The digital maestro with an old-school passion

23/02/2021 Armin Pohl's Emmy award-winning company created spectacular visual effects for Hollywood but now he's turning his attention to his car collection – which began with a Porsche 928 GTS.

Armin Pohl is in an industrial hall where concrete blocks were once made, gazing down from a mezzanine at a row of automotive history. Two dozen classic cars afford a spectacular view of timeless beauty and he surveys them with satisfaction. "My daughters say I live in the future," he remarks. Future and past, global influence and a love of home, digitalisation and traditional craftsmanship – the merging of apparent opposites is pleasing to this man who as CEO of Mackevision made the company a world leader in 3D visualisation.

Stuttgart is not only where Mackevision's headquarters is based but also home to Pohl's collection of cars. He now has more time for the latter. After 25 years of business success, the 54-year-old is pulling back from his professional responsibilities. He agrees with his daughters, and is turning his focus now to his private life. "Basically none of the technological developments of the past 20 years have surprised me," he says. A graphic artist who loved drawing cars as a schoolboy, he quickly recognised the incredible potential of digital image processing and subsequently of 3D applications. He saw the virtual world coming, and helped shape it from the start. "It was clear to me that this would change everything," he says.

With Pohl's visionary abilities, Mackevision achieved a breakthrough on the international stage. "Macke" stands for Marcus Roth, whose company Pohl joined in 1995 and then acquired in 2006. Since 2018 Mackevision has been part of Accenture Interactive. Well before competitors emerged on the scene, Mackevision specialised in creating impeccable digital marketing worlds, and today its work includes 3D photo and video gems for Porsche and other premium car makers. Its computer-generated images in ads, flyers and digital configurators are so perfect they can seem even more real than reality itself. Where "logic meets magic" – that's how Pohl describes his work as an artist and manager.

Fleets of ships for Game of Thrones

The world of spectacular visual effects soon caught Hollywood's attention as well. Starting with the fourth season of Game of Thrones, Mackevision was responsible for elements like the buildings and ships. The company received numerous awards for its work, including an Emmy in 2014. In 2020, it was nominated for further Emmys for its contributions to theWatchmen and the Lost in Space series. Pohl built a global brand with offices in Europe, America and Asia.

“Mackevision solves very sophisticated challenges within projects for Hollywood,” says Pohl. Flowing water, for example, is one of the trickiest visual effects to create digitally, but Mackevision is ready to deliver. It can also build an entire medieval city from a barracks, have an enormous fleet of ships attack a harbour or create a creature from outer space. Game of Thrones set new standards in visual effects, and Mackevision was instrumental in the process. The field demands not only quality but also stamina. “There are incredibly strong competitors and the deadlines are set in stone,” he observes. “Directors and producers have to account for budgets of millions of dollars. If you fail to deliver what was agreed upon once, you won’t get another chance in Hollywood.”

A tall man with a tight ponytail, Pohl likes working with his hands as a counterbalance to his virtual pursuits. “As a child, I worked in the garden. My parents were refugees, and I learned how to grow anything and to put everything available to good use.”

In addition to focusing on cars in the future, he also wants to devote more time to his second hobby: growing organic fruit. “The season runs from sweet cherries to walnuts,” he says with evident pleasure. At Mackevision he was known for filling fruit bowls with his own products.

A term like “garage” seems too small for the place where he houses his cars, which has multiple halls on premises that cover about 2,600 square metres. Its furnishings are the opposite of futuristic. The second-hand sofa set, used on occasion by selected guests, was a gift. Alebenches stand nearby, and an old fridge from a kiosk holds drinks. Only the 24 cars that the host has sorted by brand have been polished. They are grouped around the heart of the impressive collection – a Porsche 928 GTS. “Of all the cars here, only the 928 offers everything: aesthetics, driving pleasure, design, suitability for everyday use – a truly sensational combination,” he enthuses.

Cars as a mirror of the self

As a schoolboy in the late 1970s, Pohl was fascinated by the new model. He first drove a 928 S4 in the mid-1990s, and then a Rainforest Green 928 GTS – exactly like the car he has today. When his daughters were born, the Porsche gave way to a larger family car. Then, five years ago, Pohl had a fateful encounter. “A 928 was driving in front of me and I thought, ‘Wow, what an incredible car!’ Its owner was one of my colleagues. He got out and mentioned that he had to sell the car because of his family.” A familiar story. This automobile then launched Pohl’s collection.

“I like sitting in a car and having the feeling that this is what I am, here and now, on this day. Like having your clothing match your mood,” he says, explaining the diversity of his collection. Its oldest models are from the 1960s, and it includes both exotic vehicles and muscle cars. “Every car reflects the spirit of its time,” he says. “They are as dramatically different as parts of my own personality.” He often chooses to drive the 928. “And each time I think, ‘Ah, I really enjoy driving this car!’” The Porsche has clocked 190,000 kilometres. Built in 1994, it is the final variant of the 928 model line.

The last of these Gran Turismos with V8 front engines were made in 1995. “Porsche gives you a superb

combination of enduring design, spirited dynamics, dependability and German engineering expertise," says Pohl. "As a child, I never dared to dream that I would own a Porsche one day. And the 928 was an amazing technological pioneer back then!" Like Pohl, the Gran Turismo anticipated the future. Today we can see that its line leads to the Panamera 4 E-Hybrid Sport Turismo, in which Pohl now drives more often to his garage.

Link Collection

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