

Hidden Treasures: The Porsche collection of architect Steven Harris

10/10/2025 When the Porsche collection of revered US architect Steven Harris outgrew his mid-century home in California, he simply designed a new house for them – right across the street.

From the roadside, Steven Harris's home in Rancho Mirage seems like an apposite reflection of a remarkable architectural career spanning some five decades. And there's good reason for that: The single-story construction, with its flat roofs and floor-to-ceiling windows, is a study in efficiency and elegance, nestled among lush green lawns and framed by the breathtaking backdrop of the hazy San Jacinto Mountains. But what sits above ground tells only half the architectural story, for beneath Harris's rural retreat lies an alternate expression of precise and enduring design: an underground garage full of Porsche.

In truth, Steven Harris's passion for collecting these cars is the only reason the new house exists. The prominent architect used to live just across the road, but insufficient storage for his growing car collection prompted him to build a new home around the concept of a vast, subterranean garage. Here, Harris now keeps around 20 sports cars, part of an extraordinary timeline of high-performance Porsche

models ranging from several 356 Carrera to the latest 911 S/T (992).

Harris grew up in northern Florida, his fascination with Porsche arriving when he was just eight years old and his uncle bought a 356. “I still remember how it smelled, what it sounded like, and everything about it,” says Harris. “I was absolutely obsessed with it.”

Many years later, Harris’s father bought a 1967 911 S, which the wide-eyed young student was allowed to use to take his driving test. “Then, when I went to university, somehow I convinced him that he was just driving it to the office every day, fouling the plugs, and he should really let me take it to school. And he did,” Harris recalls. “That’s the source of the obsession with Porsche.”

Harris’s higher education began with philosophy, then fine art, before zeroing in on architecture. He began teaching just two years after graduation and has now been lecturing for a remarkable 48 years, a majority of those at the prestigious Yale University.

Because he was growing a hugely successful private practice at the same time, it would be more than two decades before he began to explore his interest in Porsche properly. But when he returned his attention to the 356 and 911, it precipitated a deliberate and exacting purchasing process that would eventually see him amass one of the most significant collections worldwide.

“I bought one and then another one – and then another one,” Harris remembers. “In studying 356 cars, you soon discover the ones with four camshafts – in other words, with the legendary Fuhrmann engine. So I began collecting these Carrera variants about 20 years ago. And then I began looking at 911 cars, and for me the ultimate original 911 is probably the Carrera RS 2.7 from 1973. So I got that. And then I heard about an SC RS and about a 964 generation RS. And that led me to … I mean, I’m a little obsessive.

Harris’s collection now sits somewhere north of 50 cars, almost all of them lightweight, competition-bred variants of both the 356 and 911. Alongside cars like the 911 Carrera RS 2.7 from 1973 and the 911 Carrera RS (964), there’s also a Paint to Sample Chartreuse 911 GT3 RS 4.0 (997), a rare Light Green 911 Carrera RS 3.0 – one of just 52 cars built to homologate the 911 RSR in 1974 – a 911 GT2 (993), and two generations of the 911 GT2 RS (997 and 991). What do all these cars have in common? They were built without compromise for a keenly focused purpose – a principle that also dominates Harris’s architectural work.

“I am very suspicious of architectural fashion and I tend to base things on utility,” he explains. “And one of my fascinations with Porsche is that it evolves relatively slowly and precisely over time. It doesn’t have extraneous details. It has as few parts as possible.” His architecture follows this same principle. Every element has a clear purpose, whether it’s structural or has to do with the relationship to the landscape. “I aspire in my work to make something look effortless and inevitable.”

Harris’s garage has also been designed with functionality in mind, allowing every car to be easily accessed for regular maintenance and exercise. “In designing the new house, I began with the garage: a

structural bay and the columns based on putting two cars in between the columns." The cars are parked on a slight diagonal in two rows, one to either side. It was also very important to Harris that every vehicle be accessible without having to move another car. "It's a garage, not a museum."

Local building regulations limit ground-level garaging to just three bays, one of which Harris used to house an elevator that lowers cars to the garage below. This allows him to pull any car out at a moment's notice and head for the surrounding hills. The biggest challenge is choosing which one to take.

"I go driving almost every morning, before sunrise, up this almost Stelvio Pass–like road that goes up from Palm Desert to Idyllwild," says Harris. "For Route 74, my GT2 RS are too fast, and the 1957 356 A Carrera GT Speedster not fast enough! Choosing the right vehicle is a question of balance – and mood."

Whichever model he chooses, Harris takes the opportunity to get behind the wheel whenever he can. "I am working on four or five projects on the West Coast in California, and I will often drive to the sites from Palm Springs because I love the drives. Even though it's the least efficient way of getting there. I typically take more modern cars. I don't want to die with a bunch of cars with 27 miles on them."

Harris's determination to use his cars extends beyond the day-to-day, too, and crosses both geographical and athletic boundaries. A regular at official US road events, he has also driven a 356 in the infamous Peking to Paris rally and completed another rally of approximately 16,000 kilometers through South America in the same car.

For someone so committed to the Porsche brand and a completist in nature, choosing a favorite car is almost impossible. "And I love the Carrera RS 2.7 because it's so perfectly balanced," he says. "It's not the fastest; it's not the most extreme, but it's just a joy to drive." The 911 Carrera RS (964) is another of his favorites: "For me, that's what God meant when he said analog. It doesn't have power steering. It's very, very lightweight. It looks almost exactly like any other C2 until you recognize that it's a little bit lower and the wheels are magnesium. And I think I have four of them." But Harris doesn't see himself as an owner in the traditional sense. "I see myself more as the caretaker of the cars. I will take care of them and preserve them for somebody else eventually."

This role of custodian could hardly be better expressed than with the genesis of Harris's home. "It's not a house with a basement," says Harris with a smile. "It's the other way around. The garage came first."

Info

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MEDIA ENQUIRIES



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Consumption data

911 GT3 RS (WLTP)*: Consumo carburante ciclo misto (gamma modelli): 13.2 l/100 km; Emissioni CO_2 ciclo misto (gamma modelli): 299 g/km; Stato [StandHeute]

*Further information on the official fuel consumption and the official specific CO_2 emissions of new passenger cars can be found in the "Leitfaden über den Kraftstoffverbrauch, die CO_2-Emissionen und den Stromverbrauch neuer Personenkraftwagen" (Fuel Consumption, CO_2Emissions and Electricity Consumption Guide for New Passenger Cars), which is available free of charge at all sales outlets and from DAT (Deutsche Automobil Treuhand GmbH, Helmuth-Hirth-Str. 1, 73760 Ostfildern-Scharnhausen, www.dat.de).

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