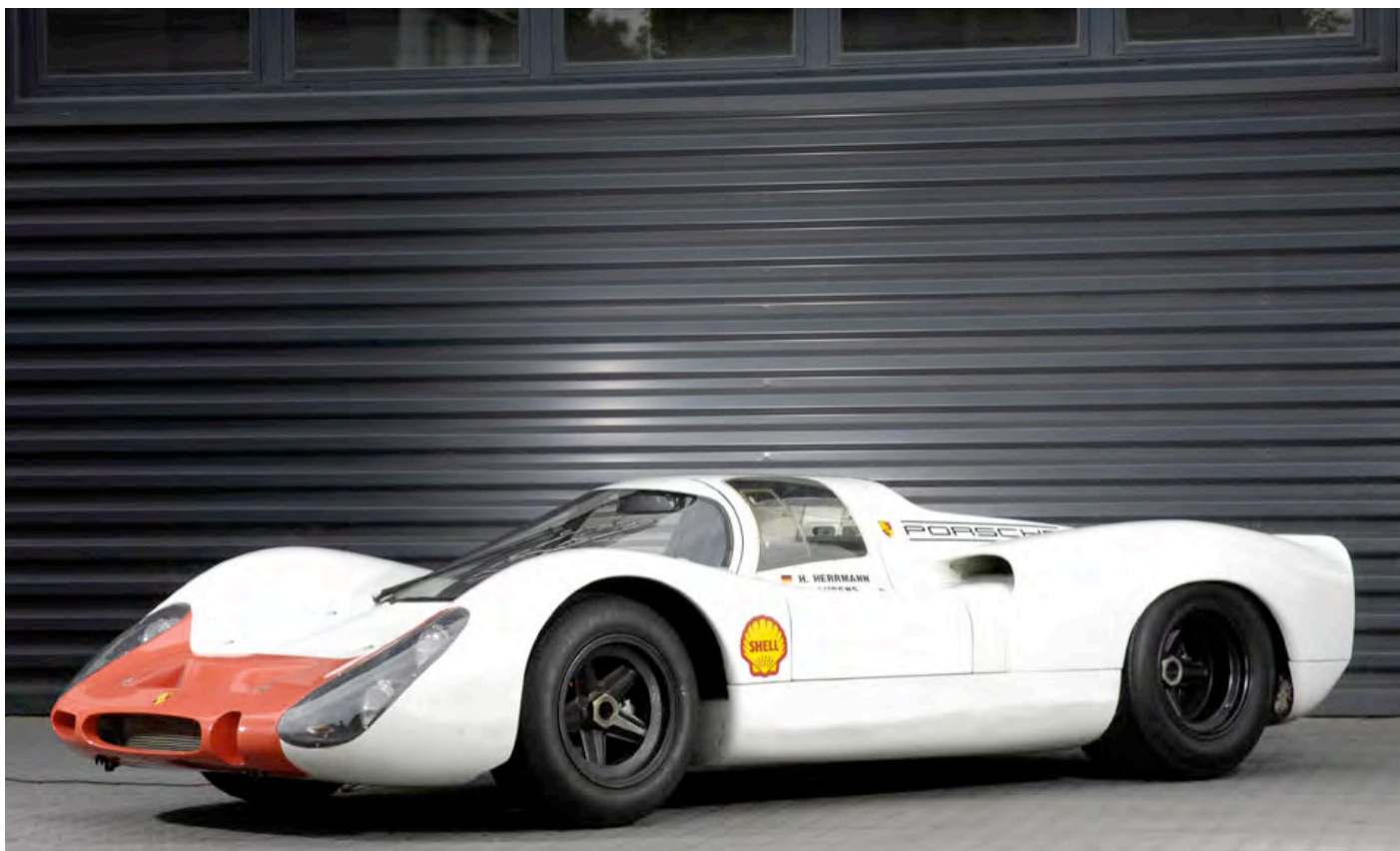


# The ex-Hans Herrmann/ Kurt Ahrens, 2nd at Zeltweg 1968 Porsche 908 Coupé

Private Portfolio No. 094



Chassis no.  
908.018

Engine no.  
908.022

Price: € 1,100,000

- One of only 32 first series 908s
- Ex-Works car campaigned by top international drivers
- Freshly rebuilt engine and ready to race
- European tax paid and road registered

So pervasive have been Porsche sports racing victories that it is hard to imagine a time when the marque won major victories by chance, if at all. But until forty years ago Porsche were content to be the underdogs.

In 1968, the Porsche 908 changed all that. It was built to win: first place wins, and championships. Porsche finally got serious about overall victories and never looked back.



Not that the German car didn't take its share of overall victories in the 1950s. Porsche won the Targa Florio with the giant-killing 550 Spyder in 1956 when the Ferraris failed to finish. Sensing more wins, the company planned a new model for 1958. The tubular space-framed 718 RSK was a breakthrough, and with 150-175 bhp and only 1140 lbs to push, allowed Porsche a better shot at overall victory. The RSK placed second at the Targa Florio and was third at Sebring, Le Mans,

## 1968 Porsche 908 Coupé



and Buenos Aires. The mid-engined Porsches were not only great on road circuits like the Targa Florio but reliable enough to outlast the competition at Le Mans.

In 1959 Porsche finished third at Sebring, behind the two Ferraris which were running three litre engines. Two months later at the Targa Florio in Sicily, one by one the Ferraris dropped out and left Porsche to occupy the first four places. It was Porsche's first points win but 1960 would be even better. The new RS/60 placed one-two at Sebring, came in second at the Nürburgring and won the Targa Florio again. Porsche's model name, Targa, stems from the eleven victories eventually achieved on the roads of Sicily.

From 1960 to 1967, sports car racing controlled by the FIA was somewhat muted (and confused) by the emphasis on GT racing; one hardly knew what rules to play by. During these years, Porsche did well with increasingly sophisticated race cars such as the 904 GT, the 906 Carrera, and the 907.

Race cars and rules became more complex in the mid 1960s and thus, too, the background of the Porsche 908. In 1968, wanting to return to 'prototype' sports racing cars, the FIA established the *International Championship of Makes*, a sports prototype class with a three litre limit, not coincidentally the same displacement as the then-current Formula One.

Based on the new rules, Porsche decided to build a car right at the displacement limit, fully capable of winning the overall Championship. Back in Paris, the FIA, in addition to establishing the new class for sports prototypes, also created a new 'Competition Sports Car' class with a maximum engine capacity of five litres. It required that the manufacturer must prove that at least 50 examples had been built - an expensive proposition for most constructors. The FIA then changed the competition sports car rules to 25 production cars rather than 50, making construction much more feasible. Porsche proceeded to build not only a small series of three litre sports prototypes to be named the 908, but at the same time constructed 25 'production' sports cars with a flat 12 engine of 4494cc and 580 hp.

This rule-bending monster would be called the 917. Together with the 908, Porsche would begin their remarkable string of overall wins in sports car racing. However, it took the better part of 1969 to render the 917 safe and sound for competition. And that turned out to be the year of the 908.

Technically, the 908 was an updated 907, but soon morphed into its own identity. Early cars were constructed

## 1968 Porsche 908 Coupé



with steel spaceframe chassis. Later cars featured 'air frames' - now built out of aluminium alloy, the chassis tubes were pressurized with air. Any damage to the frame would be noted by a drop in air pressure. Suspension followed Porsche practice of the era; the tubular chassis supported wishbones, coil springs, telescopic dampers up front and a similar arrangement at the rear with an anti roll bar. Initially, a dry sump, six-speed gearbox was designed specifically for the 908, but it was later replaced with a five-speed gearbox.

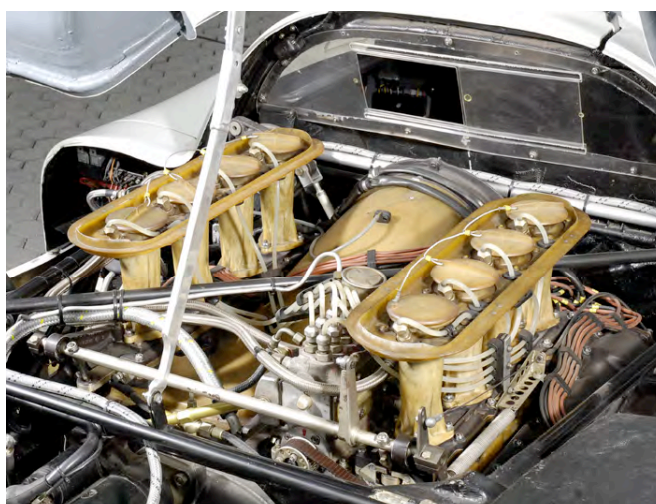
The 2.2 litre, flat eight motor that powered the 907 was derived from the earlier Formula One engine.

However, the three litre, eight cylinder 908 unit was a new design based on an experimental two litre, four cam six, and fitted into the existing 907 chassis with only a few modifications. It developed 310-350 bhp at 8,000 rpm with Bosch fuel injection. A total capacity of 2996 cc was obtained from a bore of 85 mm and stroke of 66 mm. Twin ignition and two valves per cylinder topped the head design. Exotic materials such as aluminium alloy and titanium were used throughout.

Authoritative sources agree that the 908 was constructed in three series (plus the two 909 *Bergspyders*). Chassis 908-000 to 031 was the first series; the 908/02 chassis cars were also numbered 001 to 028, but the prefix included the /02 for differentiation. The same pattern followed the 908/03, numbered 003 through 013. A total of 71 chassis of all types is listed for the 908, 908/02, and 908/03 cars.

The 908 was not only a prelude to the earth-shaking 917, but also one of the most successful Porsche racers to date. According to János Wimpffen's *Time and Two Seats*, "The Porsche 908, in all of its forms, made 295 starts between 1968 and 1981 and won 15 races, either in works or private hands." Introduced to the racing world at the 1968 Le Mans trials, its first racing event was at Monza on 22nd April, showing great speed but limited reliability. At the Nürburgring on 19th May, Jo Siffert and Vic Elford brought the 908 its first victory.

Teething problems followed, but after the victory at the Nürburgring, the 908 took first and second in Austria on 25th August. The team managed a 3rd at Spa and another 3rd at Le Mans in September. Langheck (long



tail) and short tail versions of the body were developed to both increase aerodynamics and have a shorter car for tighter road courses.

True to their promise, the 908s, in both coupe and spyder forms, dominated the 1969 season with six first places; the team of Jo Siffert and a young Brian Redman teamed up for five of the six victories. The *International Championship for Makes* was theirs; Porsche was an underdog no more. After the 1969 season, in the Porsche tradition, most were sold to private owners and many kept racing them until the 1980s.

## 1968 Porsche 908 Coupé



Porsche '908-018' *Kurzheck Coupé* offered here was one of the four 908s that participated in the Austrian Grand Prix for Sports Cars at Zeltweg on 25th August 1968. It was an impressive show of strength, as the first row of the grid consisted of three white 908s, numbering 1, 2 and 3. Jo Siffert handled car number 1, Vic Elford car number 2, and Hans Herrmann and Kurt Ahrens were paired to drive number 3, which was chassis '908-018'. The fourth car, driven by Neerpasch and Lins, was disqualified for getting help with a push start. Siffert won convincingly, followed by '908-018'.

According to a recent statement from Jürgen Barth, Le Mans winner and co-author of a book on Porsche's racing history, *Das große Buch der Porschetypen*, '908-018' is a steel frame 908, and the chassis and body are original for this car. Also unusual is the original six-speed, dry sump gearbox. Porsche '908-018' comes with full FIA Historic Racing papers making it eligible for FIA historic events. In 1994, the car was inspected and track tested by Porsche at Weissach and ran flawlessly.

Porsche '908-018' must be one of the best preserved of the magnificent 908 first series. It is not only original, but its provenance is impeccable. After the Works the car is thought to have been owned for many years by Australian collector Alan Hamilton (whom we have not been able to reach for confirmation) before passing through Porsche specialist Dale Miller to Reid Vann in the USA. From him it passed in 2002 to the current Italian owner, a respected private collector of racing cars.

The smooth, short-tail fibreglass body is finished in a Porsche's classic racing white with red accent on the nose and the period *Shell* logo on the side. Celebrating the car's second place finish at the Austrian Grand Prix, the names of the two original drivers are painted on the flanks. Lifting the forward opening doors, the interior is race-ready but immaculate and attractive with red cloth trimmed seats and a flat finish on the instrument panel. Porsche's specially built boxer eight is easy to access and has been freshly rebuilt (with a new crank) by the marque's respected Milan agent, which runs a successful Porsche Cup team and is managed by an ex-Autodelta team chief. The only modification noted is a lowered drivers seat to accommodate the tall owner.

UK road registered (useful when transporting the car to events abroad as it removes the need for expensive customs paperwork) and ready to show or race, this ex-works 1968 Porsche 908 *Kurzheck Coupé* is a stunning example of one of the firm's most successful race cars, a superb long term investment available now for the discerning collector.