

— LEFTY PORSCHE 3.0 RSR 'ART CAR'



The History of Art Cars

Motor racing has seen many changes that altered its look and feel across the ages, but two decades in particular heralded the greatest visual shift. Firstly, during the late 1960s, title-sponsor focused liveries dramatically change the viewing experience, and instantly became a hit with fans. The second major point of change, although niche, but was arguably of much greater cultural significance.

The year was 1975 and dynamic art auctioneer/author and racing driver Hervé Poulain had a persuaded BMW to try a new concept ahead of that year's Le Mans 24 Hours, which was to have a famous artist literally use a 3.0 CSL 'Batmobile' as a blank canvas. BMW agreed, and so Poulain turned to his friend, American sculptor/artist Alexander Calder. Calder painted the Batmobile in his distinctive style, and the very first 'art car' was born. Poulain along with co-drivers Jean Guichet and Sam Posey won the hearts of fans in their unique racing painting.

The following year, the Poulain/BMW 'art car' initiative continued, once again using a CSL. This time it would be painted by American minimalist artist Frank Stella, with top endurance racers Brian Redman and Peter Gregg at the helm (Poulain was scheduled to drive but withdrew). Needless to say, it was also an instant hit. Poulain and BMW would continue this tradition of creating an art car especially for Le Mans every year up to 1980. In 1977 a 320i was painted by American pop artist Roy Lichtenstein, whilst another 320i was planned for 1978, this time to be painted by pop art icon Andy Warhol, although the car ultimately did not materialize. Instead, Warhol painted BMW's new Group 4 M1 racing car for the 1979 Le Mans 24 Hours. Warhol felt his creation "attempted to show speed as a visual creation". Indeed, the entry didn't just look fast as Poulain, Manfred Winkelhock and Marcel Mignot finished 6th overall and 2nd in class.

Since this first golden age of art cars, manufacturers and privateers alike have embraced Poulain's concept with a plethora of art cars being created especially for Le Mans, right up to the present day.



Porsche in the 1970's

When looking at Le Mans during the 1970s, it is impossible to look past the impact that Porsche had during this period. Indeed, liveries took a notable step in 1970 with John Wyer's 917ks sporting pale blue and orange liveries in deference to main sponsor Gulf Oil, and Martini Racing's 917 longtail sporting a wild psychedelic purple and neon green livery. The fearsome and dominant 917 earned a cult status amongst racing fans, which it still holds to this day.

After the 917, Porsche themselves dovetailed competing with a variety of 911 variants plus sports prototypes such as the 936. 911s of all varieties also proved the car of choice for numerous privateers. First came the S, then ST, 2.8 RSR, 3.0 RS, 3.0 RSR, 934, 935 before culminating with the mighty 935 K3. These variants were highly popular amongst gentlemen drivers, with Porsche notably refining each iteration. It was the 2.8 variant though that began another tradition of Porsche racing cars, the use of the RSR moniker. Proving a formidable model on track and stage, the 2.8 RSR was very lightweight, had 917 brakes a very wide track and remarkable 300bhp engine amongst other features.

New for 1974, the 3.0 RSR enjoyed upgrades including centre-lock wheels, flared wheel arches, a front air dam, and a dramatic rear spoiler that many now refer to as a 'tea tray'. With this powerful combination of low weight, 917 brakes and an improvement in the handling capabilities, the 3.0 RSR became the most successful Group 4 racing car its age.



The Origin Story

When the idea of creating a contemporary art car came about it was evident that it would shine a light on an art form that has been in decline in recent years. Creative talent Jimmy Howson had a vision to reignite the love and passion for art cars for some time, but until early 2023 the stars had not aligned, with Jimmy not yet meeting an artist who both impressed him and shared the same love for the concept. Howson's chance meeting with 'Lefty' (aka Francesco Campanella) proved crucial and would change all that.

The pair met by chance whilst Lefty was painting a mural in Battersea, London. Jimmy decided to use his film skills to document the incredible work unfolding in front of him, and they soon learned they shared a passion for cars. Jimmy walked away from this encounter with only one thing in mind, that he had to find a way to collaborate with 'Lefty' so that the world could see a car adorned with the artist's signature polymorph pattern.

As the passion and love for 'Art Cars' had begun to fade over recent decades, Jimmy's collaboration with 'Lefty' became far more significant than just creating an art car. They quickly realised their duty to both the art world and the car world would be to create an art car so special it would reinvigorate the love and passion the early cars created. To do this, a normal car would not suffice, it had to be a racing car and a dramatic one at that. This is where the idea of using a Porsche 3.0 RSR began, and so in summer 2023 Jimmy set about using his contacts to source a suitable car.



The 'Lefty' Porsche 3.0 RSR

Before long Jimmy had procured the perfect canvas, a period-correct 3.0 RSR recreation built in 2018 by Tuthill Porsche, that just so happened to already be white! August's Monterey Car Week seemed the perfect moment to unveil the newest art car to the world, although this left very little time to make it happen. It was decided that 'The Quail, A Motorsports Gathering' concours would be the best Car Week event to debut the car, and before long an invitation was secured.

The moment the RSR landed in LA, Jimmy drove it to Lefty's studio. Here the pair camped out for days refining the brief, before the artist set to work, painstakingly adorning the RSR's complex curves with his brushwork. It was agreed that the car be painted in Lefty's signature pattern utilising four of the 1974 IROC 3.0 RSR colours, so Light Yellow, India Red, Bahama Blue and Gulf Blue were chosen. Lefty finished his creation just in time for Jimmy to roar up the Pacific Coast Highway. As well as wowing crowds on the Quail's lawn, Jimmy took part in the Quail rally, and used the car as his main transport during car week! Needless to say it was a hit all over the Monterey peninsular, and the world is one more art car richer.

Freshly available for sale this is a unique opportunity to acquire a truly special car. The chance to own a painting by a rising star in the art world is rare in itself, even more so when the canvas is a car. However its appeal doesn't end there, because the Lefty RSR is also eligible for the world's best classic car and historic racing events. It is worth noting that it is eligible for Peter Auto's CER 1 series, Le Mans Classic and Tour Auto, Masters' Sports Car Legends, plus the Daytona and Sebring Classics to list a few. So whether displayed as art in one's garage, shown on a concours lawn, or tearing up tarmac, it will not fail to impress.



GALLERY

