

CLASSIC DRIVER

This modest VW Golf is a Porsche 928 in disguise

Lead

In 1979, the inspired German automotive inventor Günter Artz created a puzzle on four wheels: Is it a Mk1 Volkswagen Golf or Porsche 928? After having spent his summer holidays in the unusual car as a boy, Dino Pannhorst didn't rest until he was able to buy it back.



Günter Artz was managing director of a car dealership in Hannover, but also dabbled in customising and modifying cars, being responsible for amazing creations like a Volkswagen Karmann Ghia running the six-cylinder boxer engine from a Chevrolet Corvair. His 'Nordstadt Carrera Beetle', created in 1972 from a Volkswagen 1303 body and the chassis of a Porsche 914/6, together with the 2.7-litre engine from the Porsche 911, also became famous.

But in 1979, he and his bodywork specialist Celeste di Santolo achieved a truly special feat with the Artz Golf 928, as this self-built wonder is officially called. Only the most observant onlooker will notice that this first-generation example of VW's evergreen hatchback looks wider, longer and somehow different from any other. And then there's the sound and acceleration, which don't really match up with the sensible family-car looks...



Fascinated by this one-off Golf (or Porsche), Dino Pannhorst's father and uncle bought the Artz creation in 1980. "My father used it as a daily driver," says the head of **Pannhorst Classics**. "As a family of four we went on holiday to Lake Garda - 1,000 kilometres from Gütersloh - 1,000 kilometres back."

The Golf 928 was later sold, but Dino's memories of this one-of-a-kind vehicle persisted into adulthood: he investigated its whereabouts until he came across the owner and was able to buy it back in 2014. "I rarely use it today - only on special occasions - if only out of respect for its rarity," he says. "The Golf is in good condition, although the 928 mechanicals need a specialist to maintain, but we have that here in our workshop."



Today, the Artz Golf can be found in the Pannhorst Classics showroom next to modern classics from Zuffenhausen. It has proven to be a crowd puller time and again – not least because it has also appeared on Instagram and been profiled several times by specialist magazines at home and abroad.



The original plan was for a limited production run of these cars. But the process of creating the first one was so labour-intensive that a 150,000-mark price tag was required. Artz and his collaborator used an accident-damaged 928 as the donor car, over whose chassis and body structure a shell was placed that looks like a standard Mk1 Golf's, but actually had to be specially manufactured. Around 21cm wider and 30cm longer than the production car, it had a stretched bonnet and rear end, as well as a custom radiator grille and bumpers. The windows also had to be specially made.



The eight-cylinder engine from the 928 under the bonnet develops a healthy 240 horsepower – which in turn meant further technical modifications, including to the front and rear axles, had to be made so it would drive well.

In testing the car is said to have hit 230kph; slightly faster than the 928s rolling off the production line in Zuffenhausen at the time. Inside, this Golf turns out to be a true Porsche 928: so for connoisseurs, the cockpit is as familiar as the interior paneling of the doors, which also come from the donor car.





Artz did build a second 'wolf in sheep's clothing' Golf - this time based on the more powerful Porsche 928 S. It was bought by the late timber dealer Louis Krages - better known as part of the trio that won Le Mans in 1985, driving under the pseudonym 'John Winter'.



That car now belongs to a collector in Rhineland; they and Pannhorst know each other and often exchange ideas. And Artz's Porsche 928 experiments didn't end there - he's also responsible for an almost-forgotten shooting-brake version of the eight-cylinder coupe.



The English term "Sleeper" is a wonderfully appropriate expression for those cars whose true sporty core is not revealed at first glance. But, to avoid misunderstandings: Dino Pannhorst's Artz Golf 928 doesn't sleep, it just rests.

Photos: Rémi Dargegen for Classic Driver © 2021

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