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Jean Daninos' personal Facel Vega Prototype is every bit as cool as you'd expect

Lead
Some cars are cool, but few are quite as ice cold as Facel Vega-founder Jean Daninos' personal set of wheels. This rarer-than-rare piece of French motoring history heads to RM Sotheby's upcoming Villa Erba sale on 20th May.



The French have a deep-rooted love affair with art, more so than almost any other country on earth. Renoir, Monet, Matisse, each with their own motives for creating a visual representation of the emotions and environments around them, but when it comes to automotive design, there is just one French car that really gets our emotions going.

Jean Daninos founded Forges et Ateliers de Construction d'Eure-et-Loir, or FACEL in 1939, but it would take 15 years for the company to officially start producing automobiles. Cars like the HK500 and Excellence came and went, but it was the Facel II that would propel this stylish French outfit into the upper echelons of design mastery.



This example, known as HK2 A099, was built as a prototype in 1959, a full two years before the model was officially launched, and served as the precursor to the 183 production examples that would follow. Not only was the prototype an order of magnitude more sporting than the HK500 on which it was based, it also differed considerably from the production Facel II. To the glancing eye it may look like a regular production example, but this one-off featured sleek coupé styling with a sheet metal rear quarter panel, a shorter roof, bespoke glazing, and an attractive front end with separate headlamps.



Its deep Noire paint adds a slightly more villainous theme to the often pastel-coloured coupé, but it's a shade that it carries exceptionally well, especially with its matching black leather interior. It was specified with the desirable Pont-à-Mousson four-speed manual gearbox, allowing Daninos to feel more connected than ever to his creation. Believed to have been built in 1959, the car spent its early life hidden from view, before being registered for the first time on February 16th 1965 in the name of company founder Jean Daninos, just months after the factory doors permanently closed.

After multiple owners, the car has now been completely restored which involved remanufacturing much of the car's impressive bodywork. The three-year restoration has ensured this piece of history can now be enjoyed to its fullest once more. You can keep your 'Impression, Sunrise', this is the only piece of French art we long for!

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