

CLASSIC DRIVER

Porsche throws an Italian birthday party to remember at FuoriConcorso Open Museum

Lead
There's no way around the 75th anniversary of Porsche. Two weeks before the official birthday celebrations, the Porsche Museum assembled some of their greatest icons on the shores of Lake Como for this year's FuoriConcorso Open Museum.

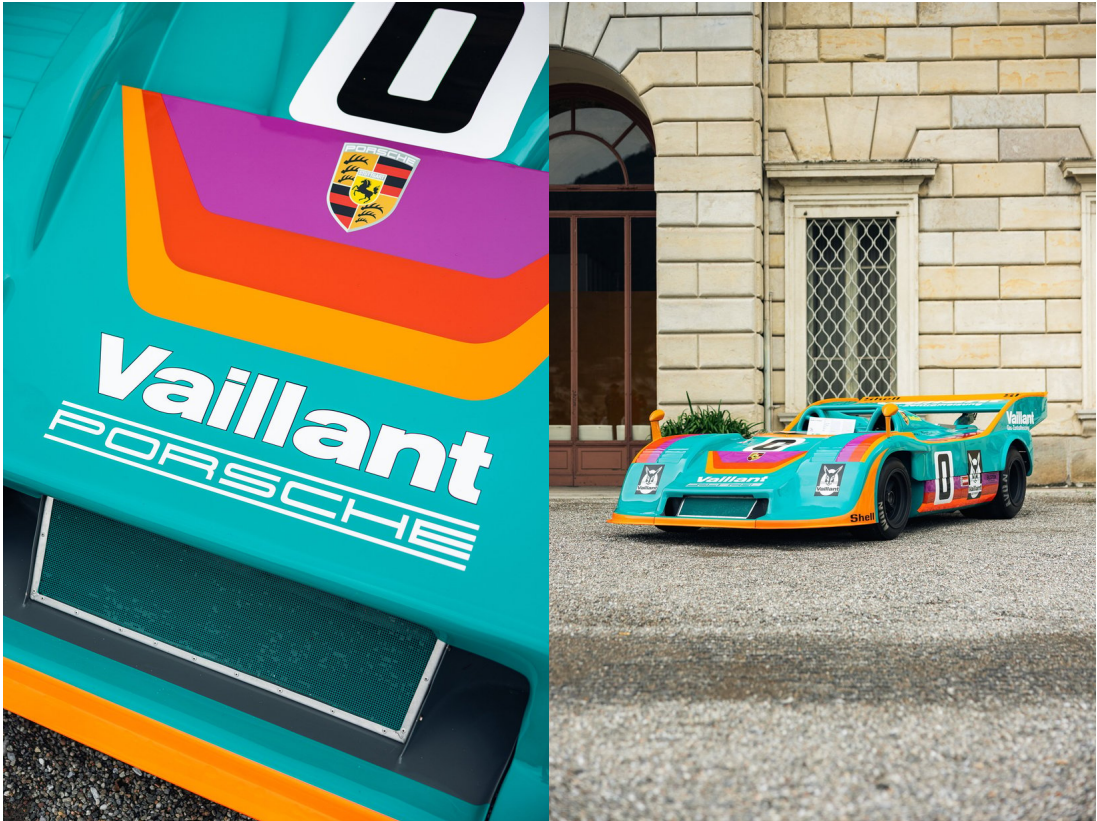


In early June of 1948, almost 75 years ago, Ferry Porsche's dream of his own sportscar became a reality. Of course, Porsche's landmark anniversary will be celebrated all around the world this year, but – at least in terms of location – it will be very hard to beat the grandezza of Villa Olmo, a neoclassical villa and park on the shores of Lake Como. Every year, Fuoriconcorso Open Museum hosts a world-class collection or museum for a public exhibition during Como Car Week. This year, the stately grounds and surrounding mountains formed a dreamlike setting for the rare sports and racing cars that the Porsche Museum had brought along.





The earliest car in the line-up was a 1954 Porsche 550 Spyder. The sleek and tiny open-top racer reminded visitors of some of Porsche's earliest racing success – including a double victory at the last Carrera Panamericana in 1954 – that established the brand's appeal as an underdog cleverly winning against the high-powered competition. Another example of the lightweight winning formula was the 1963 Porsche 356 B 2000 GS Carrera GT, dubbed “Dreikantschaber” – or triangular scraper – for its unusual shape. While Porsche's Rennsport legacy was mainly written during hillclimbs as well as road and endurance races, the 8-cylinder Porsche 801 monocoque racer, driven to victory by Dan Gurney during the French Grand Prix in 1962, documented the brand's first – and so far only – Formula 1 World Championship win.



While the cigar-shaped F1 racer looked like a fragile sculpture erected by a renaissance artist in the gardens of Villa Olmo, the massively wide, flat and sticker-clad 1969 Porsche 908/02 Spyder stood for a change of era in Porsche's racing history. Featuring an aluminium space frame wrapped in a 13 kilogram plastic body, the 600 kilogram car proved practically unbeatable in the Makes World Championship. After claiming victories at Brands Hatch, the Targa Florio, the Nürburgring, and at Watkins Glen, it notched up over 50 major victories and more than 100 podium results between 1969 and 1972. The 908/02 Spyder is one of the most successful Porsche race cars to this day – and a herald to the mythical, era-defining Porsche 917. At FuoriConcorso Open Museum, Porsche's museum team displayed the iconic Vaillant Porsche 917/30 Spyder piloted in period by Vic Elford and Herbert Müller.



Marvelling at the breathtaking racing machines, one could almost forget that Porsche also built some rather relevant sports cars for the road. In 1983, Porsche caused a stir with the unveiling of the "Gruppe B" concept car, a Group B homologation study that eventually became the Porsche 959 supercar in 1985. The pearl white, sleek, low-drag body prototype with its aero wheels looked remarkably contemporary among the verified classics, and we couldn't stop dreaming about a trip back in time to Porsche early-1980s design studio, silently watching the designers doing their thing.



While the Porsche 959 certainly was the brand's eye-catcher of the 1980s, the most exciting car built in Stuttgart in the 1990s was the Porsche 911 GT1. After Porsche campaigned the first mid-engined 911 race cars – named 911 GT1 and 911 GT1 Evo – at Le Mans in 1996 and 1997, the 911 GT1 '98 represented the late 1990s' pinnacle of racing development for the 911. This year, Porsche is celebrating the 25th anniversary of its double victory at Le Mans and we had a chance to share a modern-day Porsche 911 GT3 RS with Stéphane Ortelli, one of the drivers that claimed the win in 1998. We will report on this memorable road trip from St. Moritz to Lake Como in a separate feature story. Stéphane was joined by Porsche works driver André Lotterer.



The Porsche Museum, Porsche Italia and a handful of private collectors also brought some exceptional contemporary cars to the birthday party, including a remarkable anniversary concept. Designed by the talented Emiel Burki, [the Porsche Vision 357 pays homage to the original Porsche 356 while creatively remixing the iconic shape with elements of the brand's future design philosophy.](#)



Equally impressive were the modern version of the Porsche 935 and the 992-generation GT3 commissioned by Paolo Barilla in the black-and-yellow colour scheme of the Porsche 956 that won the Le Mans 24 hours in 1985. Next to it we recognised a less dramatic, but very dear old acquaintance – [the one millionth Porsche 911 we took from Zurich to Le Mans in 2017.](#) It's not official yet, but we might follow-up on this memorable road trip this summer in another very special Porsche.



Despite heavy rains on Saturday, Fuoricorso Open Museum was buzzing with spectators all weekend – especially as it was the only event that was open to the public free of charge during the Como Car Week. "The atmosphere couldn't have been better to celebrate our anniversary properly and to present more than 30 of the most extraordinary vehicles of the past 75 years to customers and sports car enthusiasts," said Achim Stejskal, Head of Porsche Heritage and Museum, as the event came to a close. Luckily, the anniversary year is just about to begin. Next stop? Zuffenhausen on June 8th for the official birthday party and opening of the anniversary exhibition. We cannot wait!

Photos: Tom Shaxson for Classic Driver

Gallery

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