

Air and water unites the US Porsche community

04/05/2023 Ex-works racer Patrick Long has given the latest Luftgekühlt event an inclusive modern twist with the launch of Air | Water – a day dedicated to models from across the 75-year history of Porsche.

For the best part of 20 years, Patrick Long was a Porsche factory driver. Having hung up his helmet at the end of 2021, today he remains a competition advisor for Porsche Motorsport, heading up North America's young driver development programme. But away from the circuit, for countless Porsche enthusiasts around the world, Long is synonymous with one word: Luftgekühlt.

Without a doubt one of the most famous and respected air-cooled Porsche event to be held each year, Luftgekühlt has just enjoyed its ninth outing, another rich and varied homage to classic Porsche sports cars from both road and race track. And once again, a sell-out weekend brought fans of the brand from across the US and beyond to another unique setting, carefully curated by Long and his Luftgekühlt partner and avid Porsche collector, Jeff Zwart.

Held on Mare Island, a six-kilometre-long disused US naval base just north of Oakland, San Francisco, 'Luft 9' welcomed an impressive 10,000 guests and more than 1,000 cars over two days, with the first giving special focus to the 911 in its 60th year through an exploration of the venerable G-model. And yet again, the selection of cars, careful curation and attention to every detail made for an unforgettable experience for Porsche enthusiasts of all ages and from all walks of life.

"We really look at Luft as a production, rather than an empty car park or race track full of a bunch of vehicles," Long explains. "That approach has started a bit of a revolution in how we all look at car shows today and I'm proud that people give us credit for having a big stake in that."

Luft has certainly raised the bar for static car shows, especially those dedicated to a single marque, with Long's vision being one of inclusivity. "Luft is about curation and storytelling," he continues. "Not only the stories of prominent cars or owners but the story of normal people who've built their car with their parents in their garage, all the way up to some of the most celebrated and decorated championship race cars. And everything in between! We focus on different story lines and themes and highlight cars that haven't been seen over and over again. But the beauty of Porsche as a brand is that there is so much to take in, so much history and so many amazing cars. So we continue to make it fun and interesting by focusing on the cars we want to learn about ourselves."

Mare Island proved to be an inspired choice by Long, another unique venue for what remains a highly visual event. "It's a place I drove by many times on my way to Sonoma Raceway,' says Long, "and I often wondered what it was. Then I got on the island and saw the diversity of architecture, right on a waterfront, with cranes and other structures, and it was really a dream backdrop. Dare I say it, it's the venue I think will go down as the best yet."

'Luft 9' will also be remembered for another reason, launching as it did a new concept from Long and his team called 'Air | Water', just in time to mark 75 years of Porsche sports cars. Held last Sunday on the same site, the new event is a natural evolution of Luftgekühlt that incorporates water-cooled cars for the first time and sets out to tell the wider story of the brand. It is something Long hopes will soon become a stand-alone celebration of all things Porsche and will reach an even greater audience.

The debut staging of Air | Water hosted Porsche models from across a history now spanning three quarters of a century, giving focus for the first time to transaxle cars, water-cooled 911 models and early examples of the Cayenne SUV. "The show was produced by the Luft team," Long explains, "but offered a different experience as part of a vision we have for an even larger gathering that highlights all things Porsche from the inception of the brand all the way to current model lines."

"There is a wider cast of enthusiasts out there and there are things we can do differently to open our doors to them," Long says. "In my mind, the future of 'Air | Water' is to be the largest single brand car show in the world and, leaving modesty aside for a moment, I believe we will be there within three years!"

Information

Photos: Kurt Bradley

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