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CLASSIC CARS

Sitting pretty on chairs inspired by the greatest classic cars

Jeremy Hart · 30 October 2018 · 8:31am



Adam Williams with the chair inspired by the Ferrari 250 GTO — and the car itself

Little wonder that Adam Williams wants to design a car. He was born with the speed gene: the land speed record legend Bluebird was built in the barn of the Surrey home where he spent much of his childhood. His father George was Castrol's head of motorsport, and Grand Prix racers Stirling Moss and Tony Brooks were a part of his world growing up.

So far, though, the closest Williams has come to sculpting a car is a recent series of one-off chairs modelled on the iconic bodywork of seminal classic cars — the *Ferrari 250 GTO*, the *Ford GT40*, and the *Bentley Continental*.

The unique chairs are a fusion of his passion for cars and his skill as one of the most sought-after furniture makers in the world. Pieces of his — like his trademark icicle table — adorn royal palaces in the Gulf, five-star hotels such as Claridge's, and Hollywood homes.

"I've got a 1966 Mustang. I was looking at the grille on that. And I just thought — that almost looks like a chair."

Williams explains from his Shepton Mallet workshop: "I straight away thought: oh, that's quite cool. It's not often you come across something that hasn't really been done before."



Fifties classic: the swooping wings of Bentley's R-type Continental provided the inspiration for this striking chair

Despite the catalyst coming from his Mustang, it was another Ford — the Le Mans 24 Hours-winning *GT40* — whose beautiful but brutish lines inspired Williams' first car chair. Just 40 inches tall (hence the name), the squat racer and its road-going cousins manage to be svelte and muscular at the same time.

"I can't describe it, but the 60s and early 70s cars have just got something about them," says Williams. "That era of cars and racing is just something that really appeals to me. The look of the cars, the sort of carefree attitude — I like that sort of wildness that went with that era of racing."

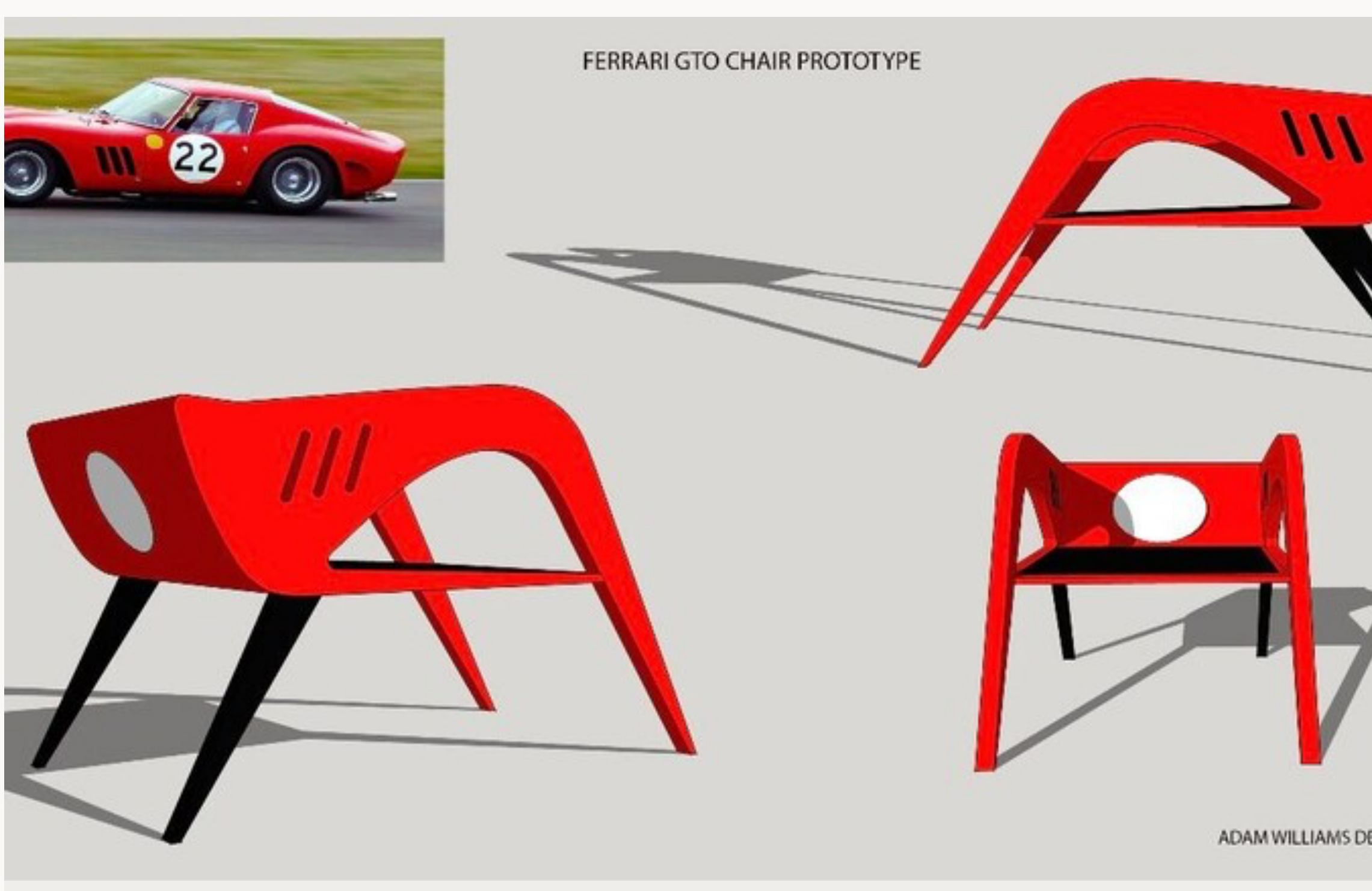
From that post-war period, and using his classic car specialist uncle as a guide to subjects, Williams found inspiration for subsequent chairs from some of the most recognisable automotive forms ever created — including probably the most famous, and most coveted, car in the world: the *Ferrari 250 GTO*.



The GT40 was the car with which Ford famously beat Ferrari at Le Mans — and became the subject of the first Adam Williams chair

A GTO sold recently for a record \$48.4 million. "There is always something unusual on a car," Williams explains. "With your first glance you look straight at something — whether it be the vents, or the wheel arches. The vents on the GTO were the most identifiable mark, and the element I used for the shape and sides of the chair. The back of the chair is based on the rear of the GTO. It is probably at the same angle, too."

Each chair Williams has made has been based on a car he has actually seen in person. Once he has focused on the shape he wants to adopt, he sketches what he wants the chair to look like and his small team of artisans in Somerset begin the fabrication — a process that can take months.



Once he has satisfied himself as to the overall look of the chair — based on elements of the car's design — Williams sketches it from every angle

The GTO-inspired chair is made from steel, though Williams would like to sculpt in aluminium, as many of the curvaceous panels on these cars were. So far, he has not sold any of the chairs — the owner of the 250 GTO was given the chair based on his Ferrari as a thank you. But Williams would sell the others he still has, or take one-off commissions for chairs from other car owners.

The price? **£10,000–15,000**, he estimates. "But that is for a chair which would never be made again."



Williams with his 1966 Ford Mustang, which first inspired him to create furniture based on classic cars

Williams has not yet had a eureka moment when looking at a modern car, but believes design skills are transferable — Marc Newson, for instance, has designed cars, furniture and gadgets alike.

Williams' dream, however, is to design his own car. "I'd bloody love to do that," he says. "Of course, I'd love to have it made as well."

Full details at adamwilliamsdesign.co.uk

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