Artifacts: bringing hidden treasures to life

This article reflects the status at the time of its publication. The content may since have become outdated.

01/09/2023 A labour of love one year in the making, Type 7's latest book celebrates the little-known world of Porsche's corporate archive.

Coinciding with its own 75th anniversary preparations, last year Porsche granted special access to the very heart of its vast and secretive corporate archive. In partnership with Type 7, the result of this unprecedented exploration of the brand's rich and fascinating history is Artifacts, a large format coffee table book spanning 356 pages of seldom-seen archive material that pays painstaking homage to many of the minute details that help tell the Porsche story.

Artifacts is a unique photographic document detailing both historic objects and human stories, plotting the passage of Porsche from engineering consultancy to global luxury sports car brand. Its abstract, artistic perspective, characterised by dramatic lighting and high-resolution photography, carefully

explores every subject in lavish detail, focusing on the textures, patina, and history within.

“The book came out of a dream,” explains Type7’s editor-in-chief and founder of ERG Media, Ted Gushue. “We are a small but passionate team that’s always talking about things we wish we could do. We had visited the Porsche archives once before and there was an aura about it, a special glow among the objects there that to us represented something like the soul of the brand. So the idea was to capture that in these objects. To treat them like works of art.”

Access to the entirety of the archive

Working with Porsche’s in-house project manager for Type 7, Franziska Jostock, Gushue and his team were allowed to explore the entirety of the company’s sprawling archive in Zuffenhausen, a place traditionally off limits to all but a select number of employees. With the support and enthusiasm of the archive’s team, Type 7 would spend three solid weeks in the archive in the summer of 2022, working intensively to compile an unparalleled body of imagery and information.

The corporate archives of Porsche AG are a repository of all important information that has an economic, technical, social or cultural connection to Porsche. It is a resource designed to expand knowledge about the brand for the purposes of historical public relations work, and for sharing information with Porsche fans all over the world. In addition, Porsche Archive employees process requests from internal departments, journalists, scientists and authors of books on development, motorsport and the company's history. Another key area of importance for the archive is legal issues: if needed, the archive can be consulted to gather information about previous cases.

“After all, the corporate archives represent the memory of Porsche”, says Frank Jung, Head of Porsche Corporate Archives. "We keep the innovations of the past here. To be able to work so close at the core of the brand is both a joy and an obligation. The appreciation of and special view on the details, as given in Artifacts, is unique so far."

Sorting through thousands of historical pieces with the expert advice of the archive’s team, selections were made based not just on visual appeal such as surfaces, structure, traces of use, but also the remarkable stories behind the objects. Hi-res images were then captured by photographer and Type 7 lead creative Thomas Walk, using innovative lighting techniques to emphasize not only the qualities of the pieces themselves but also the unique surroundings in which they were unearthed.

Sharing a magical experience

“There’s something very special about seeing all the things you can’t normally see,” Gushue continues, “like the 90 per cent of the iceberg that’s always underwater. Our goal was to give the audience something that left them with the same feeling we had every time we went into the archive. To share that magical experience. The archive’s team was instrumental in that. We would find something we

thought looked interesting and they would explain the story behind it. Without them, both logistically and in terms of the storytelling, there wouldn't have been a book."

The contents of Artifacts encompass archive material, historical parts and vehicle details from the museum's exhibition such as Porsche family items, equipment from Porsche design and development, historical cars and snapshots from the archive that have never been seen before. Handmade scale models of now-familiar racing cars reveal the passage of Porsche's development of aerodynamics, while a drilled ignition key and barrel from a 917 recall the Motorsport department's enduring commitment to lightweighting.

In order to document the insights shared the archives team while allowing Walk's stunning imagery the space to breathe on the printed page, the photographs in Artifacts are accompanied by a separate pull-out Index, which provides detailed explanations for each item. Every image is given a reference number that that tallies not only with the adjoining Index but also with the company's own archive system, resulting in a reader experience reminiscent of an archivist exploring the history of Porsche themselves. "This means you can experience Artifacts in multiple ways," explains Gushue. "You can look through it just for the beauty of the images, or you can get the full story through connecting them to the Index. Either way, we wanted the reader to enjoy the same sensation that we had as we walked around and learned the stories behind every object."

Special presentation box

And Artifacts is not merely a visual experience, thanks to a similarly uncompromising approach to its physical execution from US-based design studio House Industries, which helped the Type 7 team design the font and packaging. Wrapped in a paper that pays homage to the Porsche 930 design blueprints, the book arrives in a presentation box complete with hand-applied metal corner protectors and made from the same acid-free paper used in the archive's storage boxes. Inside is a slipcase finished in the same deep red used for decades for Porsche's own document folders, from which the book itself is withdrawn using a bespoke branded pull strap before being opened via a ring tie design taken from Porsche's historic manuals. The result is that the reader slowly unravels the book, unwinding, unfolding and eventually finding, as the Type 7 team had done, a treasure trove of Porsche within.

And it was this very process of discovery that led to one of the neatest and most evocative touches in Artifacts. Many of the more priceless objects in the archive in Zuffenhausen are contained in two secure rooms protected by remote locking doors and an Argon-gas fire-suppressant system, the potential activation of which requires anyone who enters to sign a waiver acknowledging the risk to life. Bringing the reader along with the sheer drama of this unusual process, each copy of Artifacts includes a reproduction of the actual waiver signed by the team behind Artifacts.

Nerdy little details

“There are so many nerdy little details like that,” says Gushue, “because we really fell in love with the project. It became a true labour of love from a group of people who are singularly passionate about the brand and its history. We were constantly pushing ourselves to see how far we could go in terms of the details because we know that, to the true Porsche fan, the details are everything.”

Artifacts is released by ERG Media and the Edition Porsche Museum publishing house on 1 September and is available through the Porsche Shop.

MEDIA ENQUIRIES

Linda Riechers

Spokesperson Sales and Marketing
+49 (0) 1523 / 911 8402
linda.riechers1@porsche.de

Video

https://newstv.porsche.com/porschevideos/254402_en_3000000.mp4

Link Collection

Link to this article
https://newsroom.porsche.com/en/2023/history/porsche-type-7-artifacts-bringing-hidden-treasures-to-life-33610.html

Media Package
https://pmdb.porsche.de/newsroomzips/8af484c1-e556-4ece-824f-e865d8a2f879.zip

External Links
https://shop.porsche.com