A connoisseur of the classics

07/08/2020 Modern art dealer Mark Fisk has an eye for design and loves to collect things, including a stable of Porsche sports cars.

“I don't look for anything, it finds me,” says Mark Fisk of his ability to collect articles of interest.

Today a package found Fisk, but he was expecting it. Inside is a rear quarter window replacement for his 1987 Porsche 944 S, which is getting some final cosmetic upgrades before being shipped to the Porsche Experience Center Atlanta's Heritage Gallery for a limited exhibition.

The 944 S made its way to Fisk’s possession because of his reputation for loving the iconic sports cars.

“It's just like little lost puppy dogs. They come to the door and I'm like, ‘Aren't you cute,’ and I open the door and let them in. It's the same with cars,” Fisk says.

“I've never looked for a car. People call me on the phone and say, ‘I hear you like Porsches.’ That's kind of how it works for me.”

As for Fisk’s 944 S, it’s a pristine Guards Red, a glowing example of the transaxle model.

“I've had a few 944s, and you can't appreciate them until you drive one. It's one of my most favorite cars to drive. I mean it just has everything you want -- good balance and the power's there if you need it,” Fisk says. “And it's got the look, which is back in style.”

“All the people that come up to that car are always young people.”

Fisk understands design as well as, and probably better than, almost anyone. He’s co-owned Mainly Art, a vintage modern furniture store, with his wife, Missy, for three decades. The Cincinnati storefront specializes in period pieces from Art Deco to Mid Century Modern and into the ‘80s.

“Every piece of furniture in the store has a story to it,” Fisk says.

While Fisk still does have to go searching for furniture to stock the store with on occasion, he’s often brought pieces that are in need of re-homing. Not unlike the calls he gets about Porsches.

“After 30 years, people know who you are,” Fisk explains. “They're passionate about what they have, they want it to go to a good home. They don't want to just give it away, so they'll call me. I get invited to their homes and I get to see how they live and how the furniture is. It's just amazing.”

Much like a classic lounger that can be found at Mainly Art, Fisk appreciates every aspect of the Porsche sports cars he owns.

“It’s both design and the function. The way everything is laid out is fantastic. Porsche’s always so thoughtful, and the design is classic. It’s the same with an Eames 670, the iconic piece of furniture from the ‘50s and ‘60s that says, ‘You’ve made it.’ If you’ve got that in your house somebody will say ‘I know that chair.’ They may not be able to tell you the designer, but they know what it is.”

“It's the same with a 911; they know that's a Porsche. There are very few items that are so iconic.”

1978 Porsche 911 SC

Fisk’s appreciation for interior design was learned, but his Porsche passion was entrenched from a young age. An uncle, who was a Porsche parts manager, made sure to take the nieces and nephews out in a certified classic during family reunions and get-togethers.

“He had a 356 C. All the kids would jump in it and go for a ride, you know, 90 miles an hour down the road,” says Fisk. “At nine years old you're thinking this is the best thing in the world. You're in love.”

Through the years, Fisk has gone through a numbers of Porsche models. He and Missy daily-drive Cayennes, as well as the occasional romp in a 2002 Boxster, but it’s the cars with a story that really get his attention. The 944 S, for example, came from the original owner with a binder “probably four inches thick” of every piece of paperwork imaginable, including the boat ticket used to transport the car from Germany after the original owners took factory delivery.

That’s why he’s especially proud of his 1978 Fern Green 911 SC and 1974 “Bumblebee” 914 LE. Similar to the 944, Fisk got the cars from the original owners. He also got them during an impressive year in the early 2000s when he set an ambitious goal for himself.

“I told my buddy, I'm gonna take $20,000 and buy four Porsches, and they just laughed,” Fisk recalls. “I said in a year, year and a half, I'm going to do it. I ended up buying the 914, the 911, a ‘62 356 and ‘67 912.”

He admits that scenarios like that “don’t happen anymore.”

The special edition black and yellow 914 happened to be at his local Porsche dealer when he was having his Boxster serviced. Even having owned 914s in the past, he was smitten with the buzzy Targa.

“I was like, ‘Oh god, look at this guy's 914.’ I've had four or five 914s before, and this thing is near perfect. I mean, I've never seen one so nice,” says Fisk.

The 914, he found out, was owned by an area musician who had success in the ‘60s and ‘70s, and purchased with the first big royalty check that came through. Since then it had been babied and maintained by the same mechanic at what is now Porsche of the Village. Discovering it was being traded in for a new Boxster, Fisk let the dealership know he was interested.

A call the next day brought the pristine LE home with Fisk, where it's been ever since.

1987 Porsche 944 S

The 911 SC is its own unique tale. Within a year of acquiring the 914, Fisk got a call from someone saying they heard "he liked to drive his Porsches." It was an older woman on the line, and she was looking to offload her special order 911 to someone who would really appreciate it.

"I go over to look at the car. She shows me everything and tells me all these stories of her and her husband driving it," Fisk says.

Fisk, of course, was concerned with how much the potential purchase may be. The owner ensured him not to worry. After a couple of coffees and more stories of the owner's road trips, Fisk left that day with the 911 in tow.

As often as he can, Fisk takes his Porsche classics out to stretch their legs. The Cincinnati area offers plenty of scenic routes, and Fisk is especially fond of the "most picturesque city in Kentucky," just on the opposite bank of the Ohio River.

"Augusta, Kentucky, is pretty cool. They have a ferry boat that you take your car on," Fisk says. "Stop for lunch, take a little boat ride across the river. It's an exciting and fun afternoon. Especially when the colors are changing."

Fisk also has a guiding hand in his area's premier auto events. He sits on the board of the Cincinnati Concours d'Elegance, helping to choose themes for annual displays, staffing the car selection committee and managing the Concours' charity arm, which benefits The Arthritis Foundation, with a special focus on juvenile arthritis.

Fisk is keeping the stories of his Porsche classics alive while adding his own. It's a pleasure, not a chore.

"My 911 has 200,000 miles and it runs like a clock," Fisk says. "It's just the best thing to drive."

"It feels like an old leather jacket. You get in it and you just love this thing. It smells right, it runs right, it does everything you want."

Info

Photos by Gary Kessler.

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Image Sublines

Path: A connoisseur of the classics/Images/img_2.jpg
Title: Eames 670 Lounge, 1987 Guards Red Porsche 944 S, Photo: Gary Kessler
Subline: Two icons: Mark's '87 944 S and an Eames lounge chair

Path: A connoisseur of the classics/Images/img_3.jpg
Title: 1987 Guards Red Porsche 944 S, 1978 Fern Green 911 SC, Photo: Gary Kessler
Subline: Fern Green was only available on the 911 in 1978. It could be special ordered in later model years.

Link Collection

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