

CLASSIC DRIVER

A dash over Calanques National Park with Camille Guikas in a green Ferrari

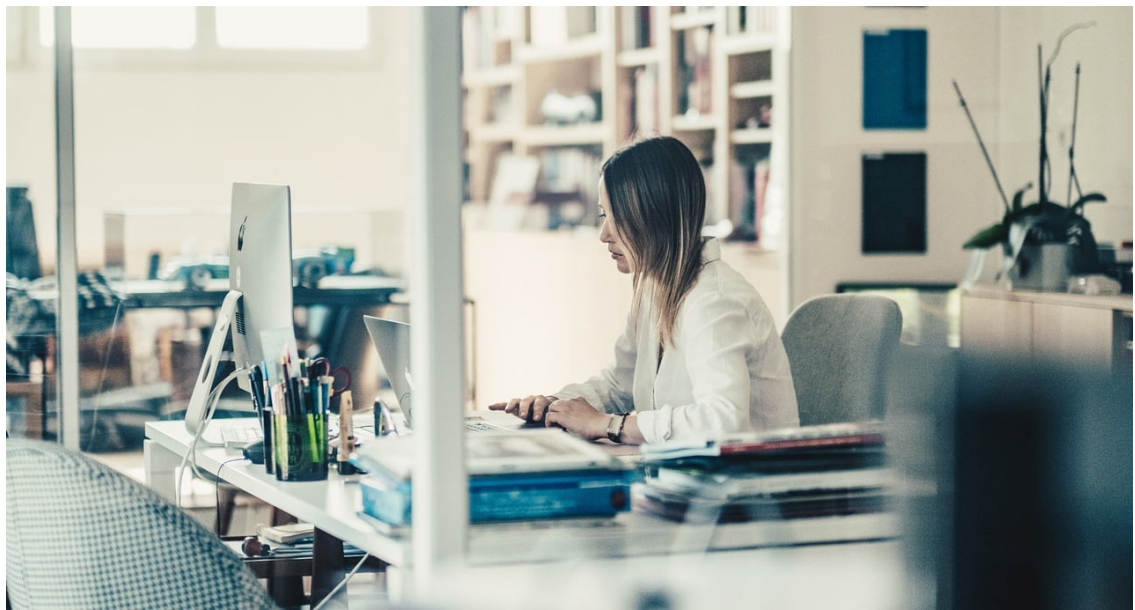
Lead
She grew up around some of the most amazing and iconic automobiles ever made, and when she was a kid, instead of dolls, she used to play with little cars. Turns out, Camille Guikas still does, but these days the cars are just slightly bigger.



"I'm not wearing the right shoes", says Camille Guikas while executing a perfect heel-and-toe downshift to second gear, before committing the Ferrari into a steep, uphill hairpin. The 485 horsepower V12 bellows beautifully as it climbs up the rev range and the car shoots forward. Camille's foot - in what's called a high-heeled "mule" type of shoe, which clearly isn't ideal for driving - is firmly planting the accelerator into the carpet. The Fezza's power delivery as smooth as a silk nightgown worn by Kim Basinger in a 1980's film, in which "love scenes" are shot through a thick layer of vaseline smudged over the lens filter. The car is extremely comfortable over the occasionally bumpy, twisty ribbon of the Route des Crêtes - a road climbing up the amazing cliffs of the Calanques National Park. "Aaah the good old days of Ferrari" I think to myself "Elegant. Powerful. Comfortable. Manual".



But let's rewind the clock about an hour or so to when we met at the [GTC headquarters](#). The company was founded by her father Jean in 1989 out of his love for the cars he grew up admiring, and which he subsequently discovered he was more passionate about buying, collecting and selling, than he was about selling ship supplies - the Guikas' previous business started by Camille's grandfather, a first generation Greek immigrant.



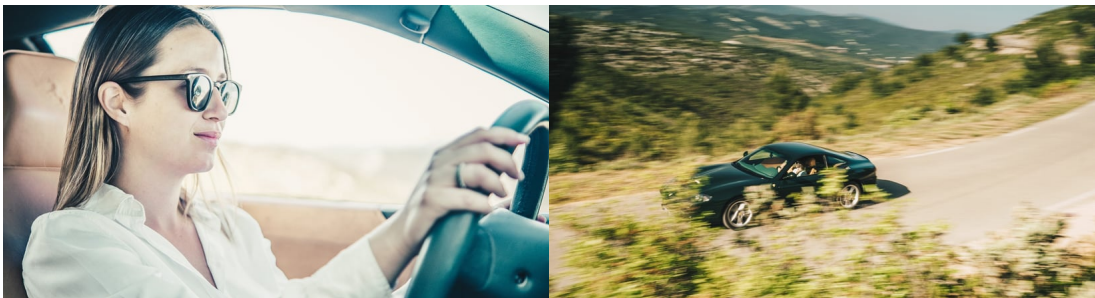
Outside the out-of-the way unmarked facility, located on the outskirts of Marseille, a place that holds the quite amazing Guikas Collection (or stock, if you prefer), sits the Verde Inglese 550. It's the only indication of anything car-related going on in the otherwise plain white building, squeezed in-between powerboat dealers. Camille is the sales and marketing director of this operation, a job rarely held by women in this male-dominated world. "I have never sold a car to a woman", she says when asked, "of course they are part of their husband's decisions, but no, no direct female clients that I can recall. On the other hand, I don't feel I was ever looked down upon because I'm a woman who, as some might think, got the job because she's Jean Guikas' daughter. Everyone was always respectful and at the very least helpful."



This comes as no surprise as Camille really knows her stuff. Like with Jedi younglings, her training started when she was 5 years old. "When I was a little girl I only wanted to play with cars. Of course, I had dolls as well, and when I had friends over we'd play with them. But when I was alone, I put my little cars on the carpet and raced around my room for hours", she recalls, "It's not like my father pushed me into it. I have two younger sisters and, while they do know the difference between a Miura and a Daytona, one of them even owns the former, just never drives it, they couldn't care less about the collector car world. Both have their own careers and lives unrelated to the GTC. I am simply the only one of us three that wanted to go with him to racetracks and auctions, or when I was five or seven years old, to come to work with him on Sunday in order to help him wash the cars, while simultaneously learning about what they were and what made them special."



I quickly tour the office where various automotive memorabilia, like Ayrton Senna's helmet, or a scale model of Jean Guikas' favourite car - the Matra-Simca MS670 - adorn the shelves and walls, wonderfully mixed in with family photos and pictures of his daughters when they were little. Family is clearly important to the man in charge. Small wonder, then, that he gave one of his daughters a priceless Miura. And that Camille's personal collection, which consists of her first car ever, a Mini Cooper S (one she says she will never sell), a V8 Defender ex-Fire brigade car, and a Panda 4x4 Meribel - Camille's bespoke remix of a Sisley and Val D'Iserre Panda - has two absolutely iconic crown jewels. The first is a Marrone Colorado Ferrari 365 GTB/4, and the second a navy blue Porsche 911 Speedster Turbo look with a matching interior and roof. A car bought new by Jean and later gifted to his eldest daughter when she was still playing with those little cars on the carpet of her room.



As we clean the last few water spots from the 550, which is done unsurprisingly skilfully with all the weekends of practice Camille's had, I ask if we could take out the Daytona instead of the Maranello as I've never been in one. "I have yet to drive it myself", she says pensively, "talk about the pot calling the kettle black, I just complained my sister never drives her Miura, but I am exactly the same... just too busy I suppose... people think my life is so glamorous because I'm around unique automobiles all the time, and I travel to various shows and auctions, which look good on Instagram. But in reality, I just spend my days here, at a desk", she adds while wiping off the last bits of quick detailer residue with one broad stroke of a microfibre cloth.



Back on the D141 (Rte. des Crêtes), we cut straight across a series of small bends, before braking hard before a tightening right-hander. The Ferrari dives slightly under the weight of its engine, but the braking force is perfectly measured, so I don't feel unsafe when observing the rock face approaching the front of the car before it turns in. She's driving unhesitatingly, always both hands on the wheel and looking far ahead. "I wasn't one of those kids that drove illegally at fifteen, but once I passed my driving test I really wanted to learn how to do it properly. And I could learn from dad, obviously, him having done and won many classic racing series. So we went to the track together, where I observed, and I also timed him on public roads when he'd drive me to school in our e46 M3 CSL, giving me many tips while he sped".



I ask about the need to go racing herself, was it ever there? "I did a little driving course in a monoposto Formula Renault, and I have done the Tour Auto once, as you know there are many occasions to go flat out against the clock during this particular event, but no. Competing isn't really my cup of tea. I prefer to create long lasting memories and experiences related to cars, but not in a competitive context, just one of sharing moments with friends and family. So, I'd love to do the Tour Auto again, but not to win it. Just to share it with my sister. She is really into Formula One, so I think I can convince her".



We pull into a little parking area overlooking the turquoise waters of the Mediterranean. The green Ferrari's exhaust ticking away a syncopated rhythm somewhere in the background, cicadas providing a cacophony of deafening chords in around us. As far as creating car-related moments, this one is pretty great in my book.

Gallery

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