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Buckminster Fuller Dymaxion Car

Jonathan Glancey

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In 1933, the visionary architect, engineer and designer Buckminster Fuller (1895-1983) built a car that was at that time the world's most fuel-efficient car. The Dymaxion Car ran on 35 miles per gallon, while every other car on the road struggled to manage half that amount; zeppelin-like in appearance, it was streamlined to minimize wind resistance and was capable of carrying six to eight passengers. Fuller designed two more Dymaxion Cars over the following year, though none of the three saw production. In his book *Everything I Know* (1975), Fuller remembered: "Many people said to me, after I built three of these cars, 'I'm sorry your car wasn't a success.' And I'd say 'What do you mean?' They said, 'Well you didn't get it into production.' I said, 'I wasn't going into business, I was producing a vehicle. And it was extremely successful. I learned an incredible amount.'" Today the Dymaxion Cars look dynamic, beautifully designed and several paradigm shifts ahead of their time, and Norman Foster has taken up their legacy with a new vehicle of his own. This monograph reconstructs the history of Fuller's first three models for the Dymaxion Car through detailed plans and archival photographs, and relates the production process of Dymaxion #4, a new prototype produced by Norman Foster, which was launched on the street in 2010.

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