

# ARTFORART'SSAKE

Art dealer Kenny Schachter is so infatuated with his 911s he keeps them in his Shoreditch gallery

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Photographs: Antony Fraser



It's the summer of love, and the couple bonking in the Focus pause their exertions long enough to check us out. We've stopped our pair of dazzling flower-power 911s in Hoxton Square for a location shot – a flat-six bark at 6.00am on a Sunday morning is enough to grab anybody's attention – so we give them a peace sign and get on with some true love of our own.

Territorially, we have the prior claim. Our featured 911s belong to fine art dealer Kenny Schachter who has a gallery here in the heart of London's trendy Shoreditch, and that's where his cars live. Kenny's a connoisseur, a big time operator in the international art world dealing in blue-chip paintings and sculpture. He's a man with a penchant for Picasso and a passion for Porsches. In fact he's so besotted with 911s that he even feels he probably looks like one – 'I see myself as that snake that swallowed a mouse,' cracks the New Yorker, 'where you can see the

bulge halfway down its body – and physically I think I resemble the cars! He does himself a disservice: no question Kenny's as personable as a Porsche, but his trim figure lacks the rotundity of a well-contoured 911.

Upper East Side comes to Upper East End: Kenny arrived in London in 2003 and opened Rove Gallery when Shoreditch was on the up. Its name is suggestive of how the American staged exhibitions when he first came over – nomadically – a show here, an expo there, always transitory. 'Rove is apt because in life you're always moving around,' he says. 'The car is moving around, the art shows are moving around.' He's open to the public every day, and on the ground floor organic furniture based on flower heads shares space with these gorgeous 911 classics. They're on the cusp of late-'60s B- and C-Programme cars with their longer wheelbase and gently flared wheelarches – the Bahama yellow one's a 1969 2.0-litre 911E and the Bahia red 2.2-litre 911T is from 1970. A



*It's worth getting up early! Six am on a Sunday morning and the roads of London and Docklands are deserted. Ideal territory for a classic 911 duo*

dealer's a dealer, so, sure, they're part of his Rove Cars collection, but everything's for sale. Almost: across town at his Fulham home, three more 911s live in his Ab (son of Richard) Rogers-designed office, and they are 'keepers'. Two of them, at least. His 'blue period' artworks are a Monaco blue 930 Turbo on 40,000 miles, a Marine blue 964 RS, and a Riviera blue 993 GT2. He also has a 2.4S that Neil Bainbridge is currently rebuilding.

He turned on to 911s mid-'70s: 'when I saw the first 911 Turbo in '74, it was love at first sight. My jaw just fell through the floor. I was around 13 and there it was with the swollen arches in the back, and I was smitten.' It's not just the British art scene that Kenny digs: he loves the British symbiosis with the car. 'I grew up on Long Island and I lived in New York for 25 years, and one reason I am so infatuated with this country is the relationship to cars which is unlike anything I have ever experienced in the States. I mean, forget California, here it's an incredible relationship, not just with flashy cars, but the history of cars and car design. There are some of the best

universities in the world for car design, and the cars you see on the street on any given day are beyond anything you'd see in ten years in America. The car community is so deep here, very much vested in what they do and prides itself on its knowledge.'

There's a practical aspect to being here too: 'My wife has family in Europe, I have four kids and they were young enough at the time to make the move without disrupting them much, plus I'd worked here in the art trade over the years before I moved here – and I understand the language. A lot of my business is elsewhere in Europe so I can easily get around.'

That means jetting off on a weekly basis, Roving for real. 'Before the recession people used to come to me or I'd go to a fair, but the whole climate changed so you have to go after the clients and present yourself on the doorstep. I do everything I can within art, from teaching, writing, curating exhibitions and museums, and I deal everything from Picasso, Monet, and Cezanne to the young artists that I promote in Rove Gallery. I fell into



*1970 911T on the streets of London in a suitably bright '70s colour. Of the duo the T is the sharper tool with its 2.2-litre flat six eager to pull*

trading cars and started the company so I wouldn't lose so much money selling to other traders. I've had about 85 cars since I moved here; it's a fake business because it is a passion – if it was solely a business then maybe I wouldn't have the same relationship to it.' Being dispassionate cost Kenny his star car. 'I had an original panel 2.7 RS Lightweight – the holy grail of Porsches – and it so happened the value of the car was around the amount that I owed the IRS for back tax! So I detached myself because I had no choice and sold it. And today the car is almost worth 60- or 70% more than I sold it for less than two years ago. In that respect I think Porsches are radically undervalued compared with, say, Ferrari.'

these camera-benighted corridors – and the growling overrun as the revs drop is awesome. These cars are a reminder of Porsche motoring in a different incarnation and from a different era. They're taut, compact, edgy, alive; come on, they say, let's go dancing, let's not hang about. For a start their lightness conveys the feel of the chassis and its behaviour, determines how they handle, their communicative, tactile character, and the light steering gives brilliant turn-in and transmits every nuance of the road surface. Once I learn the shift pattern – dogleg first on the 1969 car – and find the pedal pressure required to actuate the non servo'd brakes, a rhythm develops and I'm yearning for a long cross country run. In

**“I am drawn to the simplicity of the form, and the way everything functions so reliably”**

Kenny's aesthetic appreciation is acute, but he welcomes the practicality as well. 'I am drawn to the simplicity of the form, and the way everything functions so reliably; you can get into an old 911 that hasn't been started in nine months and it fires right up; you can't say that about many other cars. I appreciate the design as much as I do the driving aspect.' The architecture of the engine is less important. 'Once the key turns I draw a blank,' he admits. 'I love speed, I love acceleration. I also like the older cars because you can have the enjoyment of driving at slower speeds, including city driving.'

Cue the driving experience. Fraser has a plan, and we rasp rapidly through deserted Cockney conduits down to Docklands where the roads open up. Kenny and I can't resist hitting the high revs in the tunnels – all too briefly in

my dreams. Still, these are ultra low-mileage cars so I'm happy to sample. Ride comfort is partly down to the depth of the tyre sidewalls, which are Michelin Harmony 175/70x14 on the front and 205/70x14 at the rear, on 14-inch Fuchs rims on the 2.0E – in consort with self-levelling hydropneumatic struts. The 2.2T is on 15in Fuchs with 185/70VRx15s and 205/70xR15s, and it's lowered slightly.

You wouldn't clock the yellow 911E as 42 years old. It's like a brand new car; the mileage is 25,406 and the carpets are immaculate. As much as anything the antiquated seatbelts give the car's age away, being almost impossible to fasten, and then there are the limp, sagging seats. Kenny's kids have it right: 'they call them living room seats, a bit squishy – and so's the suspension, for that matter!' They say if you can remember the '60s

*High-end art dealer, Kenny Schachter has no problem parking a couple of Porsches in his gallery and who would argue that the curves of a 911 are nothing if not art?*





*Kenny Schachter: "I don't differentiate between a car or a spoon or a painting or a sculpture, so it's blurring the boundaries of what is art. Anything done well is art."*

you weren't there, but this is truly a time-warp car. It's beautifully balanced and soaks up London potholes and sleeping policemen nicely, a lovely thing to drive.

The 2.2-litre 911T with carburettors is much sharper, keener to rev and more awake than the 2.0-litre E. It's more raucous too, and pulls harder. The dash panel has two unfamiliar clocks on the left, with no oil pressure gauge, just a fuel reading, and a spectral red glow emanates from the second one that somehow ties in with the period radio over in the middle of the dashboard. Otherwise there's not much to choose between the two, though performance-wise, this is the kiddie.

Back in the Rove Gallery we park the 911s among the sculpture. 'I don't differentiate between a car or a spoon or a painting or a sculpture, so it's blurring the boundaries of what is art. Anything done well is art, whether it's a hat, a ring or a beautiful sculpture or a car, and that is why I mix it up. I have cars in my living space because

have it. For me the history is as important as the car, and that comes from the art world where the provenance of the painting – where it has been shown and who owned it and whether it has been restored – are the principle factors that determine value.'

It's a small world: Kenny employs one of our old friends, Stuart Gurr (911&PW, issue 192, March 2010, 993 RS replica) to check out prospective purchases and keep his cars up to the mark: 'Stuart travels all over the world to look at the cars and if he tells me it's accident free, not rusted, in working order and as stated, then that is enough to pull the trigger.'

Kenny reconciles his love of cars and 911s in particular in the way he knows best – as art objects. He recently got into tutoring on car design at the Royal College of Art: 'I was lecturing with Frank Stephenson (new Mini, McLaren MP4-12C, etc) – how cool is that! My idea is to try and make design and art organic; we market furniture in

**“My appreciation for cars stops in the mid-'90s. Thereafter design became so homogenised”**

when you drive the car you don't see its exterior so it's got to be in there to be appreciated, not stashed away in the garage.' Kenny's reluctant to name a favourite: 'I like the aesthetics of the pre-impact bumper cars, and for driving I love the 964 RS, I love the ride of the suspension, the fact that it is so hardcore, and it has a roll cage too. But they all have something extraordinary to offer.'

Kenny is not struck on cars that have been extensively rebuilt or restored, even if new original parts have been used. 'I love cars that are frozen in time and packed with originality. What first drew me to the red 911T was that it's a 50,000-mile car, it's never been painted, it's never had the engine out, and it takes you back to the day in 1970 when it was manufactured.' Kenny found it at a Wisconsin dealer, and soon afterwards he saw the yellow 911E in California. 'That's mostly original but it's had some light paintwork, and all panels are original. In America they're not so anxious about history files, England and Germany are the most conscientious about those things, but in America it's like Italy and France you rarely find paperwork supporting the car though both of these cars

limited editions and it sells for a fortune so my idea was to do cars on a similar basis. My appreciation for cars stops in the mid-'90s because thereafter design became so homogenised. Cars get standardised by regulations but there are ways to bring more choice into the design process.'

He'll commission works based on 911s too: 'I had a series of four pieces from artists based on the cars. Brian Clarke, a stained glass artist who shows in museums all over the world, made some beautiful line drawings and paintings based on the form of the early 911.'

Kenny has also veered into car design himself. 'Another component of my business is design and architecture, so I've commissioned furniture and installations by the Iraqi architect Zaha Hadid, though she's not a car person – she has a PT Cruiser – but she did design the BMW factory in Leipzig. The most brilliant and innovative component of this building is the overhead conveyor belt that goes all the way through the factory, above the cafeteria and the executive offices, so she has used this snaking conveyor belt to tie together all the different hierarchies within the



*We know a fine piece of sculpture when we see it. Not sure about the strange swirly thing in the foreground though!*



*Kenny's 911E has just 25,000 miles on the clock and was located in California. Now it leads the more cultured life of an exhibit in a London gallery, not to mention a city runabout*

factory. And she's also doing the swimming stadium for the 2012 Olympics. I commissioned two concept cars from her and we have danced around the idea of producing a bespoke city car because we think that potentially in China it can happen.' Kenny persuaded ExCel to allow him to exhibit it at the Docklands motor show: 'the car was one-to-one scale, made in Austria, and it was the most extraordinary piece of conceptual art. One was a three-wheeler version, very interesting visually and technologically, but I tried to produce a four-wheeler and when I went back to the RCA and showed them images of it I was practically booted out of the classroom because it seemed to them too much like every other car.' The city cars may be static displays but they do get about: 'they have travelled to museum exhibitions all over the world and one will go to the new Glasgow Transport Museum and then the Philadelphia Museum in September.' A true 911 buff, he's also visited the Porsche museum: 'I dragged one of my kids along; the building is incredible and the contents aren't too bad either.'

The connection is between cars and art is ages old – Raymond Loewy's Studebaker Champion Starliner of 1953 was hailed by Manhattan's Museum of Modern Art as a 'work of art' – and it's not lost on today's manufacturers either. 'It's in the air,' says Kenny, 'because recently

Volkswagen just gave the Museum of Modern Art in New York \$2 million and they are partnering, so you will see a Volkswagen prototype on their carpet. BMW was displaying this Jeff Koons art car at the Hong Kong Art Fair this past week, so there is definitely a weird crossover between aesthetics, art and design and the automotive world. Mercedes called their non-functional prototype a sculpture instead of a concept car. And then there was that famous Mercedes F1 car in pieces hanging on strings by Paul Veroude. That car/art connection is in my blood; I've loved it since I was a kid and I'll continue to try to find new ways to pursue it.'

He's not kidding; Kenny became fascinated by a Ghanaian fad for elaborate hand-carved wooden coffins in the shape of birds and animals, as well as replicas of their cars. 'There's a sculptor called Paa Joe, and he has done Mercedes and BMWs for businessmen and farmers. Because I am obsessed with early 911s I commissioned him to make one based on a 1973 model. These objects are so wonderful you hardly want to drop them six feet into the ground so I will have one maybe in my bedroom.' Tempting providence? 'It's not as macabre as it sounds,' laughs Kenny; 'the art dealer said to me, "if you order two you can get a much better deal," but I am only going to die once!' Not on the job, one hopes. **PW**



**CONTACT:**

**Kenny Schachter**  
Rove Gallery  
www.rovetv.net  
Rove Cars  
www.rovecars.com  
Like any exhibit, both Kenny's cars are for sale. Contact him if you're interested

**Neil Bainbridge, BS Motorsport**  
www.bsmotorsport.co.uk  
It's no surprise that Neil Bainbridge seems to crop up in every issue. He is the go to man for the discerning Porsche enthusiast and is currently restoring Kenny's 2.45