

A GEM OF A COLLECTION

For Laurence and Francois Graff, Ferrari is the ultimate car. But which is the ultimate Ferrari? Feast your eyes on one leading contender: the 400 Superamerica Coupé Aerodinamico



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For a man whose name has unparalleled international resonance, Enzo Ferrari was not someone who liked to travel. Nor did he stray far from his Modena birthplace when he founded Ferrari in 1947, choosing the agrarian Emilia-Romagna backwater of Maranello for his factory headquarters.

The original ochre-hued entrance on Via Abetone is still intact, but as the company celebrates its 70th anniversary, Ferrari now feels more like a technology campus than an artisan car-maker. The sense of history is palpable, of course, but in this anniversary year the marque is clearly committed to engineering Ferrari's future as well as honouring its glorious past. "My favourite Ferrari? That which is yet to be built," Enzo Ferrari always said, only slightly tongue-in-cheek.

This particular weekend in September, however, it is indulging in a celebratory retrospective. Maranello and its environs are a sea of red. Six months of worldwide activity is culminating in a huge party, held on Ferrari's Fiorano test track. One could almost call it Ferrari Fest, given the grandstand and stage that straddle turns 4 and 5. More than 5,000 top clients have made the pilgrimage, 118 exquisite cars are entered in a prestigious *concorso d'eleganza* and RM Sotheby's is holding a keenly awaited auction. This weekend, if you have petrol flowing through your veins, Maranello is the axis around which the world turns.

Testament to this is the presence of both Laurence and Francois Graff. "Isn't this incredible?" Francois says, gesturing to the array of automobiles that fan out behind us.

If ownership of a high-end historic car provides a gateway to a fascinating subculture, then Ferrari is surely the most arcane and devoted of all. There are different strata within the community of Ferrari collectors: some owners are drawn to 1950s racing models with notable provenance, driven by legendary champions; others to *carrozzeria*-crafted one-offs. Some love front-engined V12 GTs – or have allowed popular culture to light the way. A surprising number of American Ferrari owners of my acquaintance from a particular generation were indoctrinated by television shows such as *Magnum, PI* or *Miami Vice*, both of which starred iconic Prancing Horse models.

The Graffs are certainly connoisseurs. They own, among others, a 250 GT Tour de France, a 250 GT California Spyder

Laurence Graff's lovingly restored 1962 Ferrari 400 Superamerica Coupé Aerodinamico has a fascinating backstory

“The 400 Superamerica Coupé Aerodinamico could be likened to a rare diamond – the quality of the craftsmanship is exquisite”

Right: The 18-edition 400 Superamerica Coupé Aerodinamico on the assembly line

SWB in the highly desirable covered-headlight spec, a 250 GT SWB, a 250 GT Lusso, a 250 LM, a 275 GTB/4, an F40 and a LaFerrari hypercar – and those in the know can recognise an expertly curated collection when they see one.

Laurence Graff's most recent acquisition may also be the most compelling. The 400 Superamerica Coupé Aerodinamico is a 1962 *gran turismo* model epitomising Ferrari's embrace of a more luxurious and less overtly sporting archetype. Its original owner, Erwin Goldschmidt, definitely fitted the brief. A talented gentleman driver with several successful Ferrari race outings to his name, Goldschmidt has been described as a “bookish perfectionist of mercurial personality” who was passionate about cars. He was also a connoisseur who was dedicated in his quest for excellence – of which this model is surely an exemplar. Goldschmidt was equally passionate and driven in his pursuit of the art collection that had been stolen from his family. For Erwin was the son of the German-Jewish financier, art collector and philanthropist Jakob Goldschmidt, who fled Germany in 1933 in a car full of Renoirs and Picassos, and later settled in the United States. Erwin subsequently chased down many of the heirlooms the Nazis had managed to get their hands on – and sold many of them for record-breaking prices.

His 400 Superamerica Coupé Aerodinamico, chassis no. 3949, was one of just 18 such cars Ferrari made, and was delivered to his home in Davos, Switzerland, in December 1962, its boot containing his favourite salami, courtesy of Enzo Ferrari himself. For these cars, produced in partnership with the celebrated coachbuilders at Pininfarina, were only available for Ferrari's most important customers – clients who were friends of the marque, each of whom requested small but significant modifications.

In the case of the Goldschmidt car, these included fitted luggage, additional interior grab-handles (requested by Mrs Goldschmidt, a former Miss Argentina) and extractor vents on



ARCHIVI PARABOLA; PATRICK ERNZEN/RM SOTHEBY'S

the rear wings. Under that unusually swoopy bonnet was a sophisticated iteration of Ferrari's fabulous V12, now increased to almost four litres in capacity, whose triple Weber carburettors helped it produce 340bhp. These were heady numbers for the period, and represented a major shift for Ferrari, propelling the marque yet further into the stratosphere. For the boutique Italian sports car-maker was now making high-performance luxury cars.

“The Ferrari 400 Superamerica Coupé Aerodinamico could be likened to a rare diamond,” says Laurence Graff when asked to define what makes this car stand out, even among his own collection of exceptional classic cars. “The lines are beautiful – sporty and at the same time luxurious – and of course the craftsmanship of the coachbuilding is exquisite. A tiny number of these models were made, and all have their own distinct modifications. And the fact that this model was made for Erwin Goldschmidt and driven by him for many years gives it a singular and very special provenance. The moment I saw it, I knew I wanted to acquire it for my collection.” For Francois Graff, the comparison with a rare gemstone also holds true. “Most of our pieces are one-offs – and rarity is something our clients enjoy too.”

A stroll between the cars lined up alongside Fiorano's evocative corners for that anniversary is an object lesson in the enduring power and appeal of the Ferrari brand. As Francois sees it, “You have to be something of a student not only of your competition, but other important brands. And as far as I'm concerned, there's none more important than Ferrari. It's a phenomenal company. Ask an Eskimo to name the most famous car in the world and, while he may not say a Ferrari, he'll know that the car is red and he'll know what it looks like. To have that kind of brand power is incredible. It's what we all aspire to.”

“A car like this is something to treasure,” adds Laurence Graff. “A Ferrari is very different from a Graff jewel, but we share precisely the same obsession with producing excellence.”



From top: The 400 Superamerica's bodywork, bearing the badge of Ferrari and Pininfarina; Erwin Goldschmidt at the wheel of the Allard J2 Cadillac in which he won the 1950 Watkins Glen Grand Prix; the car's leather interior