
Classic Concepts: 1967 Lamborghini Marzal

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Making its debut at the 1967 Geneva Motor Show, the Lamborghini Marzal concept's revolutionary styling sent shockwaves through the automotive industry. Today, some of the design cues are still apparent in the most contemporary Lamborghini supercars.

In 1967, Ferruccio Lamborghini sought to add a third car to his company's line-up, which already boasted the celebrated Miura, as well as the 400GT. He was keen to add a proper four-seater (the 400GT was a 2+2), and therefore repeated the previously fruitful commissioning of styling house Bertone to create the Marzal, which took its name from a strain of fighting bull. Heading Bertone was a 28-year-old Marcello Gandini, who had become a star in his own right after being credited for the exquisite Miura a year earlier; despite the fact that the majority of the design was the work of his predecessor Giorgetto Giugiaro, with Gandini making alterations and Nuccio Bertone finalising the design. Apparently, Bertone sent Gandini on holiday during this phase to curb his enthusiasm.

But this served only to make Gandini hungrier for success, and the Marzal gave him the opportunity to break the mould cast by his peers. His inventiveness was demonstrated by electing to use a pair of gullwing doors in place of the conventional four-door configuration, in order to retain coupé-like aesthetics while adding the required practicality of a four-seater. Like the roof, the doors were made of glass to give the innovative Lamborghini an airy atmosphere inside (the total glass area of the car was a whopping 4.5 square metres), though Ferruccio Lamborghini famously objected to them, noting that they "offer no privacy: a lady's legs would be there for all to see."



But in general, the design was well received, with the well-respected British journalist LJK Setright declaring it “perhaps the most extravagant piece of virtuoso styling to have come out of Europe since the war”. Other notable styling features included the repeated use of the hexagonal theme, apparent in the honeycombed rear louvres, dashboard, steering wheel and seats, as well as the restyled Campagnolo wheels.

The car sat on a Miura chassis, its wheelbase extended by 120mm to provide the required extra space to accommodate a pair of full-size rear passengers. To further assist packaging, the engine – a 2.0-litre inline six, formed from the rear bank of the 4.0-litre Lamborghini V12 – was rotated 180° and moved aft of the rear wheels, which effectively made the Marzal the first (and only) rear-engined Lamborghini. The 175bhp powerplant was fed through a triumvirate of Weber carbs, and enjoyed commendation for its ‘lively’ nature by the Italian *Quattroruote* magazine, which tested the prototype for its October 1967 issue.



The Marzal's most famous outing though was at the Monaco GP of 1967, where the hexagonal seats were literally ‘graced’ by royalty: it was used as the pace car for the race, with Princess Grace and her husband using it to parade around the circuit before the event began. It may have been this appearance which initiated the popularity of Matchbox and Dinky scale models of the car, but of more importance was its influence on subsequent Lamborghinis. A year later saw the unveiling of the *Espada*: a Gandini-penned spiritual production version of the Marzal, which retained its general proportions but lost the rear engine layout, conspicuous doors and honeycombed addenda of its forebear. However, subtle hints of the Marzal can be seen to this day in production Lamborghinis – in particular the hexagonal shape, which has been progressively incorporated into the company's design language. Just take a look at the rear louvres of a [Murciélago LP670-4 SV](#), or the plaque on the V12 engine of an [Aventador](#).



Although it ultimately remained a one-off (now in a private collection following its [sale at the 2011 Ville d'Este](#)), the Marzal is one of the definitive cars of the post-War coachbuilding industry that was dominated by the ever-expressive Italians. At the time, an American magazine pointed out that Gandini's design instantly made "everything else seem dated", illustrated by the fact that its production successor remained on sale until 1978. But perhaps most impressive is that some of its styling cues have endured several generations of automotive design, and even seem to be increasingly relevant more than four decades later.

Photos: Bertone

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