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The 1970s French microcar revolution that never was

Lead

Small car with potential for a big impact – so was the premise for Victor Bouffort’s economical Minima. And if it would’ve been produced today, instead of almost 45 years ago, maybe big cities the world over would be a little less congested and a little more appreciated...



Unfortunately for Victor Bouffort, a lifetime dedicated to mechanical design and construction was not enough for him to see his cars mass-produced and being navigated through cities. Now, over 20 years since his death, he’s finally getting the recognition he deserves. As the concept-creator for both car sharing and the urban car, this year’s Rétromobile show will be giving credit where credit is due and displaying an exhibit dedicated to Victor Bouffort and his unique and ground-breaking inventions.

From aeroplanes to three-wheelers to amphibious all-terrain vehicles to motorised suitcases, Bouffort has designed and built all kinds of out-of-the-box modes of transportation. But it has been his little Minima that has garnered him the most recognition over the decades. Aware of parking and traffic issues starting to progressively worsen in late 1960s, Bouffort teamed up with Henri Viard, a novelist and humourist, to design a two-seater urban car that could go 120 km/h, would take up minimal space when parked on the shoulder of a road, and would be available for free rental in the middle of bustling cities — the Minima. It debuted at the 1973 Paris Motor Show, atop the Montparnasse Tower, and although a fantastic concept, it was just too forward thinking for the time. Now, almost 45 years later, car manufacturers and urban planners are using the Minima concept as a blueprint for modern city transport solutions. If we only knew then what we know now...

Gallery

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