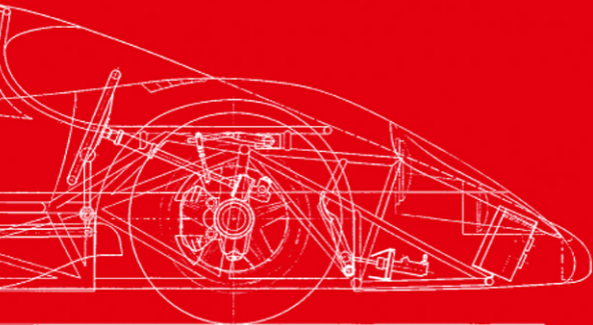


PORSCHE 917

ARCHIVE AND
WORKS CATALOGUE

WALTER NÄHER

1968-1975



EDITION PORSCHE MUSEUM

PORSCHE 917

ARCHIVE AND WORKS CATALOGUE

1968-1975

WALTER NÄHER

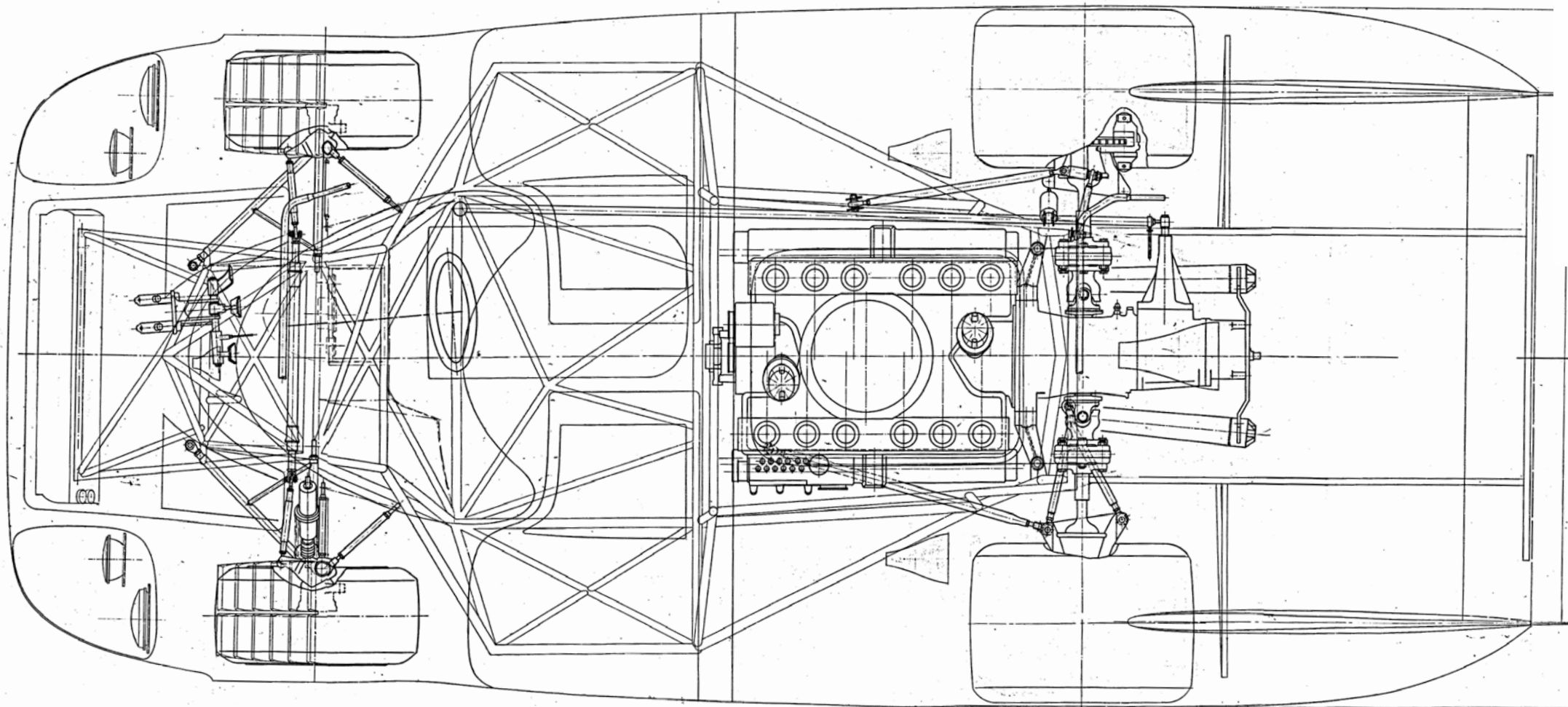
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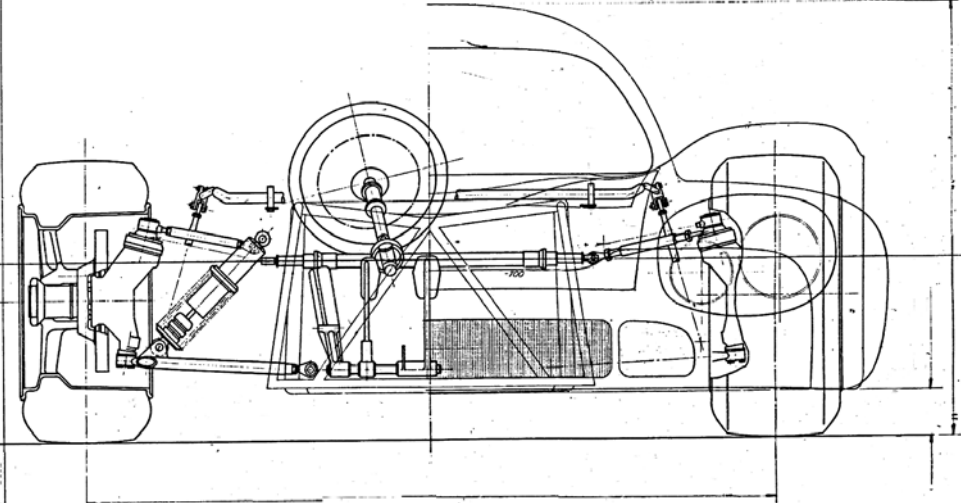
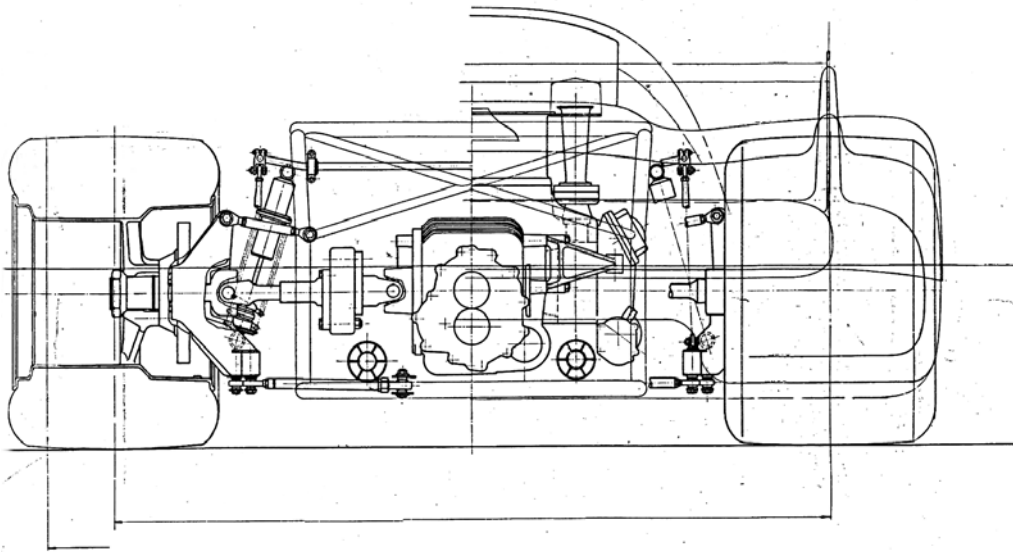
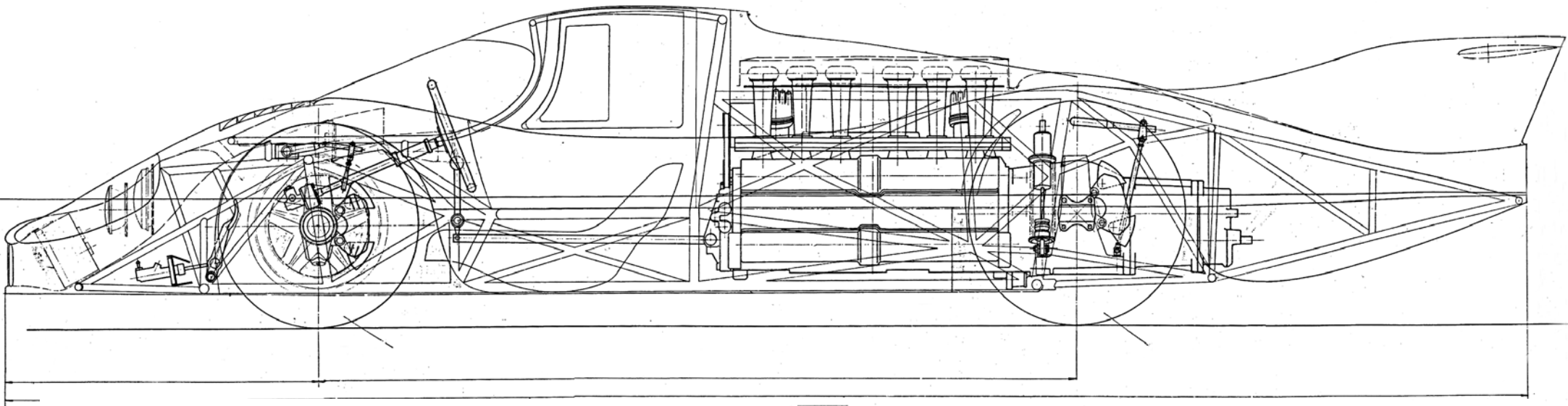
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PORSCHE 917	
CHASSIS # 917-042, 043, 045	
Pre-training, Le Mans, 1971	LONG TAIL
Race, Le Mans, 1971	
1971	



CHAPTER 4

PREMIERE IN GENEVA

The Group 4 car with type designation 917 was developed under conditions of the strictest secrecy. From the beginning, Ferdinand Piëch had planned to present it to the world with a spectacular unveiling at the start of the Geneva Auto Show on March 12.

Despite all the secrecy, by the beginning of March rumours were afoot of a super sports car under construction in Zuffenhausen. The Porsche Press Department decided to take control of the situation by coming out with a preliminary press release on 3 March 1969. However, in no way did this hint that a 4.5 litre race car was involved.

The official statement was issued to the press under the matter-of-fact headline “Porsche to present new sports car in Geneva” and went on to say, “A new sports car with the type designation 917 is currently in production in Porsche’s Zuffenhausen works. This model, with its attention-grabbing

design, will be presented to the public at the Geneva Auto Show. The Geneva Salon de l’Auto will be held from 13 to 23 March and the Porsche will be presented on the official press day, 12 March.”

For “Operation Geneva” a body frame was delivered to Zuffenhausen on 1 March. Body supplier Waggonfabrik Rastatt took this first tubular grid frame made by Baur into its production line to apply skin number two (the first skin was bonded to the Porsche sample frame and had been delivered to the Porsche plant on 10 February). Of course, there wasn’t much time left before the show

to put the new chassis number 917 001 on wheels as a ready-to-drive race car.

From the pile of parts, components, hoses, pipes and containers that had accumulated for the homologation cars, the mechanics set to work putting together a “White Giant”. The Engine Department promised to deliver a twelve-cylinder power plant ready for installation by 7 March, as well as a complete drive train.

There is no record of the exact time when the first 917 stood fully assembled, but it can be assumed that it was the evening of 10 March 1969, just in time for the car to be transported to Geneva.

LEFT: The automobile sensation is perfect! Ferdinand Piëch and his driver Gerhard Mitter present the 917 super sports car at the booth of the Swiss Automobile Club.



CHAPTER 10

WORKS TEST DRIVES, RACES AND DEVELOPMENTS IN 1970

The 1970 racing year started under a new banner for Zuffenhausen.

Unlike in 1969, the races for the International Championship for Manufacturers would no longer be run under Porsche registry but under the name of the new partner, John Willment Automotive Engineering Ltd. (JWAE). Team chief was John Wyer. His racing director was David Yorke as before and the technical chief was Wyer's seasoned racing engineer, John Horsman. The driver teams were Joseph Siffert/Brian Redman, Pedro Rodriguez/Leo Kinnunen and for Le Mans David Hobbs/Mike Hailwood. This meant that Porsche's focus for 1970 would be the supply of the requisite vehicles and their ongoing refinement during the racing season, as well as special develop-

917 014 before the 24 Hours of Daytona

ments as required by the Targa Florio and Le Mans races. It had been agreed with Wyer that two cars would be used in the championship races in addition to a reserve vehicle¹. The Targa Florio in Sicily was an exception. There, Porsche wanted to run a light spyder – which had yet to be developed – under its own name. The 1000 kilometre race at Nürburgring-Nordschleife followed Targa Florio. The plan was for the Nürburgring pre-training to give definitive clarity on the 917's suitability for that demanding course. On 4 December 1969, in the run-up to the 1970 racing season, John Wyer received the first frame/body unit

¹ And a third car for Le Mans

(917 014), for assembly of a car for the 24 hour Daytona race on 31 January/1 February. On 8 December a fully assembled but unpainted car (917 004) was also sent. On 7 January 1970, Zuffenhausen prepared two more cars for Wyer, 917 013 and 917 015. These four cars put JWAE in a position to cover Daytona as well as Sebring.

Two additional cars were delivered to JWAE: 917 016 on 21 March for Brands Hatch and 917 026 on 13 May for Le Mans.

These six formed the basis for Wyer's 1970 season. Accidents happen, and in the course of the season Zuffenhausen sent some replacement frame/body units which caused renumberings.

Thus, at Brands Hatch Siffert/Redman crashed 917 004, which then became 917 004/017. Piper had an accident with 917 013 in filming at Le Mans, so that car became 917 013/034. After Hailwood's Le Mans accident, 917 026 became 917 026/031.

In keeping with standard JWAE practice, the team used the original chassis number of the replaced car for replacement frame/body units from Zuffenhausen, although each new chassis had its own number. This later caused confusion when the crash chassis, or after the season the complete vehicles, were returned to Zuffenhausen, since the renumbering meant they no longer had their original number.

Almost unnoticed by the sport press, Ferdinand Piëch decided to put more 917s into the ring via registry by Porsche Konstruktionen Salzburg. Behind the Austrian team was Louise Piëch, Ferdinand Piëch's mother. The team had already established itself in the 1969 world endurance championship with the three litre Porsche 908. Racing chief was Gerhard Strasser and the driver team for Daytona was Vic Elford/Kurt Ahrens. At Sebring the team raced two vehicles for the first time, adding the driver team Hans Herrmann/Rudi Lins.



LEFT: 917 014 with its main competitor, the Ferrari 512 S;
RIGHT: 917 013 training car with Siffert at the wheel

At the start of the European season at Brands Hatch, Vic Elford/Denis Hulme and Hans Herrmann/Richard Attwood drove for Salzburg. Since Sebring the team had two “regular” 917s, one of which had crashed at Sebring and been replaced by a new 917 for Brands Hatch.

The Salzburg team also had two cars for Monza and Spa (Elford/Ahrens and Herrmann/Attwood), Watkins Glen (Elford/Hulme and Attwood/Ahrens) and the Österreicherring in Zeltweg (Elford/Attwood and Ahrens/Dr. Marko). At the 24 hours of Le Mans a regular Salzburg short tail as well as the new Zuffenhausen long tail took part under the direction of the Porsche works. Both cars were built and prepped in Zuffenhausen, as were Salzburg’s 917s for the International Championship for Manufacturers. The Salzburg team had a reserve car for the first time at the two Le Mans practice days. While the Wyer team drove on Firestones in 1970/71, in 1970 the Salzburg team chose Goodyear.

PREPARING FOR DAYTONA

After the painful experience at the previous Le Mans with the 917 transmission and the associated clutch issues, various steps had been taken with the primary goal of improving the long-term strength of the housing. Nevertheless, in the hard-driven tests and race trials in late 1969 there had still been occasional housing cracks.

With a view to the upcoming 24 Hours of Daytona race and 12 hour Sebring event at the start of the year, a 24 hour transmission endurance test was therefore carried out on a roller test bed.

From 12–23 January a final version of the 917 drive train was tested. It had lighter components like aluminium shift forks, titanium locking differential and titanium threaded fasteners for the ring gear.

“Gulf Special Lubricant 90,” a transmission fluid with reduced foaming, and a three-disc Borg & Beck clutch with Ferodo Rad 11 liners completed the test list for 917 006.

The result summary of the test report reads “*The transmission survived the 24 hour endurance without breakage*”. There were, however, issues with the aluminium shift forks (rivets torn out of the bearing shoe mounting), the bronze bearing bushings in the titanium locking differential and the clutch, which would not function for longer than five hours due to dirt and the lining of the middle disc repeatedly coming loose.

24 HOURS OF DAYTONA, 31 JANUARY/1 FEBRUARY 1970

JWAE ran 917 014 with Siffert/Redman and 917 015 with Rodriguez/Kinnunen, and had training car 917 013 along as well. There was also a surprise appearance by 917 011 for Porsche Salzburg, driven by Elford/Ahrens.

The three Porsche 917s faced four Ferrari 512 S cars driven by Andretti/Merzario, Ickx/Schetty, Gurney/Parsons and Vaccarella/Giunti. Other serious rivals were two Matra 650 3 litre sport prototypes with the first-class driver teams Beltoise/Pescarolo and Brabham/Cevert.

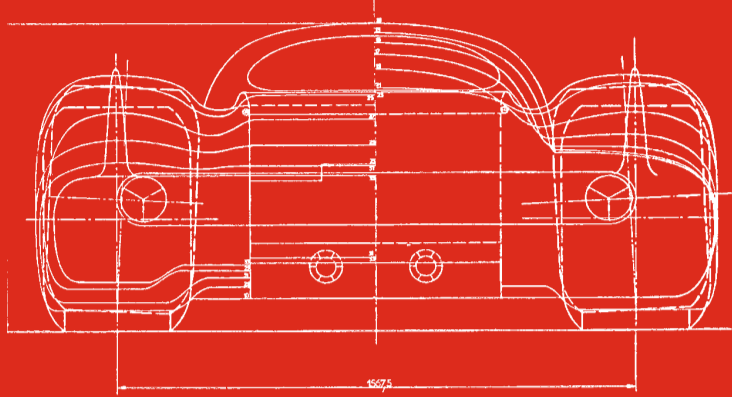
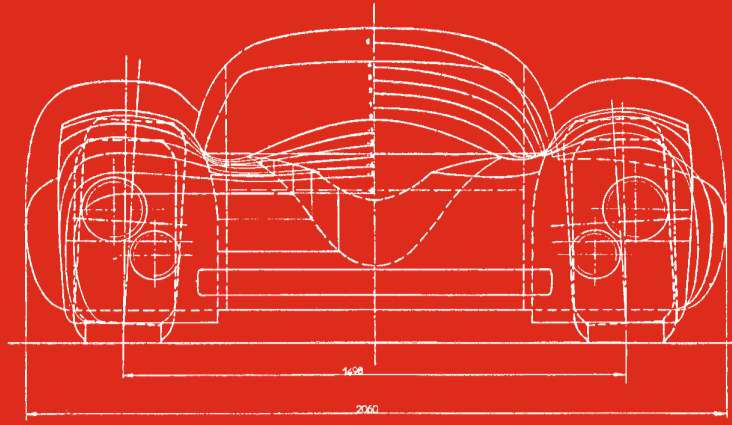
Andretti/Merzario had the fastest practice time with 1'51.6", beating Siffert/Redman with 1'52.9", Beltoise/Pescarolo with 1'53.0", Rodriguez/Kinnunen with 1'55.8" and Ahrens/Elford with 1'56.1".

The race itself was won after 24 long hours by the two Wyer 917s of Rodriguez/Kinnunen (724 laps) and Siffert/Redman (679 laps), ahead of Andretti/Ickx/Merzario in the Ferrari 512 S (676 laps).

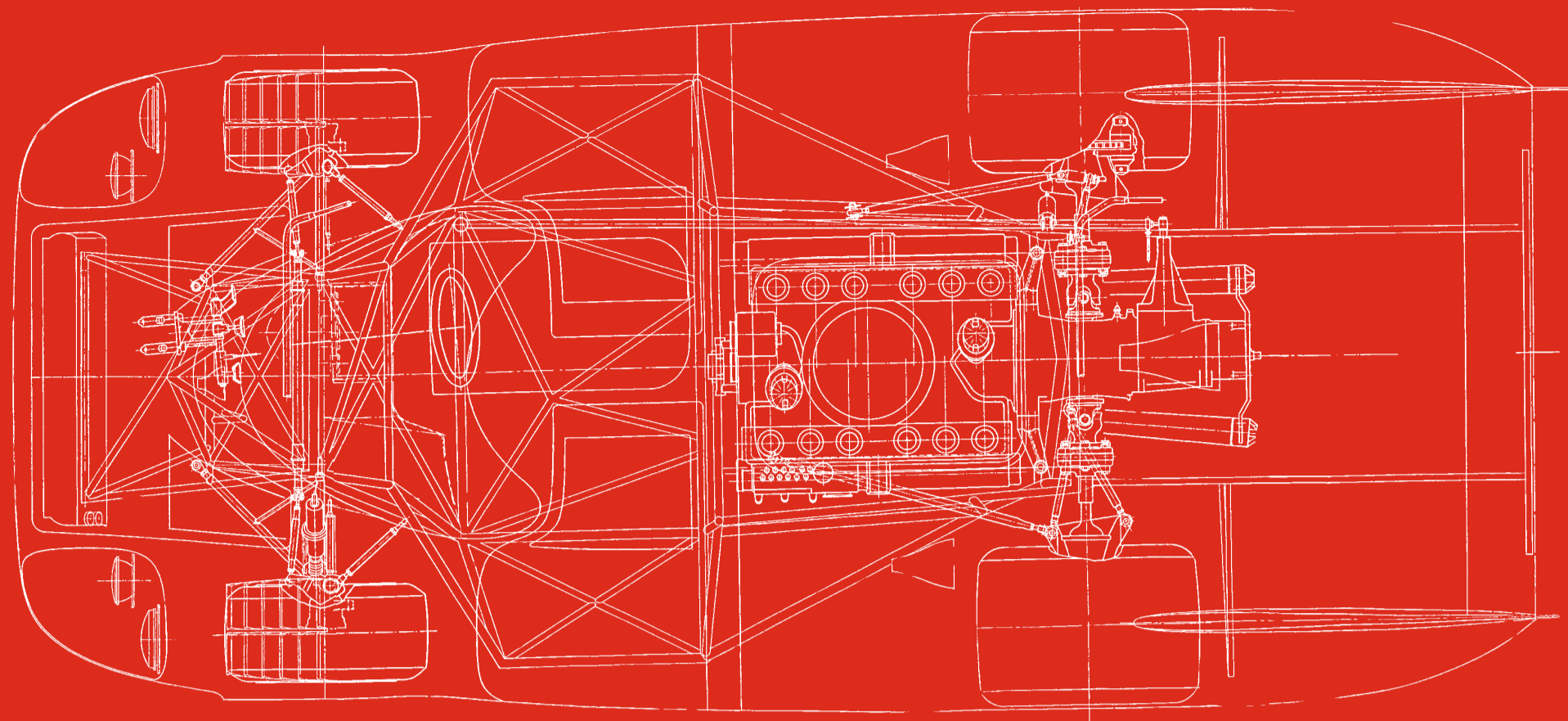
Porsche's summary report on the Daytona race reads “*The winning Rodriguez/Kinnunen car:*

This vehicle had no defects during the entire race. There was a brief pit-stop delay caused by loosening of the headlight reflectors, which had to be re-attached.”

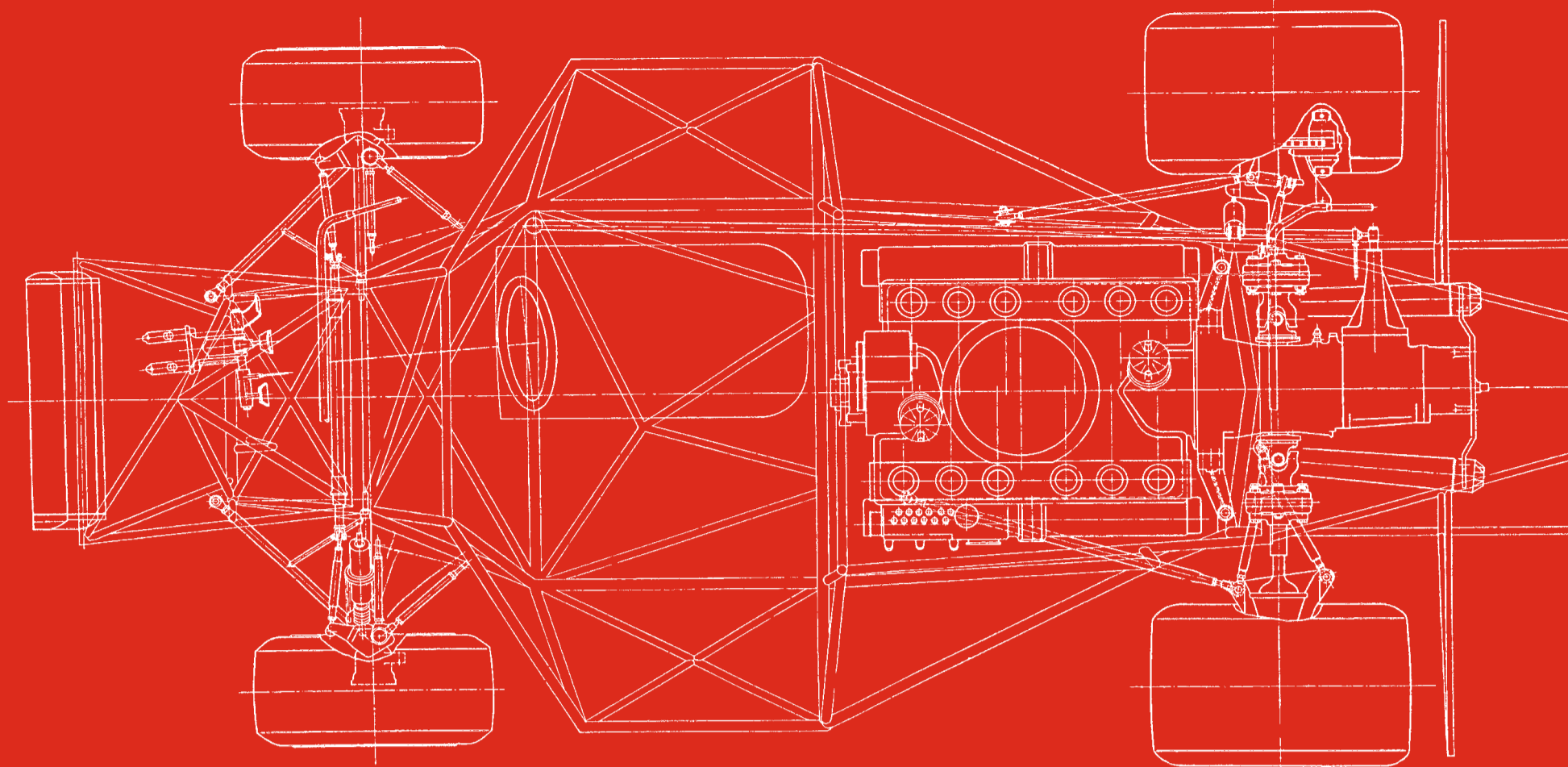




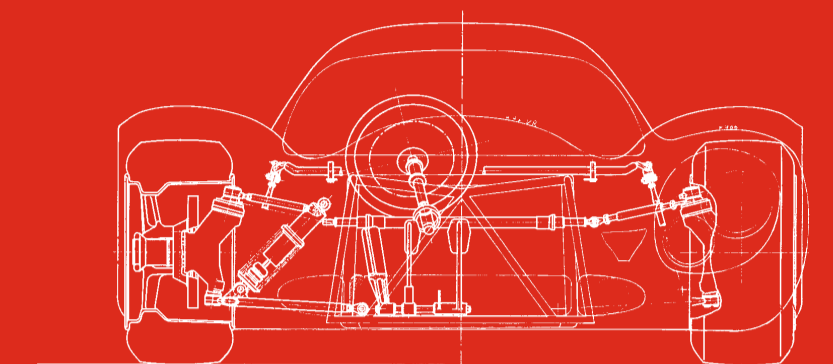
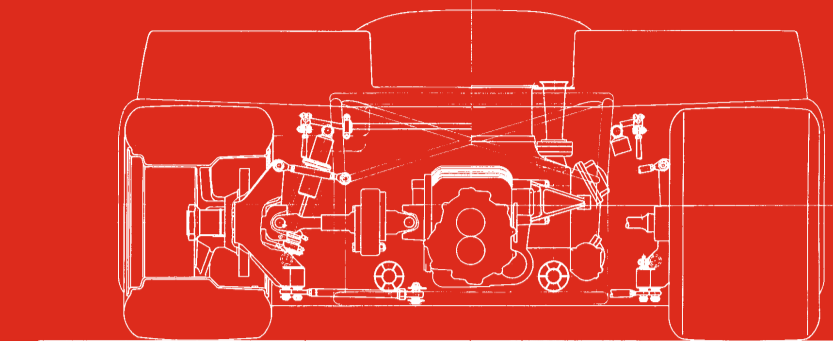
1970 LONG TAIL



1971 LONG TAIL



1970 SHORT TAIL



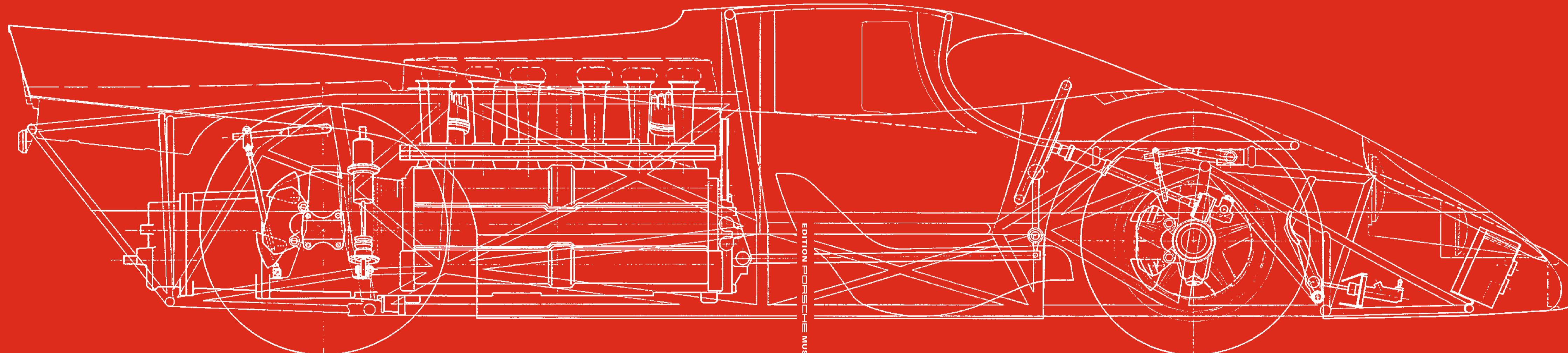
1971 SHORT TAIL

THE BOOK

For the first time ever, this book describes the development and refinement of the legendary Porsche 917 race car in painstaking technical detail, backed by original company documentation. The resulting Works Catalogue lists each of the 65 chassis and their individual fates. The immense effort Porsche went to between 1968 and 1975 in the never-ending contest with Ferrari, Ford and McLaren comes to life through detailed practice records and technical race analyses, interspersed with the original remarks of the drivers involved. The reader feels as if he had actually been on the race team. Working entirely from documentation from the historical archives of Porsche AG, much of it never before published, in years of meticulous research Walter Näher has produced an authentic standard work that no Porsche enthusiast will want to be without.

THE AUTHOR

From 1969 to 1989 Walter Näher was employed at Porsche as a test and racing engineer. He worked on race cars as well as many prototypes and series production cars, and was on the Zuffenhausen works team at nineteen Le Mans races. When Peter Falk's newly formed Racing Department entered competition in the early 80s with the Porsche 956, Näher followed the call to "Falkland" and worked as racing engineer with works drivers Ickx, Mass, Belof, Bell, Stuck, Holbert, Schuppan, Ludwig and Winkel. In late 1989 he switched to the silver Group C cars of Sauber Mercedes, stepping into the Formula 1 arena with them in 1993. He remained on Peter Sauber's Swiss racing and test team until 2002.

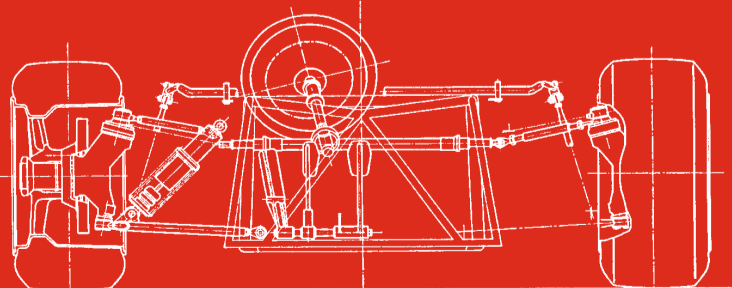
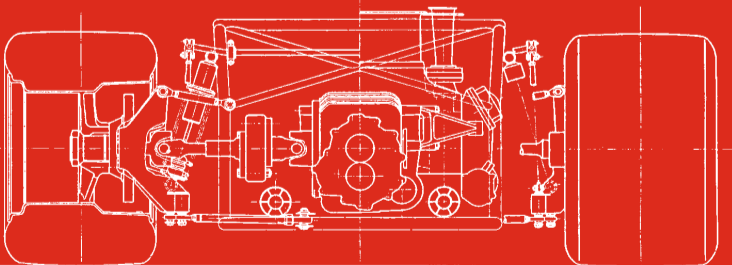


1970 SHORT TAIL

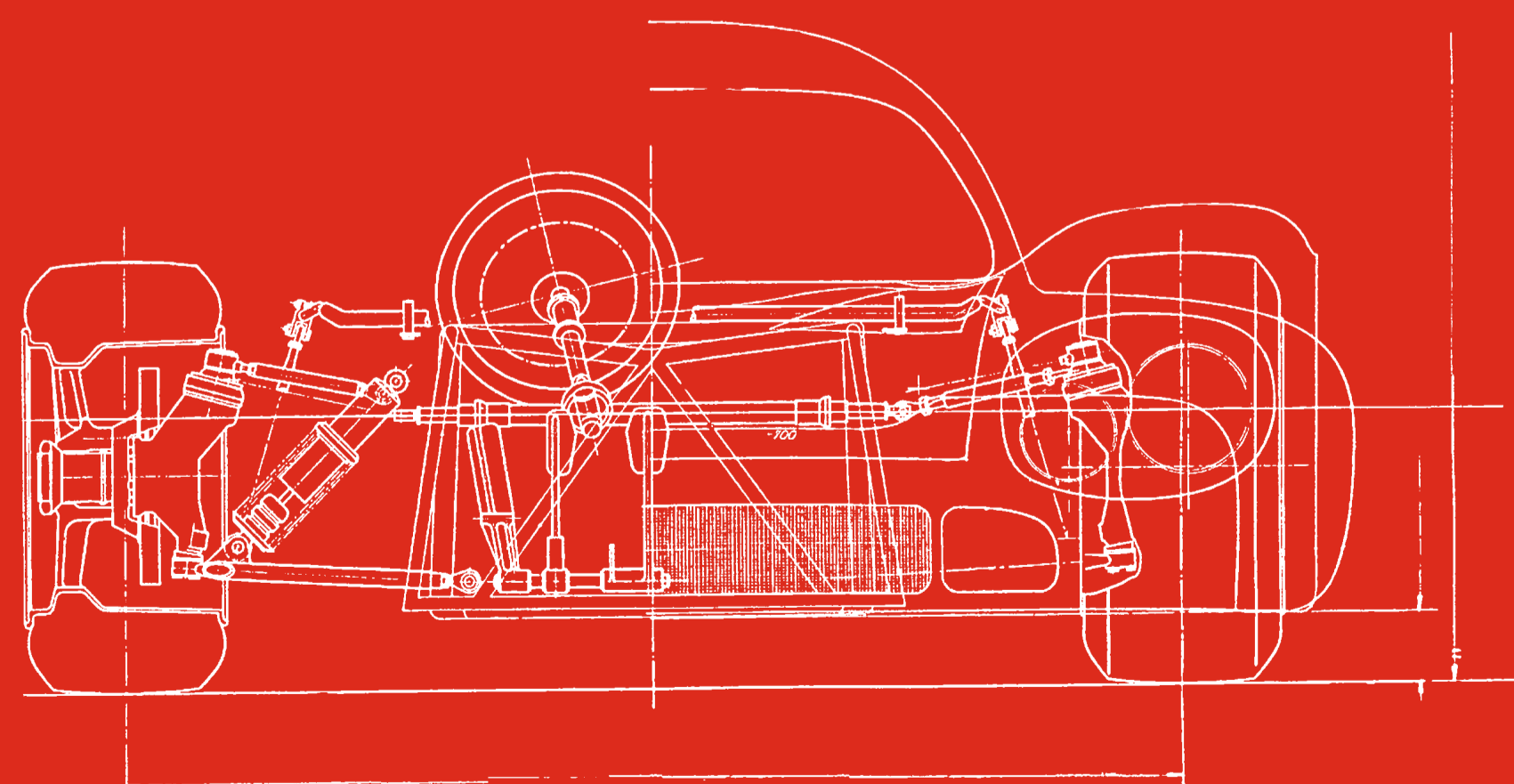
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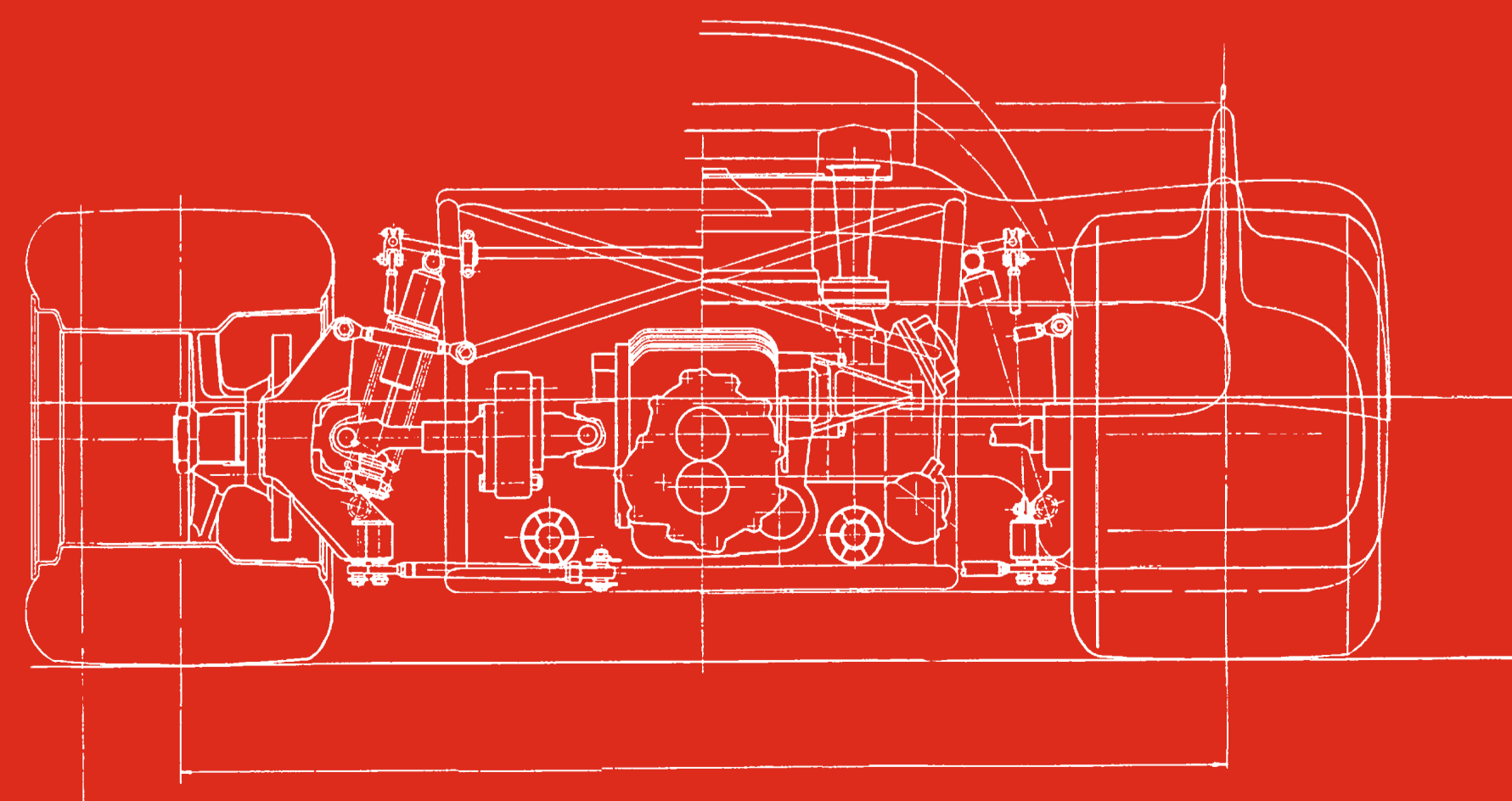
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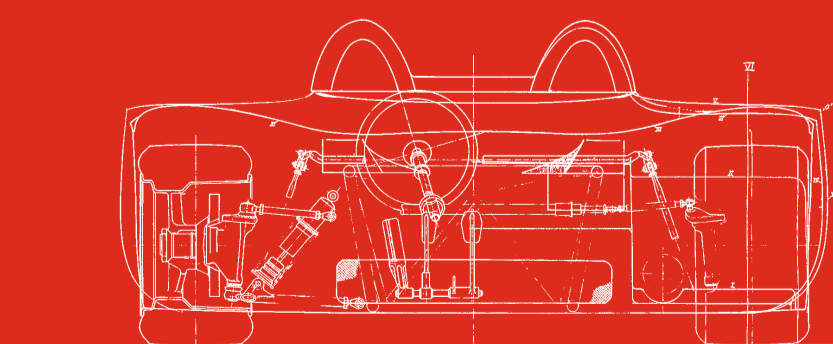
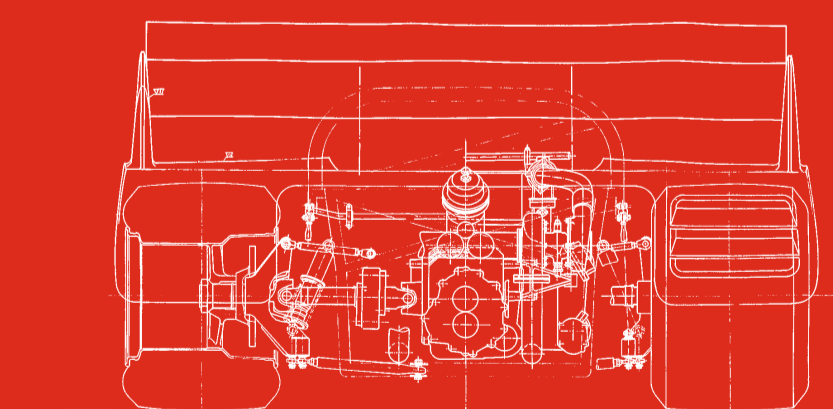
1970 SHORT TAIL



1971 LONG TAIL



1972 LONG TAIL



TURBOCHARGED 917 SHORT TAIL 1971-1973