

Open secret

Sometimes forgotten treasures appear. Like this 356 1500 Pre-A Cabriolet, for which the Reutter company created an aluminum body - but it remains unique.



Flawless and perfect: after a six-year restoration, the 356 1500 is probably better than when it was created - and the unique car drives like a Porsche from 1953: sporty and with the unmistakable sound that characterizes the brand.



Finally free rein: 66 years after the first handover of the key, the 356 aluminum convertible can be admired on the streets in its old beauty. The aesthetics of the simple lines are particularly effective painted in the original ivory color.



Sporty and comfortable: Sitting opulently on the red leather, looking at the simple dashboard is even more enjoyable.

It takes a lot of imagination to identify the convertible that drives past with the typical Porsche sound as something special - if you disregard the fact that each of the only 394 convertibles that Porsche built in 1953 is a rarity.

And yet: This convertible is unique, because the ivory-colored original paint hides an aluminum body - which of course leads directly to the question of what caused Reutter's bodyworks 66 years ago to build this body.

Because aluminum bodies actually serve to make vehicles - i.e. coupes - lighter and more agile in order to achieve victories in motorsport. Lightening a convertible doesn't make much sense.

And yet: here is the one-off - perfectly restored after six years of hard work. Dipl.-Ing. Rolf Sprenger, the veteran of Porsche history and the initiator of the special exclusive department for Porsche Exclusive, had supervised these Herculean tasks and thus brought a "daily driver" back to its former glory. A Herculean task because the restoration of a one-off is constantly confronting everyone involved with questions to which there are only limited answers - just one of many examples: How did the workers solve the problem of contact corrosion between the steel frame and the aluminum structure?

But back to the question "Why an aluminum convertible." And since intensive searches in the archives of Porsche and Reutter only help to a limited extent here, only guesses remain - one of which could be a contact with the Association of Mechanical Engineers (VdM), which was founded in Cologne in 1892, of which one member had the car in this configuration could have ordered from Porsche, although that is no longer clear today. Did one of the members of the association want to check whether a small aluminum production would pay off?

If this were to be the solution to the riddle, then a glance at the then young history of Porsche would have sufficed to reveal the difficulties that had been overcome. Because after the first vehicles that were made of aluminum in Gmünd, the move to Zuffenhausen meant that steel sheet bodies were understood, which were lighter, cheaper and easier to manufacture.

And the unfortunate fate of the 356 America Roadster, of which only 15 examples were created (plus a roadster with a steel body) in 1952, did not really support the aluminum theme. In this case the high production costs were caused by the Gläser-Karosserie GmbH in Ullersricht near Weiden in the upper Pfalz area after the construction of the unique models, which are today seen as Speedster precursors, who had to file for bankruptcy. No wonder that Ferry Porsche later wrote in his memories that "Reutter was not inclined to weld aluminum bodies." So there seem to have been talks on the subject - but no orders. Except for this convertible, which was obviously not an order from Porsche to Reutter.

The car was delivered in July 1953 to the well-known Porsche dealer Glöckler in Frankfurt, nothing is known about the early history of this one-of-a-kind - the track can only be resumed in the UK in the 1970s, where it was sold in Gloucester at a price of 1,000 £: "Historic and unique Porsche Cabriolet Type 356. Aluminum body specially built to single order by Reutter, Zuffenhausen, March 1953, unmarked white paint work, new gray interior trimming, new red upholstery and new black hood, all to original standards."

Then the car came to Germany at some point, where the current owner could buy it more than 20 years ago, under the condition that one day it would be perfectly restored and not put in the corner as a speculative object for a few years. A gentleman's agreement that the buyer naturally kept - and then put together a team for six years that was supposed to handle the costly restoration work as perfectly as possible.



In search of perfection: under the supervision of Dipl.-Ing. Rolf Sprenger and the eyes of an owner who has internalized the details of this model for decades, brought the articulated convertible to new life

That the task of coordinating the trades, Dipl.-Ing. Rolf Sprenger was to be expected, because he not only knows his way around old vehicles perfectly, he also has contacts with companies that dare to undertake complicated tasks - because one thing was clear: "It was always about quality over speed." Which ultimately led to thousands of hours of work and the aforementioned six years to the resurrection of the convertible.

Astonishingly, the Cabriolet had been used every day for many years - a "daily driver" that had been gnawing at the ravages of time. "After an initial inventory, it was clear that this unique piece had to be completely dismantled," recalls Dipl.-Ing. Rolf Sprenger, "and although the car was complete, we of course had to overhaul each part and check its functionality." It is clear that this research kept asking questions and problems: How could contact corrosion be avoided, why does the hardware on the seats not work properly? Questions over questions. And above all, the question "How can we preserve as much old original substance as possible and restore the vehicle to its original condition?"

Questions that were processed step by step - and led to a remarkable result. To a unique piece of Porsche history, which now tells in perfection that even in the early history of Porsche, efforts were made again and again to break new ground by building unique pieces and to fulfill special requests. And, it tells the story of an enthusiast who recognized the value of this unique item a long time ago.



In 1953, the Porsche company only delivered 1,941 vehicles - 394 of them convertibles, of which only one was built by the bodywork company Reutter with an aluminum body. A single piece, a dream on wheels.



Stolze 55 PS leistet der 1.488 cm³ große Vierzylinder, die er bei 4.400/min zur Verfügung stellt. Mit der Alu-Karosserie dürften 160 km/h erreichbar sein.

Porsche Pre-A 356 Alu-Cabrio

TECHNISCHE DATEN

Motor	Vierzylinder-Boxermotor Typ 546
Hubraum	1.488 cm ³
Gemischaufbereitung	Solex-32-PBJ-Fallstrom-Vergaser
Zündung	Bosch-Zündverteiler VE 4 BRS 383
Maximale Leistung	55 PS bei 4.400/min
Radstand	2.100 mm
Höchstgeschwindigkeit	160 km/h

The 1,488 cc four-cylinder engine delivers 55 hp, which it makes available at 4,400 rpm. With the aluminum body it should be possible to reach 160 km/hr (100 mph).