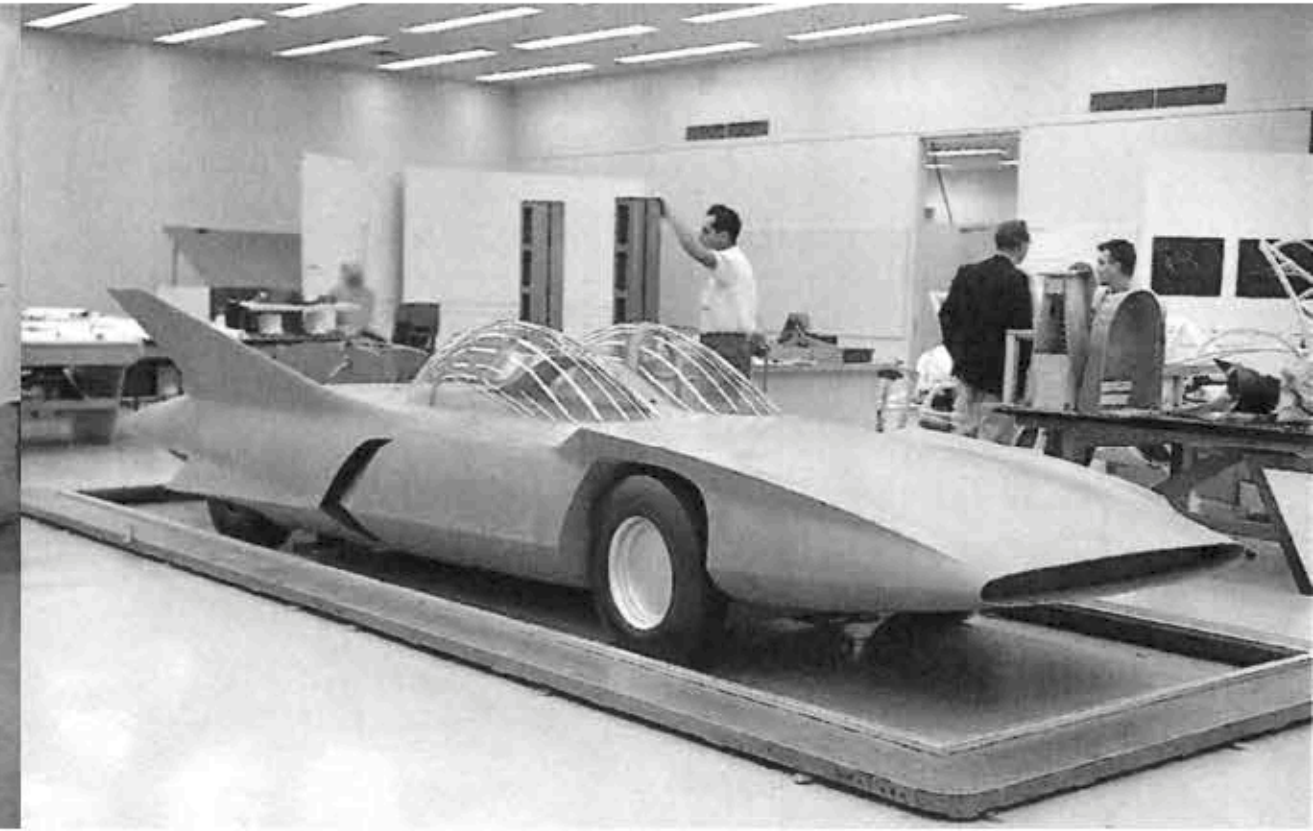
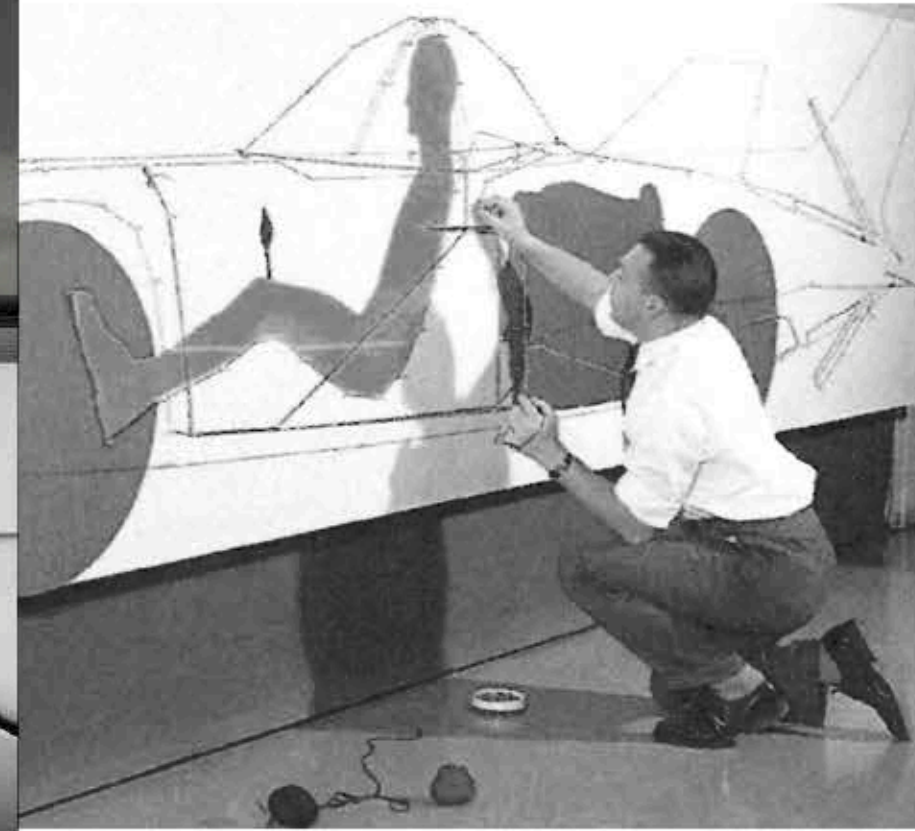
Although it would be impossible to list every individual who contributed behind the scenes to this exhibition, I am immensely thankful to all who shared ideas, fielded phone calls, made collections accessible, and answered questions as it took shape.

*Benjamin W. Colman*  
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 Detroit Institute of Arts



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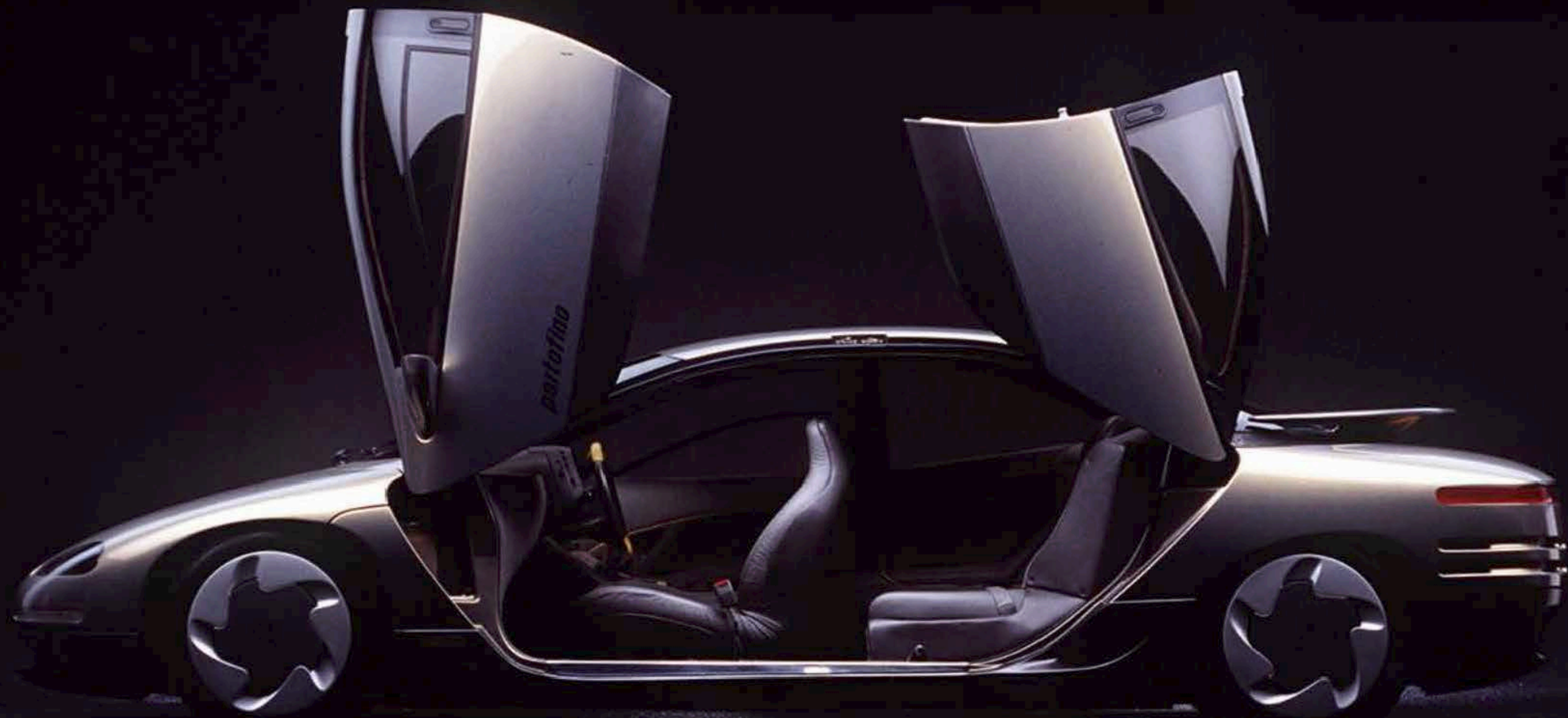
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INTERVIEW WITH  
WILLIAM B.  
PORTER



The original Ford GT was born out of a 1960s rivalry. The fame of that racecar inspired subsequent designers to revive and revisit its sleek and powerful proportions for reintroduced models. Together, these updated GT offer different visions for how design history can shape contemporary forms.

In 1963, a group of Ford Motor Company representatives travelled to Maranello, Italy, to negotiate the purchase of Enzo Ferrari's eponymous company. The deal was meant to energize Ford's racing profile and elevate its reputation for styling. When it collapsed late in the process, a feud was sparked between the two companies, and Ford became determined to break Ferrari's string of prominent victories in the most important car races. The result was a rapid program to develop a new race car at Ford Advanced Vehicles in England, led by legendary American designer and racer Carroll Shelby and the English racer John Wyer. Their team created the GT40 that won first, second, and third places in the 24-hour race at Le Mans in 1966, keeping Ferrari out of the winner's circle it had dominated in the early 1960s. The GT40 went on to take first

at Le Mans from 1967 to 1969! The 1966 GT40—a sleek and sinuous mid-engine design with a low-slung form and fluid curves that suggested a powerful machine—became an instant racing legend.

When Ford set out to celebrate its corporate centenary in 2003, a proposal was developed for a car that paid homage to the 1966 classic, layered with associations of power, machismo, and speed. As Ford product developer Chris Theodore said, the project appealed to design history to “polish the Ford oval to bring the luster back.”<sup>2</sup> Overseen by Ford product developers Theodore and Richard Parry-Jones, and head of design J. Mays, the project was called “Pentunia” to keep prying eyes away from the secretive Special Vehicles Team studio where the car was being developed.



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The revived GT needed to succeed on two fronts. It had to function as an innovative car whose speed, performance, and exotic appeal rivaled that of its European competitors and it had to be legible as a Ford. The design was led by Camillo Pardo, whose first attempt updated the look of the classic GT40 to suit the modern sports car, with a profile that “was simpler, smooth, organized.”<sup>3</sup> Initial proposals suggested a car similar to a number of high-end European sports cars of the day, but not enough like a Ford GT40. The design team's ultimate 2002 concept model hewed more closely to the lines of the 1966 car, with subtle updates. Introduced during a period of retrospective assessment of the company's design heritage, this car instantly called to mind the iconic form of its inspiration. By 2003, the initial concept design went into production. Three prototypes were

produced in time for the June centennial celebration, in anticipation of a limited production run for the 2005 model year.<sup>4</sup>

The same pull of nostalgia that drew designers back to the 1966 GT40 attracted the eyes of artists like Richard Prince (born 1949) to explore the narrative and form of American automotive history. In the 1980s, Prince began a series of sculptures from fiberglass reproductions of parts of classic American muscle cars. Blurring the line between readymade art object, minimalist sculpture, and pop art, works like his 1992–2002 Pro-Street highlight the formal features, vernacular traditions, and lived beauty of the automobile (Plate 05, page 145). To him, a car hood was a, “great thing that actually got painted out there, out there in real life. [...] It got ‘teen-aged.’ Primed. Flaked. Stripped. Bondo-ed. Lacquered. Nine coats. Sprayed. Numbered. Advertised on. Raced.”<sup>5</sup>

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