

## The Jerry Seinfeld Porsche 908

### Painting the Famous Porsche 908 No. 12

When I was visiting Joe Cavagleri to deliver a twin-plug engine for a Speedster he was building for Jerry, he showed me the #12 908-3 that had just returned from a complete repaint at a shop in Oregon. The car had previously been painted in the Martini colors, and Jerry wanted to restore it back to its original Gulf design. The problem was that the colors had been matched incorrectly and even a novice would recognize the colors as “not quite right.” To add to the frustration, the car had been invited to Laguna Seca for Porsche’s 50 year anniversary celebration, and then to be displayed at the Pebble Beach Concours d’ Elegance, which were less than one month away! Joe’s question was “could we repaint it in three weeks?”

Well, as much as we love a challenge, this was a big one. With the multiple colors, and necessary masking, drying between colors, etc, even if everything went right it would require that my entire shop be committed to some serious overtime hours. I talked to my crew and we all agreed that it would be a fun project...and I made them all swear to never mention that a car had been painted in three weeks!

I told Joe that since we were going to repaint the car completely, we should do it like they did in the late 60s. There were no base/clear coats back then, and the cars were done first in the basic color and then the graphics were masked off and added later. There was always a tape line where the stripes or numbers were added, and this authentic reproduction of the original type of painting cannot be duplicated with a base/clear system (because of cost and difficulty most vintage race cars today are painted with base coat, the graphics are added with more base coat, and when it’s all finished a coat of clear is sprayed on top).

The first step was properly matching the single stage acrylic urethane to the correct color samples that Joe had provided. Since the single stage PPG that we preferred for this job was no longer available in LA and Orange Counties, we had to source the paint from San Diego.

We began the sanding process and realized we had a problem. The repaint had been done with water base base-coat and this had not dried properly before the clear was applied. The repaint was not sticking in many areas. It would now be necessary to completely sand off the repaint, and because this can create waves in the finish, it would also be necessary to prime and block the entire body (we weren’t going for a concourse finish, but even a race car, especially one as famous as this car, needs to look good). This almost called a stop to the painting process. We had a shop meeting with all hands on deck, and decided that seeing the car at Pebble Beach would be worth the extra work required.

The entire body was sanded down to the original gel coat, primed with polyester primer (required for fiberglass), block sanded, primed with finish primer, and then wet sanded, all in less than four days!

Once the blocking and final sanding was complete, we assembled the body panels to check the fit and function. One of the doors would not open without damaging the paint, and the rear

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section could only be opened if one person lifted the front edge over the main body panel while a second person lifted the rear. This should have been corrected during the bodywork stage, and we assumed that everything fit properly since Joe hadn't mentioned otherwise. Refitting these two panels required shimming and modifying the hinges, and trimming and sanding the edges of the fiberglass to fit properly (also requiring more priming and sanding). This added another 8 hours of labor to the job and held up the painting process by almost a full day.

The first stage in painting was to do the entire body in the original Gulf blue color. After a 3-day drying period, the blue was lightly sanded wet with 2500 grit paper. This process was necessary to make sure the graphics painted over the blue would stick properly. The taping and stencils were done by Jamie Storm. He was commissioned by Joe to accurately duplicate the graphics on the 908 from an assortment of historical racing photographs. He did an excellent job and was a pleasure to work with. He spent several days at the shop during the painting of the basic orange stripes, green nose and tail, and the off white number circles. After another 3-day drying period, these graphics were also lightly sanded with 2500 grit paper to open the paint for application of the outline stripes and numbers. Jamie returned and taped the arrows and other graphics for the black outline stripes, and the white circles for the blue numbers and outlines. Once this final painting was done, another 3-day drying period was required, and then the entire car was polished with a fine compound and all body panels were assembled.

Joe picked up the 908 exactly three weeks from when he had delivered it to the shop. We were able to get a few photos of the finished body, although these were taken after sunset. Joe and his team got the car finished and tested mechanically and delivered to Laguna Seca in time for Jerry to take a parade lap on Saturday. The 908 was displayed at Pebble Beach on Sunday and took second in class to a 917 (it's hard to beat a 917...even at Pebble). Jerry was able to drive the car across the podium and accept the award.