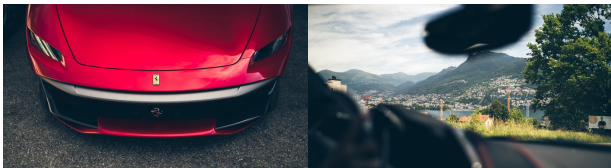


CLASSIC DRIVER

[A rosso rendezvous with the Ferrari SP38 Deborah and F40 in Lugano](#)

Lead

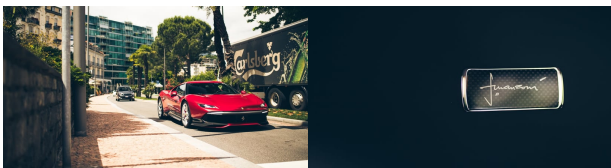
Which impressionable child doesn't dream about and draw the supercar of their dreams, more often than not finished with a Prancing Horse on its wings? Extraordinarily, for one passionate and loyal Ferrari customer, the dream became a reality. This was our rendezvous with the unique SP38 Deborah...



If you're a fully-fledged member of the Ferrari family, you'll be invited to purchase its revered 'halo' supercars such as the Enzo and the LaFerrari. If you're considered to be of even greater importance, its Corse Clienti department, which allows you to buy a track-only 'XX' model or one of the Scuderia's former Formula 1 cars, will welcome you with open arms. But there's another rung on the ladder you can climb – a level on which every diehard Ferrari collector yearns to reach. And that's when the Special Projects programme invites you to create your own tailor-made Ferrari.



On that note, say *ciao* to the dazzling SP38 Deborah, a one-off Ferrari based on the 488 GTB and built by the Special Projects skunkworks for a *very* important client. Ever since we first clapped eyes on the SP38 at Villa d'Este, we were completely smitten. Its general demeanour is more V12 hypercar than V8 supercar and, frankly, it makes the 488 GTB upon which it's based look comparatively 'normal'. Fast-forward two weeks and we're lakeside in the pretty Swiss town of Lugano, close to the Italian border, ogling this stunning machine parked next to its primary inspiration – the mighty F40.



This is so much more than a case of visiting your local Ferrari Atelier and ticking all the boxes on the options list until the final price resembles a telephone number. It's been four long years since the SP38's owner first sat down with Ferrari's head of design Flavio Manzoni to conceive the car. Starting entirely from scratch, the client's brief was clear – to create a modern homage to the F40 painted in a particular shade of dark red.

After the initial sketches were signed off, Ferrari produced three-dimensional renderings and then a life-size model, before the final manufacturing process began. They say patience is a virtue, but we can only begin to imagine the agony of waiting three years to see your ravishing red baby come to life.



To say it was worth the wait is an understatement. The SP38 in the metal is nothing short of exquisite. For our rendezvous, the Swiss Ferrari dealer [Loris Kessel Auto SA](#), which assisted the SP38's owner in the latter stages of the build process, kindly provided an F40 so we could see exactly where many of the Deborah's design cues were derived - namely the slatted rear clamshell, the huge star-shaped wheels, and the intricate rear aerodynamic foil, which gives the impression of the F40's distinctive squared-off rear wing.



While the F40 served as the SP38's primary inspiration, this is an entirely different and altogether more modern design. The wedge-shaped front end, which tapers towards that wide and low open grille, harks back to the Ferrari 308, while the slim day-running lights look just as evil as those on the FXX K. The muscular arches protruding from the flat waistline certainly lend an air of the Lancia Stratos. Perhaps the greatest - and most clever - aesthetic departure from the 488 GTB, however, is the loss of the ungainly 'air scoops' on the car's hips. They've been discretely concealed by sleek sheets of aluminium that blend seamlessly into the C pillars.



And then there's the paint - an unctuous triple-layer metallic red christened *Rosso Deborah*. Ferrari apparently loved the shade so much that it's now offering it as an option to its customers. For those scratching their heads about the car's name, Deborah was allegedly the person who invented the colour. Clearly, she has great taste - it's a simply gorgeous shade, especially in the direct sunlight, when it twists almost to an orange. It implores you to look closer and closer still until your nose is virtually pressing on the bodywork.





While custom interior details such as the body-coloured trim, the 'Deborah' stitching on the dash ahead of the passenger, and the plaque bearing Manzoni's signature are nice, we'd have loved to have seen the interior redone to the same extent as the bodywork. We're reliably informed by Ronnie Kessel, who's on driving duties for our rendezvous, that the SP38 feels as phenomenally quick, delicate, poised, and energetic as the 488 GTB from behind the wheel.



The residents of Lugano are accustomed to seeing exotic cars, but the sight of these two gleaming twin-turbocharged titans purring past certainly left them scratching their heads – this was quite clearly a Ferrari, but so dramatically unlike the 458s and 488s that are ten-a-penny in this part of Switzerland. Chasing these two cars side-by-side was quite the spectacle – to steal the spotlight from the dramatic F40 is no mean feat for any car, but in the company of the SP38, even the definitive 1980s supercar recedes into the background.



We're not alone in thinking the SP38 is a masterful piece of design – the jury at the Concorso d'Eleganza Villa d'Este, where the car made its public debut, awarded it the first prize in the Concepts category. And compared to previous Special Projects one-offs such as Eric Clapton's SP12 EC or the P540 Superfast Aperta, we think it's a better-resolved design. Ultimately, though, this car is an embodiment of one person's unflinching loyalty and dedication to Ferrari – the ultimate crowning trophy for a no-doubt spectacular collection, created in tribute to what is considered one of the greatest supercars ever built. *Grazie Deborah!*

Photos: Tom Shaxson for Classic Driver © 2018

Gallery

