The one-off

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25/02/2019 In 1984, this 911 Carrera 3.2 became the company car of the assistant to the Porsche CEO. Its spectacular visual appearance was a harbinger of what Porsche would offer to a wider clientèle under the Porsche Exclusive label from 1986 onwards.

The lighted outline of a car has a similar effect to the curves of a beautiful female body. It is particularly beguiling when the lighting is just right. The outline of this Carrera 3.2 Coupé built in 1984 has a light turquoise hue, from the front bumper to the door sills and rear bumper, and from the A-pillar to the rain gutter and the large serving-tray spoiler of the 231 hp G-model. Clearly distinct from the dark blue base colour, the shade is repeated not only in the spokes of the Fuchsfelgen wheels, but also in the fully leather-upholstered interior. An effect that is impressive today as it was back then.

For Tilman Brodbeck, who at 74 is as lithe, slim and fit as the air-cooled Porsche, this reunion comes after 33 years apart. This was his company car from early 1984 until summer 1985. At that time he was executive assistant to the then Porsche CEO Peter W. Schutz. The Swabian is a Porsche veteran,

having started as a body tester at Weissach in 1970 and then spending ten years in Porsche's development centre. As an aerodynamic expert he designed the "Bürzel" ducktail rear spoiler for the Carrera RS 2.7, and also the front spoiler of the 911. This was required because the front always became too light at a certain speed, which allowed the notorious Ford Capris to overtake on the corners when racing. In addition to his aerodynamic brainwaves, Brodbeck had a second passion: He customised his cars at a time when upgrading was in its infancy, and not just at Porsche.

Although the company had opened a new department to handle special requests in Zuffenhausen in 1978, it took until 1986 before the worldwide demand for bespoke ranges led to the establishment of Porsche Exclusive – today known as Porsche Exclusive Manufaktur. But it was unheard of in 1980 when Brodbeck leased a 911 Turbo 3.3 at a reduced employee rate of 1,000 marks per month. He had it resprayed in the then revolutionary looking colour of pearl white metallic.

When it came to choosing a new and this time "genuine" company car in 1984, "we wanted to do something very special in conjunction with Anatole Lapine's design studio", recalls Brodbeck. The idea was to add turquoise to the outline of a 911 Carrera G model painted a dark blue metallic colour. Brodbeck tasked the Ewald Rempfer paint shop in Bietigheim, with which he was familiar, with the unusual job. "After the primer had been applied we took the car off the production line and brought it to the paint shop in a panel van," Brodbeck recalls. "First the base colour was applied followed by the turquoise finish which we called "Highlight". Studio engineer Reinhold Schreiber, who also specialised in colours and materials at Porsche Design, was with me in the booth to show the painter exactly where to direct his pistol to apply the turquoise to the outline freehand."

After that, everything was sealed with a clear coat. Only two days later, the 911 was returned to the production line, where the interior parts were ready for installation. These included velvet carpets made by Mapotex in Unterriexingen which were dyed the same turquoise colour with leather edging (for the interior and front luggage compartment), and fully leather-upholstered interior parts by SC Schäfer in Würzburg. Nothing was spared – the parcel shelf, the tensioned convertible roof headliner that was standard in the 911 at the time, the sun visors, and the surrounds on the rotary switches and buttons. All cut to size from wafer-thin cow hide and colour-coordinated to match the highlights

"The Recaro seats were the largest in the range at that time, the side panels could be inflated with air," says Brodbeck, who drove the car for a little longer than the twelve months that was standard at Porsche at the time. "It turned heads everywhere I went because the turquoise glinted like crazy. On my first trip to Füssen, I was queuing at the border and almost everyone coming in the opposite direction had a good look." According to Brodbeck, he often heard cries of "Bella macchina" when driving to Stelvio Pass to go skiing. "And on the way back down the hill, the Carrera was always the only car whose brakes didn't overheat."

The car was restored to full working order

After Tilman Brodbeck had served his time as assistant to a total of five Porsche CEOs, he became the new head of Porsche Exclusive. As a result, what had previously been a hobby became a full-time job and his company car, which had previously been prepared in the factory, was shipped off to Sweden. It was re-registered there on 10 July 1986, with a good 40,000 kilometres on the clock. It then remained in Scandinavia for 31 years, where two owners drove it another 60,000 kilometres. In 2017, Porsche collector Ronny Pannhorst from Bielefeld stumbled across the car – and it was anything but love at first sight. Only a call to his friend Frank Troche, another Porsche insider and collector, made him change his mind. This was because Troche had already experienced the car as a 17-year-old. "My father supplied technical plastics to Porsche and was friends with Tilman Brodbeck, so Mr Brodbeck occasionally drove to visit us in Lauf, just outside Nuremberg," recalls Troche. And Pannhorst advised: "Buy that car – it is a one-off and has an amazing story."

However, before the glamorous company car was able to take pride of place in its new garage in East Westphalia, it was given a complete overhaul at Porsche Classic in Freiberg. The main work required to restore the car to full working order included replacing all fluids and filters, performing a complete survey including setting the correct height, replacing the brake hoses and other connections, checking the electrical system and replacing various seals that had become brittle with age. Meanwhile, the leather was still in such excellent condition after more than 30 years that it only had to be given a quick clean.

"The car wasn't driven for the last few years as the last owner was very elderly. The sensible man had even placed corks under the wipers so they weren't resting on the glass," reports Pannhorst, who founded his company specialising in air-cooled 911s in the listed Lenkwerk building in Bielefeld in 2013. "The Bridgestone SF 350 tyres were mounted in 1991 but were still in such good condition that I left them on."

Not only the tyres, but also the rest of the car still looks brand new today. This impresses the aesthete Tilman Brodbeck, who used to remove all the dead insects from the bodywork after long journeys in order to prevent paint damage. "And the turquoise still looks amazing today", enthuses the man who worked for Porsche for almost 40 years and, in his time as head of Porsche Exclusive, was involved in unique projects including a Porsche for Jil Sander and a completely orange 911 Turbo Cabriolet for the Swiss furniture designer Carlo Rampazzi. And he also drove a company car, the like of which has never been seen at Porsche either before or since.

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