

Elitism in Harvestehude: The 911 Monoculture in Hamburg

At the beginning of the twenty-first century a Porsche 911 monoculture emerged in the prosperous districts of Hamburg, which in its rigidity generated elegant streetscapes that were unique even by international standards. Parked in front of the resplendent, white-painted, renovated jugendstil houses with their gray or anthracite window frames and doors stood the metallic black and anthracite Carreras, generally less than five years old. Range Rovers, Cayennes, or Mercedes E class station wagons dominated the ranks of the first cars. In the wealthy merchant city the Porsche 911 became the cashmere pullover among sports cars. With a lack of humor echoed in the choice of box tree and yew tree hedges for the front garden, the car classic became the favorite vehicle of Hamburg's prosperous families around the river Alster and in the district of Blankensee.

There is a rumor that this style choice was also inspired by Jil Sander, who as early as the 1980s saw her 911 Carrera as a minimalist statement directed against the dominance of the British sports saloons that could still be felt at that time.

The charm of the 911 was the relaxed approach it took to meeting the standard definition of a sports car—in contrast to the eccentricity of a Ferrari—while its sound and form, even on

repeated viewing, still retained the capacity to activate emotions that other cars lacked. Not even the homogenous sidewalks in Hamburg, Munich, Dusseldorf, or Kampen, which sometimes resembled a customer parking lot at a Porsche center, were capable of diffusing the 911's unique character. For J. Philip Rathgen, car journalist, style expert, and native of the Hanseatic city of Hamburg, this victory had less to do with the classic Carrera of the 1980s than the 996 with its fried egg headlights. Finally, with the 997, the omnipresence of the 911 in a number of Hamburg's streets, above all to the west and north of the river Alster, grew explosively. At one point there were as many 911s as Minis and Range Rovers, frequently accompanied by the dog breeds Rhodesian ridgeback or Weimaraner. The 911 key, which a number of years ago had assumed the car's form, was prominently displayed on the tables of the fashionable Italian restaurants. The clientele consisted of incredible numbers of small, haggard men, explained Rathgen. And naturally numerous women: Rathgen's circle was populated by countless women with a PR agency or a boutique in Uhlenhorst^[2] who also exercised understatement in their choice of sports car. These women had been wearing white jeans and riding boots since 2009, and, seated next to the small, haggard men, were prone to stand out with their over-dimensioned bags that would have taken up all the space

[2] Idyllic, high-class area in Northern Hamburg.

on the front passenger seat. The Porsche often went hand in hand with the Hermès belt with the "H" and, as a rule, a sporty Rolex watch.

» German actress Iris Berben in a Carrera 2 3.6 cabriolet with tiptronic transmission in Hamburg, 1995.

