

Porsche exhibit opens in North Carolina (Update)

October 11 2013, by Martha Waggoner



In this photo taken Wednesday, Oct. 9, 2013 a 1958 Porsche Type 356 Speedster 1600 Super once owned by Steve McQueen is shown on display in the Porsche By Design Seducing Speed exhibit at the North Carolina Museum of Art in Raleigh, N.C. (AP Photo/Gerry Broome)

Curator Ken Gross had his first encounter with Porsches in college, when the cool guys were driving Super 90 Coupes. His old Ford, which was fine for attracting girls in high school, didn't compare.

"I lusted after that car," Gross says. "A friend let me drive his, and it was kind of an epiphany for me."

He bought a 1961 Super 90 Coupe after graduate school in 1966, then sold it before he went to Vietnam in the U.S. Navy. Although he hasn't owned another one since, he has found a job that makes for a fine consolation prize—curating museum shows that include Porsches, such as the one that opens Saturday at the North Carolina. Museum of Art.

This show is different from other car exhibits that Gross has curated because it's the first one he's done that focuses only on Porsches. The show has 22 of the German-made cars, starting with a 1938 Type 64 Berlin-Rom Racer and including actor Steve McQueen's 1958 Speedster, fashion designer Ralph Lauren's 1988 Type 959 and a 1989 Panamericana concept car with a zip-off roof that's never been in the U.S. before and was an 80th birthday gift to Ferry Porsche. It's the only one of that car, which had a dune buggy feel to it while still maintaining that clear Porsche design.

Porsche didn't put the car into production, although elements of its design are apparent in the modern 911s, Gross said.

Janis Joplin's psychedelically painted 1965 Type 356C Cabriolet that's usually at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland also is part of the exhibit, titled "Porsche by Design: Seducing Speed."



In this photo taken Wednesday, Oct. 9, 2013 a 1977 Porsche Type 935 is part of the Porsche By Design exhibit at the North Carolina Museum of Art in Raleigh, N.C. (AP Photo/Gerry Broome)

Museum exhibits of cars date back to 1951, when the Museum of Modern Art produced a show titled "Eight Automobiles," and are gaining in popularity with museum directors, who see them as a way to attract a new audience. Gross, former director of the Peterson Automotive Museum in Los Angeles, now works as a guest curator for museum exhibits about cars, most recently at the Frist Center for Visual Arts in Nashville, Tennessee, and has exhibits scheduled through 2016.

"They are rolling sculpture," said NCMA Director Larry Wheeler. "It's the design and exquisite quality of Porsche that has been sustained from the very beginning. In terms of art museums embracing great industrial design, this is not new."

Both Wheeler and Gross said they believe the North Carolina exhibit is the first car exhibit in a fine art museum that features only Porsches.



In this photo taken Wednesday, Oct. 9, 2013 a 1962 Porsche Type 804 is shown on display in the Porsche By Design Seducing Speed exhibit at the North Carolina Museum of Art in Raleigh, N.C. (AP Photo/Gerry Broome)

Among the museum's events scheduled for the opening is a meet-up Saturday where Porsche owners will bring their cars to the museum parking lot. Jeff Zwart, a seven-time Pike's Peak Hill Climb champion who does most of Porsche's advertising, and Magnus Walker, a Porsche collector who builds 911s, are expected to be there.

Walker's love affair with Porsche was in full bloom by 1977, when he was 10 years old and wrote to Porsche to say he wanted to design cars for them. Thirty-five years later, a short documentary about him and his wife, Karen, titled "Urban Outlaw" got the attention of Porsche, and he

got a letter, inviting him to Stuttgart, Germany, where he visited the factory recently.

"Our passion with the Porsche is the driving experience the car offers," he said. " ... Porsche is a language. It doesn't matter if you speak English, German or Japanese. It's a worldwide, universal language that everyone can relate to. ... It's a driving experience, an art experience, as well as a bond, sort of connecting experience."



In this photo taken Wednesday, Oct. 9, 2013 a 1965 Porsche Type 356 C Cabriolet that once belonged to Janis Joplin is on display in the Porsche By Design Seducing Speed exhibit at the North Carolina Museum of Art in Raleigh, N.C. (AP Photo/Gerry Broome)

Several race cars are part of the exhibit, including the Type 804 Formula One from 1962, designed so the driver sat in an aluminum cradle that's

formed by the gas tank. Racer Dan Gurney won two races in that car.

"It wasn't that they weren't concerned about safety, but let's say it was a secondary concern," Gross said.

Among the things that set Porsche apart from other automobile manufacturers is its continuity of design, Gross said, which is evident from that 1938 Type 64 designed by founder Ferdinand Porsche to the race cars that the company originally designed as a way of free advertising since it didn't have a large marketing budget. The curvy, aerodynamic design continues into the most recent car in the exhibit, a 2010 Type 911 Sport Classic Carrera.



In this photo taken Wednesday, Oct. 9, 2013 a 1965 Porsche Type 356 C Cabriolet that once belonged to Janis Joplin is seen as part of the Porsche By Design Seducing Speed exhibit at the North Carolina Museum of Art in Raleigh, N.C. (AP Photo/Gerry Broome)

"The people who drive these cars, the enthusiasts who own them, they're looking for that open road, they're looking for that windy, twisty road without a lot of cars, they're looking for some place you can really exercise and enjoy them," Gross said. "That's the thrill. And it doesn't come every time you get in that car. But find just the right off ramp and the right country road on a weekend morning, and it's exhilarating. It makes the rest of the week fine."

The exhibit runs through Jan. 20, 2014.



In this photo taken Wednesday, Oct. 9, 2013 Porsche By Design Seducing Speed exhibit curator Ken Gross is seen with some of the Porsche cars on display at the North Carolina Museum of Art in Raleigh, N.C. (AP Photo/Gerry Broome)



In this photo taken Wednesday, Oct. 9, 2013 a 2010 Porsche Type 911 GT3 R Hybrid Race Car Prototype is on display in the Porsche By Design exhibit at the North Carolina Museum of Art in Raleigh, N.C. (AP Photo/Gerry Broome)



In this photo taken Wednesday, Oct. 9, 2013 a detail is seen on a 1960 Porsche Type 718 RS60 in the Porsche By Design exhibit at the North Carolina Museum of Art in Raleigh, N.C. (AP Photo/Gerry Broome)



In this photo taken Wednesday, Oct. 9, 2013 a 1965 Porsche Type 356 C Cabriolet that once belonged to Janis Joplin is on display in the Porsche By Design exhibit at the North Carolina Museum of Art in Raleigh, N.C. (AP Photo/Gerry Broome)



In this photo taken Wednesday, Oct. 9, 2013 a rare 1949 Porsche Type 356 Gmund Coupe is shown in the Porsche By Design Seducing Speed exhibit at the North Carolina Museum of Art in Raleigh, N.C. (AP Photo/Gerry Broome)



In this photo taken Wednesday, Oct. 9, 2013, details of the hood of a 1964 Porsche Type 356C Carrera 2 Coupé is seen in the Porsche By Design Seducing Speed exhibit at the North Carolina Museum of Art in Raleigh, N.C. (AP Photo/Gerry Broome)

More information: ncartmuseum.org/exhibition/porsche-by-design-seducing-speed

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