



PORSCHE

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Background story Michael Christensen

The dashing prince and the still life

Stuttgart. A police car swoops down the street followed by a dark limousine with the American flag waving at the front. “The neighbours are getting visitors,” smiles the Porsche works driver Michael Christensen. The Dane stands on the balcony and points to a spectacular building. “That’s the US embassy. There are definitely worse places to live than here,” laughs Christensen. The reigning world sports car champion has been living in London since early 2019. His 50-square-metre apartment is in a new, modern complex right next to the US consulate. At the front of the building flows the Thames, behind it is the London Underground which takes the 1.81-metre Dane into the centre of the British capital or to Heathrow Airport within minutes.

“The environment is perfect for me. It’s very rare to find something like this in London,” says the 2018 Le Mans winner. Before moving to London, Christensen spent five years living in Vienna. When he signed the contract as a Porsche works driver in 2014, it was time to leave his parents’ home and begin his own life. “I discovered something about myself in Vienna,” reveals the often quiet professional racer. “I had an apartment with a wonderful view and I realised how important it was for me to have a wide outlook.” The tall apartment block in the Nine Elms area on London’s South Bank offers exactly this. From his balcony, Christensen looks over the silhouette of the financial metropolis.

And for the swift WEC driver there is an added bonus: “When I close the windows and the balcony door, it’s completely quiet,” says Christensen. “I have Danish friends who’ve lived in London for years. When I came to visit them I got to know the very different living conditions here. There are a lot of old buildings. It can get really loud at

some of my friends' places because of the extremely poor insulation. It feels as if you're sitting out on the street," laughs the well-trained athlete. Christensen's apartment is in a stylish, new development in an up-and-coming quarter of the metropolis. "We even have our own gym in the building. To train, I only have to catch the elevator a few floors down – so there are no excuses," he says with a wink.

Still, the Dane prefers to train in the fresh air. His immediate environment is not regarded as a London tourist hotspot. For his training runs, the Porsche factory driver heads down to the Thames just 250 metres away, then along the promenade towards Battersea Park. "If there is an upside to the coronavirus, then it's the fact that there are hardly any tourists in the city right now. That means I can run right up to the famous London Eye. The scenery is great," says Christensen. Apart from his obvious passion for motor racing, the Scandinavian has an interest in harmonious images and artistic aesthetics. He loves art. Two years ago he even became part of the scene.

"Immediately after our Le Mans win in 2018, an artist approached me with an exciting project," he explains. "I was dressed in a smart suit. She sat me in a huge leather chair and took photos. She then added almost 50 layers of different elements. In the end, it looked almost like a still-life artwork. This image portrays the essence of me and my racing: a falcon for focus and speed, a brain as the hub of concentration, and a time-piece for the constant battle against the clock. Many fantastic images came out of this project. It was a lot of fun." Generally in life, Christensen loves the bigger picture, a clear perspective, and an overall view.

Several months ago, the quiet aesthete met Maria from Denmark. The couple complement each other perfectly. The lives of the Danish government official and the swift racing driver from Greve near Copenhagen are significantly different. "And that's exactly what makes our relationship perfect," says the 29-year-old, who, despite the ongoing travel restrictions, can fly often from London to his homeland to see his girlfriend. "I travel a lot, I work in the fast motorsport business. Maria, on the other hand, is always in Copenhagen and has completely different work commitments. Her very different

perspective gives me fascinating insights into life.” Sometimes, the pair talks about racing and just as often about totally different topics. “At the moment we’re discussing how the coronavirus pandemic affects life and society. It’s extremely eye-opening,” declares Christensen.

“I’ve been on talk shows in Denmark, I’ve played a reasonably central role in athletic awards and I’ve even met Prince Joachim,” he reports, before adding with a smile: “It’s hard to believe, but his Highness beat me in a race. At the historic Grand Prix in Copenhagen, an amateur and a professional driver share a cockpit. His car had a stronger overall crew. But it didn’t matter, the main thing was about having fun.” Christensen, however, had less fun at the famous Roskilde music festival not far from Copenhagen. “I went once. Never again! The music was great and I like pop and rock and the organisers offer young artists a chance to take the stage, but the crowds, the chaos and the mud were awful. I prefer my quiet life in London.”

Further information, film and photo material in the Porsche Newsroom: newsroom.porsche.com. The Twitter channel @PorscheRaces provides live updates from Porsche Motorsport with the latest information and photos from racetracks around the world.

