



HAMBURG AUTOMUSEUM

Prototyp

ONE MUSEUM YOU
CAN'T MISS ON YOUR
NEXT TRIP TO GERMANY

STORY AND PHOTOS BY **RONAN McGRATH**

SITUATED IN HAMBURG'S historic district since 2008, the Automuseum Prototyp is a must for anyone interested in early Porsche or VW history. One might say that a Kübelwagen is responsible for the collection, because Oliver Schmidt had one when he met co-founder—and brother-in-law—Thomas König many years ago. The pair quickly discovered that they shared a passion for the earliest days of the air-cooled era and decided to pool their limited resources to build a joint collection.

Although the earliest Porsches and Volkswagens are now very valuable, there was little interest in them when König and Schmidt got started. Using a wide range of contacts, they were able to locate a variety of cars, often in a very poor state. By 2008, when the museum opened in an old building that had been prepared to Schmidt's design, they had 60 cars.

While all of the cars in the museum are German or Austrian, not everything is an early VW or Porsche. Other exhibits include cars directly competitive to the earliest Porsches, local Hamburg commercial vehicles, and the first Formula 1 cars of Michael Schumacher and Sebastian Vettel. All of the exhibits have helpful descriptions in German and English, and guided tours are available. The museum also has catering facilities and hosts events for a variety of clubs and organizations.

THE COLLECTION'S SWEET SPOT is from the late 1930s to the end of pre-A 356 production. In the period after World War II, VW struggled to get back into production as the fledgling Porsche car company produced its first 356s. The ability to produce special designs was limited, and neither company had time for its history. Everything was for sale—including discarded prototype cars and engines. Many such cars and parts were used in specials that were worn out or scrapped. Not all, though—and the museum's collection contains superb examples of private specials as well as factory-built cars.

The jewel of the collection is a black streamliner, a design that dates to 1939 and one that could only be Porsche's—with a nose that clearly predicts the 356 that would follow nearly a decade later. Due to the outbreak of World War II, the Type 64 never got to compete in the Berlin-Rome race for which it was designed. Just three examples were built, and the Automuseum Prototyp offers evidence that testing continued quietly even during wartime.

The third car was destroyed in a bombing of the Porsche offices in Berlin. The first two cars remained in the Porsche family's possession, but

the second car was crashed. After the war, its roof was cut off. U.S. soldiers used it as a runabout before it was driven to destruction in a field.

The first Type 64 survived and was rebadged and registered as a Porsche to Dr. Ing. h.c. F. Porsche in 1946 in Gmünd—making it the first Porsche car registered as such. In 1949, Porsche sold the car to Otto Mathé, an Austrian amateur racer who built specials for hill climbs. It was eventually sold to another collector in Austria and survives, albeit with an early 356 engine.

Schmidt and König acquired the remaining single-seater specials and



Opposite: Research and restoration of the museum's centerpiece, the Type 64, took eight years. Special permission was obtained to use the original paint formula on the car, which was completed in 2013. The current special exhibition (called VIP, for Very Important Porsches) includes a 1949 Gmünd coupe (center). Left: The museum recently restored this 718/2, which sits next to the 1954 Rometsch Spyder (#29).



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from a 985-cc flat four. Schmidt says it drives much like a conventional VW of the time. Like most of the cars in the museum's collection, it is driven and appears at special events and exhibits. In 2013 and 2014, it was part of "Seducing Speed," an all-Porsche exhibit at the North Carolina Museum of Art.

THE CURRENT SPECIAL exhibition at the Automuseum Prototyp runs through March 27, 2016, and is titled VIP, for Very Important Porsches. It concentrates on very early 356s and includes cars from private collections that have never been exhibited before, including a recently discovered 356 claimed to be the oldest Stuttgart-built Porsche in existence. Other highlights include one of two Gmünd Keibl 356 cabriolets, a Gmünd coupe, a 356B Carrera Abarth, and one of two 1963 356B GS/GT Dreikantschaber coupes.

Although Schmidt and König are completely independent, they have a close relationship with the factory Porsche Museum and the Porsche Archive, working cooperatively with both. Their collection is a personal one, and has little overlap with the collection in Zuffenhausen.

The brothers-in-law have a deep knowledge and enthusiasm for every car in the collection, and spending an afternoon with them is an education on the beginnings of the Porsche story. Their enthusiasm is not limited to early cars, however. They have modern Porsches, including a 997 GT3 RS 4.0, and each has a new GT3 RS on the way. No wonder, then, that they showed as much interest in the 991 RS we arrived in as they did in the priceless cars in their collection.

A clearly enthusiastic Schmidt kindly provided a previously unpublished period photo of the Type 64, which is shown in this article for the first time. Their museum provides a fresh look at a time in Porsche history that is not well represented in any other museum—it is a destination not to be missed. 🍷



assorted parts from Mathé's estate, including a junk-filled VW delivery van. They examined all of the parts in detail and noticed an unusual set of door handles, which turned out to be from the crashed Type 64. Mathé had purchased the wreckage of the second car and used it for parts for his specials. By examining the various specials and assorted parts stamped with "38/42," Schmidt and König say they were able to recover the car's chassis components, transmission, steering wheel, instruments, almost all of its engine, and even parts of its carpeting.

The body, of course, was long gone. However, Schmidt and König had the remaining Type 64 on loan and were able to take precise measurements. Over time, they accumulated period photos of the second Type 64, which remain unpublished. Once the photographs were computerized, they discovered differences in the shape of the first two cars. The second Type 64 had a subtly different roofline, for instance.

A multi-year project to bring the second Type 64 back commenced. The work was painstaking and included an exact reproduction of the fabrics based on scraps found in the Mathé hoard. Painted black like the original and with wartime blackout lights, it has immense presence—an almost Darth Vader-like aspect when viewed head on.

Sitting on impossibly narrow 3.25-inch wheels, the coupe weighs a mere 1,180 pounds, has a narrow cabin, and produces about 35 hp



From the top: The oldest known Zuffenhausen car, a 1950 Reutter-bodied 356, chassis #5006; Otto Mathé's Fetzenflieger racer in front of his parts van; 1960 Porsche Wender W/RS-001; museum founders Thomas König and Oliver Schmidt with the Type 64; VW Type 1.

