
1966 Porsche 911 Spyder

Lot sold	USD 700 000 - 1 000 000	Drive	LHD
Year of manufacture	1966	Condition	Used
Lot number	161	Location	
		Exterior colour	Other
		Car type	Other

Description

PROVENANCE

John von Neumann/Competition Motors, Culver City, California (bare chassis acquired from Porsche in 1965)

Second Owner, California (acquired from the above circa 1970)

Mark J. Smith, Lynchburg, Virginia (acquired from the above in 1987)

Marv Tonkin, Portland, Oregon (acquired from the above circa 1990)

Current Owner (acquired from the above circa 1993)

EXHIBITED

Geneva Auto Show, Geneva, Switzerland, March 1966

Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance®, Pebble Beach, California, August 1989

LITERATURE

Karl Ludvigsen, , discussed on pp. 444-445

Jürgen Barth and Lothar Boschen,

Randy Leffingwell, , discussed on p. 63

THIS CAR

When 356 production ceased in 1965, customers and dealers alike wanted to know whether Porsche would build an open-air version of its new 911/912 sports car. While Porsche was known to be developing a semi-convertible Targa variant, John von Neumann, a Southern California Porsche dealer, believed that would not satisfy his California clients who were badgering him for a completely

open-top car.

Von Neumann, also one of the most successful racing drivers of the early sports car era, had previously teamed with influential auto distributor Max Hoffman to conceive and promote to Ferry Porsche the sales potential of a strippeddown and lower-priced 356 Speedster. This time, von Neumann first approached highly regarded Italian car designer Nuccio Bertone, who expressed interest in the project.

A bare chassis was made available to von Neumann by Zuffenhausen as a litmus test and shipped to the workshops of Carrozzeria Bertone in Torino. Because Porsche's name would be on the car, the German automaker told von Neumann that it would have the final say on production, despite the fact that he was funding the project.

Bertone was given a challenging brief: to fit out a Porsche chassis, notoriously atypical in size and shape. It was also very important to deliver a high level of technical and design quality, befitting the high standard of the basic product and the prestige of the Porsche nameplate.

Exhibiting an Italian, rather than German, flavor, the striking, sleek Porsche 911 Spyder that emerged nine months later incorporated some of Bertone's previous styling elements as seen on the 1963 Testudo show car and the 1965 Fiat 850 Spider production car. The cockpit was completely separated from the rest of the vehicle with the use of a deep swage line running from the windscreen along the upper edge of the doors to the engine compartment, allowing for notably low wings for this type of car. The lavish leather interior also differed from that of the standard 911 and featured unique seats, a center console, and main instrumentation laid out vertically down a central stack.

Finished in a shade of Carmine Red over a cream colored interior and shod with Campagnolo wheels, the 911 Spyder was presented at the March 1966 Geneva Auto Show. Displayed close to Porsche's own Targa, the concept was met with an overall warm reception, and several inquiries but no hard orders, forcing von Neumann to concede that the Targa would be the more practical and economical choice for series production.

Exported to the US after its show duties were completed, the 911 Spyder was retained by von Neumann for a number of years. After one other ownership, it was acquired in 1987 by noted collector Mark Smith of Lynchburg, Virginia, who had the Spyder refinished in its current black over beige leather livery. Mr. Smith was subsequently invited to display the Spyder at the 39th Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance®, where designer Nuccio Bertone was honored, in August 1989.

Around 1990, the Spyder was acquired by Marv Tonkin, a noted car collector and owner of Marv Tonkin Ford, a dealership renowned for its factory-sponsored race team. Mr. Tonkin would sell the Spyder into its current collector ownership circa 1993.

It is believed that the Spyder, when originally produced, was equipped with the standard two-liter flat six producing 130 hp. At some point, though, the car received an upgraded 901/02 "S" specification engine as well as a set of 914-6 Mahle "Gas Burner" alloy wheels.

Presenting in well-preserved condition today, this 911 Spyder has been on static display in climate-controlled storage for many years. Although it has been recently returned to running condition in advance of this auction by specialist Motion Products of Neenah, Wisconsin, this car will require further mechanical attention before returning to the road.

This 911 Spyder is the only collaboration between Bertone and Porsche, and the sole example ever built. Boasting impressive provenance and offered for the first time in almost 25 years, the sale of this most exclusive Porsche may well be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and is certainly one not to be missed.

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