The Workshop 5001 964

Porsche's Provocative 911 Reimagined

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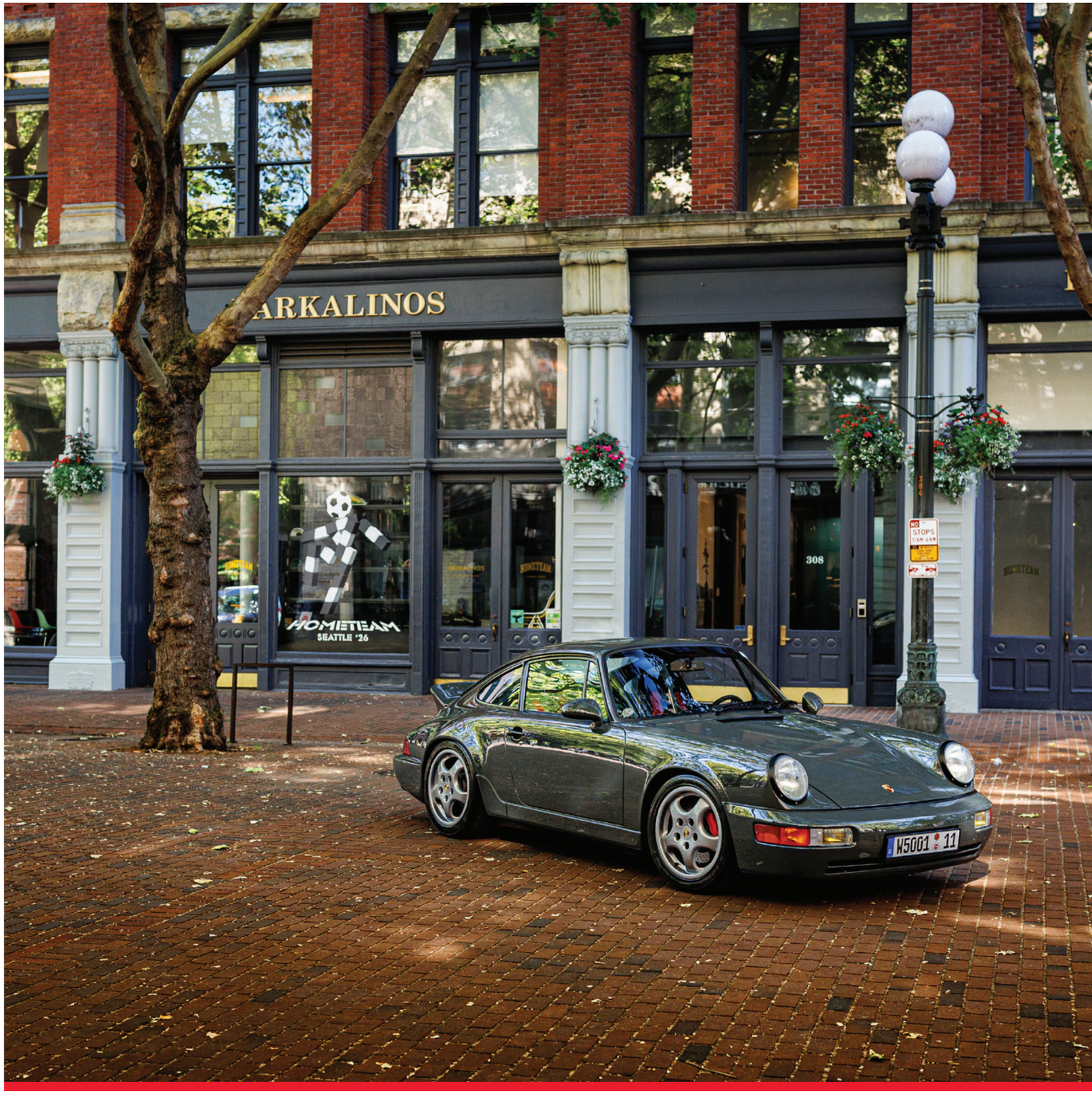
When the 964 generation 911 was released in 1989, the initial reaction was not universally positive. In fact, many of the Porsche air-cooled faithful hated it. Too big, too bulbous, rides too high, and not in keeping with the Porsche ethos of small light and fast. Those were the charitable complaints. Just plain ugly was less so. On the other hand, the new model was aerodynamically superior to its G body predecessor, had a more powerful 3.6 mill, ABS, coil springs, and featured an automatically extending rear spoiler to name just a few upgrades. It could also be purchased with the new Tiptronic gearbox as well as AWD. And while it was often seen as big and bulky compared to its older siblings, it did retain the shape so familiar to the Porsche faithful. I admit I wasn't a fan, and skipped the 964 series, instead opting to trade in my trusty 1988 3.2 for a 1995 993 coupe in Guards Red. But as is often the case, with time the 964 didn't just gain a renewed fan base, it saw a complete reversal of fortune.

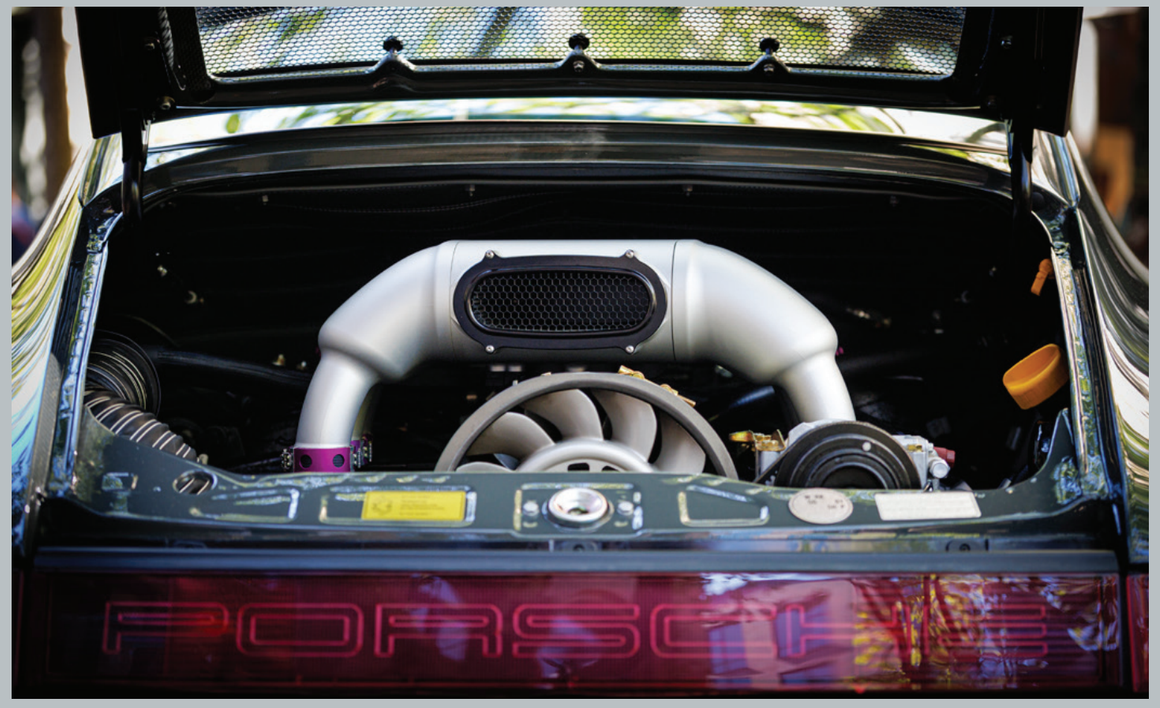
It went from ugly duckling to the queen of the ball in a relatively short period of time. Two things undoubtedly helped with the image makeover. One was the obvious comparison to contemporary 911 models. Next to a new 992, the 964 looks positively dainty, svelte, and true to the original form. The other factor is undoubtedly the "Singer effect" as old tired early '90s examples have been completely reworked ("reimagined") and transformed into uber expensive and collectible bespoke sports cars best described as muscular looking versions of the pre-G body 911 series that debuted in 1964.

The art — or science — or bastardization (depending on one's view) of Porsche 911 models with bodywork, and performance upgrades is nothing new. Gunther Werks, Singer, BB, Gemballa, STROSEK, and others have been at it in one way or another for decades. (I remember a neighbor in Bellevue, Washington who owned a 3.2 Carrera rebodied to look like a 959 back in the early 1990s). Some have been better received than others. But for every tasteful rework, there have been countless botched slant noses, questionable body kits, gaudy wheels, and tacky looking cars intended to resemble more expensive collectible models. Only recently it seems has the art of reimagination become more widely accepted and praised. No doubt due to the high quality of the finished product produced by contemporary companies like Singer.

But while the reimagined 964 movement has gained steam, and legitimacy, in wider Porsche circles, there are fans who still think the 964 form, or "look", is just fine as is. Enter Marlon Goldberg of Workshop 5001 and client Harvey Kanter.

Kanter, a confirmed "car guy" who's owned a wide variety of makes and models admits to liking the idea of upgrading the performance of classic cars, but believes strongly in keeping the original look. "I had Wilhoit of Long Beach, California create a mildly upgraded 356 that looks stock, but has modern performance features like brakes, transmission, motor and suspension" recounts Kanter. "It was a great partnership, and one that turned out exactly as I wanted. The car is a gem and I love driving it."





After the 356 experience Kanter was again bitten by the bug so to speak. Kanter, who'd been looking for a pristine 964 RS America found himself on the phone discussing the model with Marlon Goldberg of Workshop 5001. Based in the L.A. area, Workshop 5001 and Goldberg were already known for their bespoke Porsche upgrades and top-quality work. The two hit it off and had similar views and visions of the 964 platform. Both liked the idea of upgrading systems, but saw no need to do any alterations to the basic 964 form. In Kanter's words, "It's a great looking car in its own right. Lower it a bit, give it a few tasteful cosmetic tweaks here and there, and you have a very pleasing shape that personifies Porsche air-cooled cool."

With both men is the same camp and of the same mind, the project was on. The 964 was to have no major alterations to the body. All updates would be strictly performance focused and stealthy. The car would be a canyon carver that for all practical purposes looked like the factory intended. Goldberg, who worked at Singer for two years has strong opinions on design sensibilities "I also like the way the 964 looks and don't understand why some feel the need to alter its appearance to mimic something it isn't." Call him a purist or even old fashioned, but Goldberg believes the Porsche factory design team got the car right the first time. "It reflects that era perfectly. The lines are pure 1990s 911 and the car has stood the test of time. I'm not one to think I'm smarter or have better design sensibilities when it comes to the exterior shape as drawn up by the team at Stuttgart." Think of it another way he says "It's like a classic landmark. Sure, upgrade the Chrysler Building's internal communications, lighting, and heat systems, but leave the exterior as is. Art deco beautiful."

> **Think of it as a 1990 Porsche 964 GT3 Touring. The car uses mostly factory motorsports parts and closely follows the Porsche ethos and design philosophy.**

After finding a suitable 79k mile black 964 C2, the project got underway in February of 2022. Goldberg sourced a six-speed box and LSD from a 993 RS. Next came Cup1 wheels, a circa 380-horsepower mill, bespoke KW three-way dampers, custom pistons and throttle bodies, and many other details that advanced the 30-year-old car's performance by leaps and bounds. What didn't change much was the exterior and its classic old school Porsche 911 look. Ferrari Grigio Scuro paint added a classy yet understated appearance that tells you it's not a Porsche color, but somehow perfectly suits the subtle yet sporty goal that was sought. The project was completed in January of 2024. Both men suggest that the best way to understand the final result is to think of it as a 1990 Porsche 964 GT3 Touring. The car uses mostly factory motorsports parts and closely follows the Porsche ethos and design philosophy. The end result is a stunning interpretation of what that might've been in 1990 if Porsche had access to some of today's modern motorsports technology. From the ducktail to the Recaros, to the beautiful paint, the car unambiguously proclaims special 964.

How does it drive? Kanter says it's nothing short of sensational. "The acceleration is like a modern GT3 in that its instantaneous and incredibly strong. But it's also got low-end torque in buckets and pulls hard through the entire rev range. As those revs rise, so too does the aural shriek from 380 horses that move the car forward fast. Very fast. It's naturally aspirated heaven and as exciting as any car I've ever driven." And the handling? Kanter thought for a moment, "I'm lucky enough to own a wonderful stock 964 RS America. It's a car I really like. However, the upgrades to the motor and suspension of the Workshop 5001 project put it in an entirely different universe. The car is incredibly grippy and moves with race car like balance and poise through the twisties." Kanter and Goldberg liken the finished product's performance to a ROW 964 RS with 120 more horsepower and 100 pounds less weight. We like those numbers.