

NOW'S THE TIME

Meister refiners TechArt reveal their latest creation; based on a 992, it's an example of what their clients can commission, but, basically, the sky's the limit

Words: Johnny Tipler Photography: Antony Fraser

Straight out of the box. The carbon-fibre trim in the centre console was installed only the day before our shoot: that's how brand-new this TechArt 992 is. The base car is a 992 Carrera 4S, and the masters of Porsche embellishment have thrown the door wide open with their take on the latest version of the 911; under the slogan Your Time is Now, the customer can specify exactly what trim and tuning levels he or she aspires to. Always prey to musical allusions, this time I fall back on Eddie and the Hot Rods' magnanimous offer, Do Anything You Wanna Do...

We've come to TechArt's Leonberg headquarters, 20km west of Stuttgart, to meet publicity manager Marc Herdtle, who'll give us the lowdown on their latest 992-

based offering, and explain how clients can posit their own ideas onto the ingénue 992.

Basically, anything is possible. The basic spec of the 992 C2S is more than adequate for most aficionados, but for the enthusiast who wants to express a tad more individuality in their Porsche, TechArt will happily provide and install the makings in short order. They've always offered a range of styles and levels of tune, but this time the ball is in the client's court. The choice is yours.

It's all very well applying confectionary bodywork, but you really need a power-hike to back that up, otherwise it's all just cosmetics. So, first things first: before we look at the detailing, let's get the performance logged: this 992 has the 3.0-litre Carrera 4S engine, and it's boosted with TechArt's power kit to lift output from 450bhp to





510bhp. A 60bhp increase is not to be sniffed at, since standard Porsches are so powerful these days, but inevitably there'll be a 992 TechArt Turbo workover sometime in 2020.

TechArt planned this 992 C4S's official launch at Bilster Berg circuit in northern Germany a few days earlier – a place where Antony and I were once snowbound in a 981 Boxster – but here, on TechArt's home turf, we have the advantage of having Solitude circuit on the doorstep. There's no racetrack as such, since it was only ever a street circuit comprised of closed-off roads, in use from 1935 to 1965, but there are enough recognisable trackside landmarks to pose the 992 against.

'We decided to give this car a special ambiance,' says Marc, 'and that was the golden touch, which demonstrates what you can actually achieve. So, that's why almost every bit of trim has the gold highlights, and that extends to the carbon-fibre weave.' Most

obviously, it's manifest in the ostentatious golden wheels, more of which later.

Marc clarifies TechArt's premise: 'The launch campaign states "Your time is now," and the idea behind it is that the 992 is a car that looks back to the past – given the 911's legacy – and it looks forward as well, being a vision of the future, and we thought that the highest value is what people can do right now, living for the moment, expressing their own ways of thinking and driving, and yes, you can do whatever you like to give your car more individuality.'

The concept consists of a number of additional TechArt body parts, aerodynamically proven, which can be adapted according to what the customer fancies, whilst offering room for further personalisation should they want to revert to the car's body colour or add another colour highlight. 'So, it's the customer's choice whether they make it clearly visible, as it is on

our demo car, or just have it all painted body colour, or somewhere in between, with a black accent, which is not so obvious. But here, we want to show what is actually possible.' Take a silver 992 and paint the roof and bonnet black, the front grilles and door mirrors ditto, and then apply stripes and details in gold. Black and Gold? If only someone would do a book about that classy colour scheme, in the context of a Grand Prix car. Oh, wait, it seems they have... (unashamed plug for Xmas book present). But still, you have to admit, it is pretty tasty, and it lifts the standard livery onto another level.

All the elements of TechArt's bodykit have an aerodynamic function, improving the balance of the car at high speed, though Marc readily admits it's hard to better a standard 992 because, as he says, 'in terms of the technical capabilities it is already very near to perfection; so, for us, the task was to make it more individual – and certainly not to make it

Perhaps TechArt could tweak Tipler's wardrobe... Pic on centre screen is to remind him what he's driving!

Silver is the perfect base colour for TechArt's styling and colour tweaks





worse, aerodynamically. The goal for our technicians was to improve the aerodynamics and styling, and to amplify the sound, too, but nevertheless maintain the overall balance of the car. And this meant our technicians spending a lot of hours in the wind tunnel, but finally the aero kit did manage to fulfil both aims, being special in styling and functionality.'

produced and fitted on the car, which then goes into the wind tunnel, and after that the tooling-up starts.'

And here's the result: at the front of the car is a complex five-piece spoiler, comprised of inner splitter at the bottom, highlighted in gold, with thin intakes on either side, while the central radiator is flanked by a pair of triple-vented air scoops, each emphasised in gold.

tipped with aerodynamically-angled fins. It looks like a T-shape with extended arms, but look more carefully and the more substantial cantilever supports become clearer: these complicated buttresses are made of a clear plastic called Makrolon. As Marc explains, 'it's a very rigid material in terms of the weight and stresses it can support, so while these uprights are usually made of aluminium, this time we decided to introduce something really new to give it this transparent, almost invisible look.'

Gold works and follows Porsche's current enthusiasm for gold wheels. We wonder if TechArt's styling tweaks might be a hint at Porsche's 992 GT models, that are on the horizon

“ The aero kit manages to fulfil both aims of styling and functionality ”

While developing their options for the novitiate 992, TechArt introduced a new design engineering process with the help of 3D CAD modelling. 'The first step after the renderings and sketches, the complete design was done in 3D, in a virtual reality room where the developers could stand in front of the car in actual size and process every detail, and then it was verified in the modelling department with traditional three-dimensional clay models. Then the prototype parts are

There's also black trim on the 'air curtain' at the leading edges of the front wheelarches. The door mirrors, too, are pinstriped gold. Headlights, while distinctive, are regular 992 C4S items.

Another of the car's standout features is the rear wing. It's effectively split into two bi-partite sections. The two paired main supports turn outwards by 90-degrees above the pert ducktail, stretching out almost as far as the extent of the car's bulbous rear arches, and

TechArt's 992 also has quite radically different two-piece side-skirts. 'We decided to make them look very different to the standard 992,' says Marc 'Sometimes side-skirts are fairly close to the original ones, because in terms of shape you're limited as to what you can do, because of course they have to fulfil an aerodynamic function, and they have to integrate as seamlessly as possible with the design of the car. So, we made each side-skirt a two-piece part; it's actually two shapes – the inner shape, which gives a dynamic swoosh to the sills' exterior, and the outer skirt in black, which has the connotation of a skirt rather than the moulded curvature of the upper one. And when you are some distance from the car, you will see that the black outer

Split wing looks the business and has been aero tested in the wind tunnel. Right: Solitude race track setting for our test





part links the front aerodynamic aspects and the rear, because you have the same black colour contrast along the baseline of the car.'

The detailing is different across the back of the car beneath the spoiler. The original 992 doesn't have the braking light strip here, normally presenting one in the car's rear window, which would be obscured here by the vast wing, but TechArt have introduced their own, above the car's reflector strip, with the chunky P-O-R-S-C-H-E letters spread across the trailing edge of the light swathe. The roof spoiler is designed to guide the air-flow over the top of the car directly onto the rear wing. They gave it a profile which matches the original design, as with the rear diffuser, and just as the slats on the engine lid fit within the shape of the channel between the two sections of the rear wing uprights.

The base of the rear wing also includes a pair of air intakes, inset into the Ducktail, and Marc explains that these are important because, 'unlike the standard rear wing, the

TechArt rear wing is a fixed one, so it won't move. This is why the lid has special air intakes, which provide enough cooling airflow all the time.' The other key feature at the rear of the car is the lower diffuser, which is an amalgamation of TechArt parts that can be highlighted according to taste preference, as in, say, black with six gilded vertical lines. 'The customer can choose to add a little pinstripe like these gold ones at the top and sides of the exhaust outlets, while the silver part changes the way the rear of the car looks and gives another angle to the surrounding area, and helps create a much heavier set to the rear end.' In fact, the whole lower valance is packed with detail, from diffuser to central numberplate and twin exhaust outlets, plus the air vents at the corners. It's all an agreeable melange of purposeful-looking techy stuff.

The wheels are brand new and quite different to TechArt's Formula wheel series. Marc reveals the conception. 'Up to Formula

5, our wheels are all evolutionary, whereas this one is more revolutionary – a completely new design. But the concept goes back in TechArt history, to when we introduced wheels for the 996 Turbo, called TechArt Daytonas. This new one, launched on the 992, is called the TechArt Daytona II, because we wanted to make it clear that this is not a TechArt Formula wheel, it's a completely different design. And we're offering two different wheels for the 992 in this size combination – 20in at the front and 21in at the rear. We also have a new TechArt Formula 5, which is forged, so there are two wheel variants that customers can choose for their 992.' The gold-on-black TechArt-logo'd calipers lurk behind the spoke-works.

Rarely do road wheels look so formidably strong: like something from a space station, the Daytona II is basically a five-pointed star shape, composed of strips and struts, and each arm of the star is buttressed by arches emanating like girders from the wheel rim. In

TechArt 992 looks imposing on the road. Below: Interior can be anything the customer wants it to be. However, it's relatively sober on the demo car and we're liking the Merino wool seat inserts





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fact, I am reminded of Ferrari's complex five-spoke centre-lock wheels, fitted on the 330 P3/4 Le Mans prototypes in the late 1960s and early '70s, invariably finished in gold as well – and I expect most of us will have seen the Ford v Ferrari movie by now, where these wheels might have been glimpsed. TechArt's Daytona II wheels have five-stud fixings though the centre cap alludes to a central locking device.

The power kit is based on TechArt's TechTronic engine management system, which is fully integrated into the car's ECU and electronic infrastructure, including safeguards to protect the engine. 'So, it's very safe, and enables you to drive the car in regular mode if you leave it in Normal, or even in Wet mode, which is a new feature of the 992, so that it reacts differently when it's wet in terms of power delivery. As soon as you switch to Sport mode, the TechArt power kit becomes active, giving you the additional 60bhp power increase, and at the same time the exhaust valves open so that you have a more emotional driving experience. You feel

and hear the additional power of the car, but as soon as you switch to Wet mode the TechArt power kit will turn off.'

The exhaust is a TechArt system. 'We still have this regular silent mode, operated automatically relative to how you drive it, and of course you have the possibility to open the valves at will as soon as you go to Sport mode. You then have a more characteristic sound, too; the combination of increased power and louder sound instantly gives it the feeling that you are in a different driving mode. This car has a steel exhaust system, but TechArt will shortly introduce a titanium version, so there'll be a bonus of a weight reduction as well as looking and sounding even nicer.' TechArt also recently announced its protection warranty scheme, an important issue for a lot of customers, which covers new and old Porsches with TechArt modifications for any damage caused by the power kit.

It's a beguiling environment, the 992 cabin. The leather upholstery and trim are described as Espresso, so you get a combination of black, grey and brown, which matches the

external livery rather nicely. 'You already know from the GTStreetRS, and maybe the Cayenne models as well, about our new natural Merino wool, which is comfortable and adds a classic touch to the interior as well. But, of course, we can do a full leather interior for customers who prefer that, too.' It's comfortable, tastefully done, and it's got the paddle shifts on the steering wheel, and drive mode to adjust how it's driving. It's got Sport Chrono, too. The new switchgear is so intuitive, and I particularly like the new gear lever, which looks like a miniature electric razor with its grille on top; it just has reverse, neutral, drive, and parking is a button just below it, and manual is also a button below it. It's all pretty well thought out; there are a lot of details which you don't see at first sight, but when you notice them you think, ah, okay, that's a nice touch. Like the gold in the weave of the carbon-fibre, which resembles stitching in the leatherwork.

My time is now, and that means it's time to get motoring! We may be on a racetrack, historically speaking, but these are public

TechArt has resisted messing with the suspension on this demo car, so it largely handles as Porsche intended, which is to say very well, with massive levels of confidence inducing grip

Below left: Gold five-spoke wheels are a work of art. Remind us of these found on Ferraris of the '60s and '70s



Gold pinstriping abounds. Shades of the JPS Lotus days for those of us of a certain age (ie most of us!)



roads, in close enough proximity to Stuttgart suburbs to be relatively busy. Ribbons of lanes and backroads pass through mixed deciduous forested parkland adjacent to hilltop Schloss Solitude, for which the area is named. Nevertheless, there are enough stretches of B-road where some of the TechArt 992's potential can be evaluated. First impression is the spontaneous power delivery and tumultuous blast of straight-line acceleration. Given that we're on a race circuit, I switch to Sport. There's a 3km section that wiggles its way along the valley, and I go along swiftly in both directions, the sonorous exhaust echoing off the escarpment to one side. It's superbly responsive, with inch-perfect accuracy on the apexes. Some bits of roadside are kerbed, which I doubt would have been here back in the day, and in any case wouldn't prevent an errant car from plunging into the drop-offs and into the forest.

This car imparts a feeling of total competence, while presenting as muscular and four-square on the road. It does everything that you could wish it to do, in a B-road context, and there's no question that it would perform imperiously on an Autobahn. Regarding its behaviour at speed, it's admirably quick to react, though as I negotiate

tight turnarounds at the behest of my photographic colleague, it then feels like quite a heavy he-man car.

TechArt's new 992 C4S hasn't been granted a special suffix like some of its siblings. 'Only certain models on our programmes have a name,' points out Marc, 'like the Cayenne, which was the Magnum. The Panamera is the Grand GT, the 991 Turbo is the GTStreet R or GTStreet RS, while this 992 carries the regular options for

wants, to go into the details. We see it every day in our saddlery, for example, or when it comes to steering wheels; people have a favourite colour, and if they can add it to some selected parts and give their car a little highlight, they will do so. This is why a lot of people go for coloured stitching in the interior, or have a small section of the steering wheel in this colour. All those details really add up to a really individual identity for the car.' TechArt have given you a head start.

“ Regarding its behaviour at speed, it's admirably quick to react ”

the TechArt programme, so you could simply call it the TechArt refined 992.' Marc looks forward to the TechArt 992 Turbo. 'There's no question that we will do a power kit for the 992 Turbo. That will have a different engine concept, but for now, this is the regular 992, which is also turbocharged, of course.'

In summary, he says, 'we've really tried to give the customer as much freedom as he

The aluminium front lid with its matte finish is suggestive of a competition era (e.g. Ford v Ferrari) when racing cars were painted like that so the driver wasn't dazzled. And the gold stripes? Well, there I go again with the JPS thing. Anyway, if you're in the market for a 992 C4S and you fancy a snazzier look than standard and have ideas of your own, then look no further! **PW**

