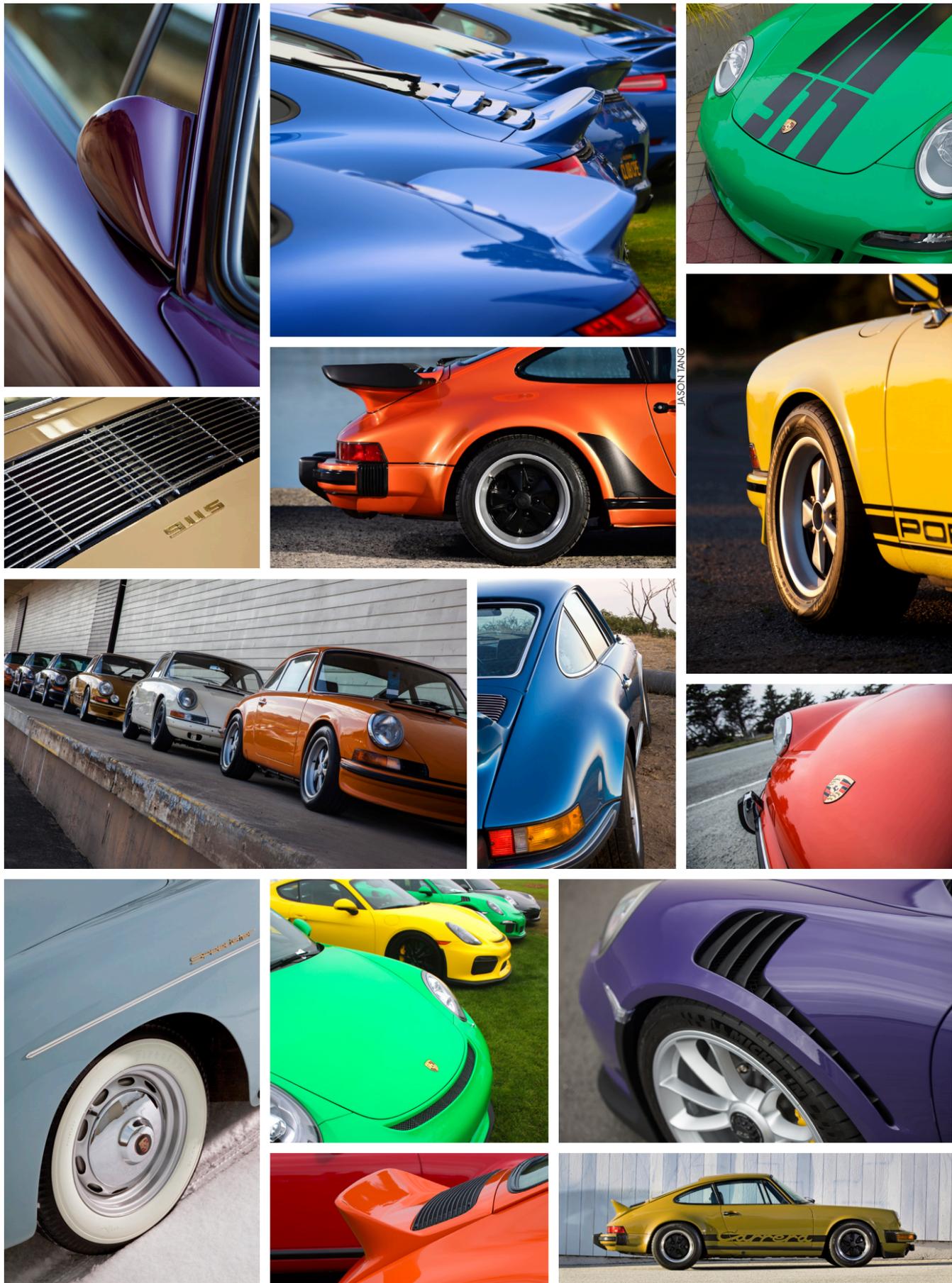


The Power of Color

THE COLOR OF A CAR IS ABOUT MORE THAN AESTHETICS.

STORY BY **NATHAN MERZ** PHOTOS BY **SHUTTERSTOCK, RANDY WELLS, PAG**

It's hard to resist any gathering where Porsches might be present, with the anticipation of seeing row after row of magnificent machinery and the various stamps of personalization each owner has carefully installed on his or her prized possession. Whether the car is pristine or has rock chips, a dirty windshield, or rubber chunks in the fender wells, chances are it is well loved. ❖ However, there are certain cars that stand out in these rows of Porsches. Around them gather the usual cadre of PCA members, as well as the young hipsters, cameras in hand. There seems to be a veritable buzz encapsulating these Porsches. Later, those same cars are likely to be heavily posted on Instagram, Facebook, and various forums. So what is it about these particular cars?



JASON TANG



Often, it has to do with their vibrant paint color—Aurantium Green, Gulf Blue, Viper Green, Tangerine, Continental Orange, Jade Green, Arrow Blue, Leaf Green, Mint Green, Rubystone, Signal Green, Signal Yellow, Maritime Blue, Riviera Blue, Aubergine, Chartreuse. Like moths to a flame, we seem drawn to these over-the-top period colors, even if we might not be brave enough to have picked one of them for ourselves.

Marketers know that color has a tremendous impact on how we emotionally respond to a product, and marketing is all about creating a passionate reaction. We know that blue connotes safety and security, red sex and daring, yellow happiness and joy, silver technological superiority and elegance. Is it surprising that sports cars in bright, primary colors are more apt to be featured in advertising?

If that's the case for sports cars, how do automakers market a vehicle like a minivan? The class leaders Toyota and Honda advertise their wares in safe shades of silver and gray. Chrysler is trying to get back in the game, and you will note it is featuring the new Chrysler Pacifica in Red Pearl and promoting it as a van for cool families. Whether or not this approach is working, it goes to show the power of color in something as mundane as the much-maligned family minivan.

When you log on to *Porsche.com*, you will see that the promotional photos of the 718 and 911 series of cars are in Lava Orange, Miami Blue, and Racing Yellow. Check out a Panamera or a Cayenne and you will find more neutral shades of black, Volcano Gray, and Night Blue Metallic.

IN TODAY'S AUTOMOTIVE CLIMATE, the neutral colors are dominant: white, black, gray, and silver. In fact, according to Axalta Coatings Systems' latest 2016 survey, those four colors accounted for 73% of all cars sold in North America. Red comes

up a distant fifth place at 10%, and blue is trending upward at 8%. Those six colors account for 91% of all new cars sold. The greens, yellows, oranges, and purples account for an increasingly small sliver of the market.

This trend holds true for Porsche as well. On Porsche's online car configurator, you will find that Porsche offers a total of 25 unique colors across all models, although each model has fewer choices than that. Among the neutral colors are white, White Metallic, black, Black Metallic, Volcano Grey, Agate Grey, Meteor

In years past, buyers spent hours poring over these small paint samples making tough color choices. For some reason, these old sample cards seem to hold great charm.



All-time Favorites

Here are author Nathan Merz's five favorite Porsche colors:

1 Jade Green/
Hell Grun,
Color Code 227
1972-1975 911

2 Maritime Blue,
Color Code 38B
1991-1993 928
& 911

3 Continental
Orange, Color
Code 107
1976-1978 928
& 911

4 Lime Green,
Color Code 226
1972-1973 911

5 Talbot Yellow,
Color Code 106
1976-1980
911/912

Grey, Rhodium Silver, GT Silver, and Chalk. There are also various reds and blues, such as Guards Red, Carmine Red, Burgundy Red, Graphite Blue, Night Blue, Miami Blue, Biscay Blue, and Moonlight Blue. Arguably, there are only three really daring colors offered: Lava Orange, Miami Blue, and Racing Yellow.

When it comes to collectible Porsches, the color story is the polar opposite. Bright, fun, daring, and unique colors are all the rage, and rarity is the Holy Grail. That's because, whether we are talking artwork, stamps, coins, or Porsches, an item that is scarce is more desirable than one that is plentiful. In the early days of Porsche, the color palette was more daring than that of today. That is likely a factor of both the time period and the fact that Porsche was a small sports car company that didn't have to take itself so seriously. Prior to the mid-1970s, a Porsche owner was literally yelling to the rest of the motoring public: "I'm an individual and my car is a direct reflection of that."

With that mindset, an owner could pull off an outrageous color like Viper Green or Signal Yellow. Fast forward to the mid-1980s, and Porsche had fully arrived. Its owner,

while still an enthusiast, projected a more buttoned-down image, which continues to this day. There is also a certain risk involved in picking a daring color. How will it fare in the future? What will my co-workers and neighbors think? How many of these bright early cars were later changed to black, silver, or Guards Red in the 1980s?

THE VALUE OF A NEUTRAL

So, if collectors today want early cars in a bright "jellybean" shade, why don't people buy new Porsches in the more daring Miami Blue, Racing Yellow, or Lava Orange? Why do so many of us pick a neutral color? There are many great reasons:

- **Conformity:** Not everyone wants to make a loud statement. You can't be shy if you're going to drive a Lava Orange Porsche.

- **Compromise:** Cars are usually purchased by a couple, and nearly everyone can compromise with their partner on silver, gray, white, or black. Nobody compromises on Speed Yellow or Mint Green.

- **Safe resale:** A neutral *never* goes out of style. Whether it's 1980, 1990, 2000, or 2020, arriving in a black or white car will never offend. Its resale value will always be neutral as well.

- **Versatility:** A neutral matches every season, every occasion, and even every outfit. If butter yellow leisure suits come back in style (hopefully not!) how will you look climbing out of your Rubystone 964 in front of the discotheque?

It also comes down to what's available at your local dealer. If you owned a Porsche store, would you feel safer with a lot full of neutral-colored new Porsches, or would you be willing to bet your fortune by having a dozen new Miami Blue cars on the lot? I would bet you might be more comfortable stocking them in Agate Grey.

THE VALUE OF A NON-NEUTRAL

- **Uniqueness:** Whether it's on a club drive, the concours lawn, or your local Cars and Coffee, there is nothing like the reaction you'll get pulling up in a Chartreuse 1973 911S. It's no fun to go to an event and have your pride and joy join a line of otherwise indistinguishable models just like yours.

- **Nostalgia:** When buying an older car, we are reflecting on simpler and more carefree times in our lives. Nothing says simple, youthful, and carefree like a decidedly bright primary color. Nobody can accuse you of being frumpy when you are driving a Ravenna Green 914!

- **Memorable:** In today's fast-paced world we are inundated with a veritable landslide of information and images. Which car is more likely to be remembered by others, the black 928 or the Arrow Blue 928? If you are trying to wow the concours judges, according to the rules, color should have no impact. In reality, having an Auratium Green Speedster is a sure trump card over a Signal Red one.

- **Safety:** In the early 1970s, Porsche actually posited that its sports cars should only be sold in bright colors, as it was believed the colors made them safer due to increased visibility. In fact, the legend is that they discontinued the colors Slate Grey and Sand Beige for this very reason! In today's world of smartphone-

focused drivers, maybe a Continental Orange 911 SC is better than a Silver Metallic one?

WHAT ABOUT PAINT TO SAMPLE?

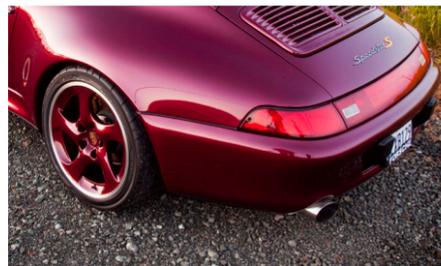
One of the unique things about Porsche has been its commitment since the beginning to really listen to its customers. Nothing is better evidence of that than the Paint to Sample (PTS) program. Since the 356 era, Porsche has allowed its customers to specify a color that is not listed in the standard palette. This could have been something as simple as requesting a color only available on the 928 for your 911, or picking a historic 356 color for your 996. More unusual are the truly rare, one-off colors specified for a Porsche family member, VIP client, or just a regular customer lucky enough to specify that his new 911 should match his wife's Ferrari Dino.

The current Paint to Sample program, while still quite unusual in the automotive world, does not allow the truly unlimited choices it once did. Currently, Porsche maintains an approved list of PTS choices, which primarily consists of historic Porsche colors. In fact, the interesting thing is that on modern Porsches, some of the PTS shades are more common than some of the lesser-chosen standard palette choices. The bright jellybean choices have permeated the majority of the PTS GT cars, such as the GT3, GT3 RS, and GT4.

As a general rule, PTS Porsches will trade for a premium. So if you get the chance to purchase a car in a one of these shades, you will generally be rewarded when it comes time to sell. Not to mention, you'll have a great story to tell at the next Cars and Coffee when you explain that your car was manufactured in the school colors of the original owner's alma mater.

IF YOU'RE LUCKY enough to own a Porsche in a unconventional shade or would like to purchase one, here are some things to think about:





Which one speaks to you? A colorful array of various Porsche hues over the generations.

- Certain rare colors are currently in vogue; those colors will trade at a significant premium versus more standard colors on that model. The premium will depend on the relative rarity of the given color.
- Certain rare colors are still *not* currently in vogue. As a general rule, the majority of the currently in

vogue colors are single-stage, primary colors (think M&Ms and Skittles).

- One of the best metrics for understanding how much of a premium the market might support for a given color has to do with its rarity. Is it a one-year-only color? Was the color a significant extra cost when new? Is it a truly unique Paint to Sample

color? When doing a broad-based search, can you find many cars in this particular shade, or does your search turn up little information?

- Some special colors have historical significance: the Porsche family cars in green, the Le Mans 917 in Gulf Blue, a Jagermeister Orange 934. Buying an old car is a nod to nostalgia and a look backward.

SO, IF YOUR PORSCHE is a common color, is it doomed?

No. If we think of the stereotypical Porsche color, Guards Red comes to mind. In the 1980s, if your 911 was anything other than Guards Red you were somehow missing the boat. As a result, there are a tremendous number of Porsches from the 1980s and 1990s in this iconic shade. In fact, I personally own two Guards Red Porsches and showed them in Preservation class at the 2017 Porsche Parade. I cringed when I pulled up in my 1993 RS America and in my class of nine cars, four were Guards Red.

Here's the good news:

- The color was popular because it was highly desired. People *loved* that color, so in the long run people will continue to love that color. It clearly showed the car in a great light and captured the essence of that car.

- Because there are so many of a particular model running around in a given shade, people everywhere—including collectors of the future—are developing a connection to that car. Case in point: When I was 12 years old I was a newspaper carrier, and each morning while doing my route, I would see a Bamboo Beige 911 SC in a customer's driveway. Now, 30 years later, I want a Bamboo Beige 911 SC!

- For the same reasons people pick neutral colors for their new car, most people pick them for their used car, too, because the color won't go in or out of style. You will note that none of the wild colors has ever been a large sales success. Most people are happy with



Wild Colors of Each Decade

Within each decade you can see some basic trends emerge.

While these color lists are not exhaustive, they are a sampling of the more daring colors of each era.

1950s Pastels are the flavor of the day.

Aurantium Green, Lago Green Metallic, Radium Green, Adria Blue, Orange

1960s Greens are still popular, but a few more daring colors.

Leaf Green, Gold Green, Olive, Sea Green, Crystal Blue, Pastel Blue, Champagne Yellow, Blood Orange

1970s The floodgates open—this is the golden era of wild paint schemes!

Rose Red, Magenta, Conda Green, Daphne Green, Lime Green, Jade Green, Ravenna Green, Signal Green, Viper Green, Acid Blue, Arrow Blue, Gulf Blue, Aubergine, Royal Purple, Light Yellow, Signal Yellow, Talbot Yellow, Tangerine, Continental Orange

1980s Conservatism returns. A few colors mix it up, but by far Porsche's most buttoned-up color era.

Granite Green Metallic, Glacier Blue, Minerva Blue, Lime Yellow, Bamboo Beige, Caramel Brown, Nougat Brown Metallic

1990s The colors come back! None of them sold in large volume, but Porsche put them on the palette.

Raspberry Red, Coral Red Metallic, Rubystone, Mint Green, Murano Green, Signal Green, Turquoise Blue, Riviera Blue, Horizon Blue Metallic, Iris Blue Metallic, Tahoe Blue Metallic, Amaranth Violet, Amethyst Metallic, Viola Metallic, Speed Yellow, Pastel Yellow

2000s A retreat from the wild options of the '90s. A few flamboyant colors, but fairly conservative.

Orient Red Metallic, Malachite Green, Wimbledon Green, Azure Blue Metallic, Violet Chromoflair, Fayence Yellow, Speed Yellow, Nordic Gold, Orange, Orange Metallic, Orangerot, Signal Green

2010-Current There are a few slow-selling wild shades, but the industrial shades rule.

Aqua Blue Metallic, Racing Yellow, Miami Blue, Lava Orange, Sand Yellow, Malachite Green, Ipanema Blue Metallic, Ultraviolet

the more common shades. A color doesn't sell well if it doesn't look good on a particular car. A Silver Metallic Boxster will always be an elegant car, and black will always be in style.

So the real question is, are you content to be the person who is drawn to a wild-colored Porsche but motors away in your black 911 SC knowing your car looks snappy, elegant, mature, and timeless? Or do you daydream of replacing it with an early SC Targa finished in Talbot Yellow with brightwork trim? If that's your choice, be prepared to be the center of attention at your next Porsche event. 🌀

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Interested in more on Porsche colors? Get a preview of PCA's Color Wiki, where you'll be able to look at a huge collection of factory color charts and upload photos of cars in the appropriate colors, as well as paint code/formula information.

Go to: pca.org/colors