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Connoisseurs of Art and Design Reveal Their Own Private Collections

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The 1990 Porsche 964 Targa collector Assad Raphael tailored with David Raffoul and Nicolas Moussallem of David/Nicolas features stitching in the designers' signature diagonal pattern (below).

Street Art

David/Nicolas designers David Raffoul and Nicolas Moussallem customize a collector's Porsche into a one-of-a-kind design statement

Inside his garage in Beirut, Assaad Raphael keeps 50 vehicles, mostly Porsches, amassed over two decades. Chairman and general manager of Porsche Centre Lebanon and the owner of a restoration studio in Dubai dedicated to the marque, he had resolved to collect one iconic model from each generation, yet his favorite acquisition may be the 1990 964 Targa he purchased as a birthday gift for his daughter, Shaha, in 2015. The vehicle was in bad shape, and he had intended to restore it himself, but destiny intervened several weeks later, when he met David Raffoul and Nicolas Moussallem of the acclaimed Beirut- and Milan-based design firm David/Nicolas at a dinner party. Impressed with their vision, he decided to work with them to reimagine the car.

When it came to the mechanics, Raphael wanted the auto to be driven as it would have been in the '90s: "heavy clutch, heavy brake, and the smell of gas." After the mechanical work was completed in Beirut, the Porsche 911, as the model is known, was shipped to David/Nicolas designers in Treviso, Italy. Moussallem and Raffoul tapped the workroom that produces their furniture to spearhead the process, recruiting around 30 artisans to create various elements. "It became more than just a car—it turned into a crafted interior made with the same care we bring to our furniture and architectural work," says Raffoul, noting that they chose leather, teak, brass, stainless steel, and other materials by considering how they would age over time.

Other trademark design motifs of David/Nicolas were reinterpreted for the auto, such as the use of diagonal lines as seen in their Monocle cabinet for Carpenters Workshop Gallery and the Orquestra collection of porcelain dinnerware for Vista Alegre. In a nod to a drive through the English countryside, the Porsche was painted British racing green. Interiors were upholstered in a complementary shade of Connolly leather, which was stitched by hand with intricate French seams and piping around the seats, ladder stitching on the shift, and X stitching on the steering wheel.

There were numerous delays, including a yearlong wait for a highly specialized upholsterer, but all parties involved agree the result was worth the effort. "It was a really crazy project," Raphael says of the eight-year journey. "Everything is customized, and to see this type of handwork is so satisfying." *davidandnicolas.com* —**RIMA SUQI**

COUNTERCLOCKWISE FROM TOP: MALEK HOSNI (2); ROGER MOUKARZEL