



Notizie



03.05.2008 LONG FORGOTTEN PANTERA PROTOTYPE RESURFACES AT VILLA D'ESTE

The level of quality at the Concorso d'Eleganza Villa d'Este is simply unrivalled, each year historical cars that visitors have simply never seen before abound in this beautiful setting and this year was to be no different. Long forgotten by time the De Tomaso Pantera Series II prototype unexpectedly reappeared at Villa d'Este last weekend in perfectly restored condition where it attracted huge attention as it was paraded down the red carpet at Villa Erba by none other than legendary Pantera designer Tom Tjaarda.



The Pantera Series II prototype was a one-off which was designed and constructed at the Ghia design studio. The project started around the beginning of 1973 and shipped off to Ford's headquarters in Dearborn, Michigan in the November of that year. It was intended to become the next generation Pantera, however the oil crises halted all further plans to go ahead with this new idea, following the permanent closure of the Vignale factory where the Pantera was then being built.

The entire assembly line, dies, stampings and everything else that pertained to the production of the Pantera was discarded and scrapped. The Pantera program was then completely written off by Ford; however De Tomaso did in fact make a few new dies, even if they were rather crude and simple, to continue the very limited production for a number of years.

At Villa d'Este the just-restored Pantera Series II prototype was immaculately presented and was driven by Tom Tjaarda who was being reunited with the superb car. It created a huge amount of interest, with the public and specialists alike, and Tom recalls its history. "It was shown at an auto show, I seem to recall it was the LA Auto Show of 1974, then taken back to Dearborn and repainted first a deep bronze colour then after that repainted again in white above the upper half and a dark bronze on the lower half, the dividing line having a rather ugly black belt line dividing the two colours," he told *Italiaspeed*.

"The prototype was later sold, along with many other Ghia prototypes, by Ford to a dentist living in northern Michigan and was shown in a number of local classic car gatherings, then faded away and left to sit for many years," says Tom, an American citizen who worked for Ghia, Bertone, Pininfarina and Fiat amongst others during a very long and successful career as a designer. "Two years ago the sons inherited this car and they put it up for auction last summer during the Pebble Beach weekend where a very good friend of mine, Corrado Lopresto, an architect living in Milan, bought it from the auction. He sent me an SMS telling me that he had purchased the car right there at the auction, and was very excited.

"The car was in very bad shape, it had to be completely dismantled and all the various layers of paint sand blasted off the body. The interior was also completely redone," continues Tom, who, while his name will forever be linked to the fearsome Pantera, while at Fiat worked on design projects for cars such including the Fiat-branded Tipo and Cromia as well as Lancia's Y10 and Thema. "The Ford design studio had just put layers and layers of paint over paint that after years practically peeled off by itself. The interior had a deep pile carpet just glued on the original floor carpet. I collaborated with Corrado to restore the car to its Original configuration. We found the correct light bronze colour inside the door panels as everything else was buried in layers of different colours of paint.

"All this was done in three months time, however many hours of overtime were needed to complete the restoration for the Villa d'Este event. What began as a light cleaning up and exterior paint job turned out to be a complete restoration when it became obvious that the car had been abused for so many years.

"It was fun to present this prototype at the Concorso d'Eleganza and so many surprised visitors that had never seen or known about this car. Many experts and collectors came by to find out what it was and I could see that they really liked the design. It did not win an award, and we had no expectations of doing so, however it was a real honour to receive such a friendly and spontaneous approval when the car passed in front of the jury and spectators." Basking in the sunlight in its bright bronze paint scheme, fitted with chunky black-and-alloy finished wheels, and with its superb attention to detailing the Pantera concept was another first ever sighting of a historical work for most visitors at the weekend.



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