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[Le Corbusier's 'Voiture Minimum': Downsizing, 1930s-style](#)

Lead

The name Le Corbusier is synonymous with minimalist and futuristic architecture – he created modern apartment buildings and even influenced entire cities. Whether in art, design or architecture, he strove for perfection; an aim that can also be seen in his small car concept 'Voiture Minimum'.

In his 350-page book 'Voiture Minimum: Le Corbusier and the Automobile', Antonio Amado describes the relationship between the creative virtuoso and the car. Indeed, aside from his multiple talents, the Swiss designer was an avid motorist, described as a 'committed' driver who yearned for a sense of speed.

Even though his urban planning theories often included a sense of 'fast mobility', it was a long time before he came up with his idea for a car of the future. Together with his cousin Pierre Jeanneret – who was also involved in the development of the LC4 Chaise Longue – Le Corbusier presented his vision of the 'Voiture Minimum' in a 1936 design competition.





The simple, teardrop-shaped small car offered space for four passengers: three seats in front and a reverse-facing rear chair. It was powered by a rear-mounted engine (and it's worth remembering that the VW Beetle had not yet been released at that time). Ahead of his time as always, Le Corbusier applied his customarily rigorous geometrical principles to the design, and he also considered functionality to be as important as aesthetics – a difficult approach in a time when the motor car was primarily designed to be 'beautiful', with ergonomics and usability seen as a mere afterthought. Ultimately, though, the pair did not win the competition.

Nonetheless, Le Corbusier subsequently tried to convince car manufacturers to adopt his vision of the car of the future, but without success. After this setback, he produced no further car designs – although some flourishes of the Voiture Minimum could later be found in the super-popular Citroën 2CV.

Photos: MIT Press

Gallery

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