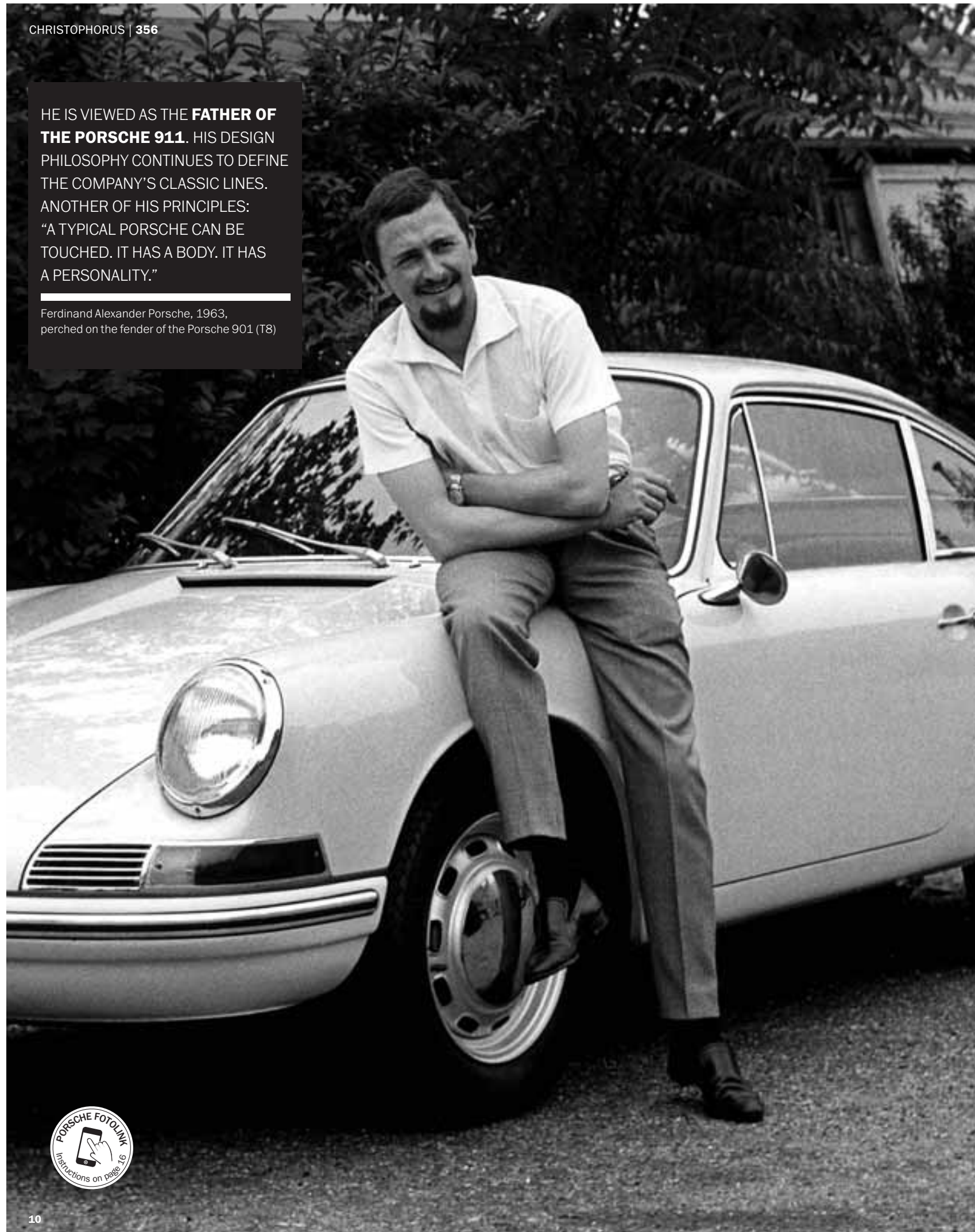


HE IS VIEWED AS THE **FATHER OF THE PORSCHE 911**. HIS DESIGN PHILOSOPHY CONTINUES TO DEFINE THE COMPANY'S CLASSIC LINES. ANOTHER OF HIS PRINCIPLES: "A TYPICAL PORSCHE CAN BE TOUCHED. IT HAS A BODY. IT HAS A PERSONALITY."

Ferdinand Alexander Porsche, 1963, perched on the fender of the Porsche 901 (T8)



In memoriam Ferdinand Alexander Porsche

Giving Shape to Dreams

Design must be honest and fulfill a purpose—only then will it endure. By remaining true to this principle, F. A. Porsche achieved greatness, and not only in the realm of sports cars. Surrounded by family, he died on April 5. He was 76 years old.

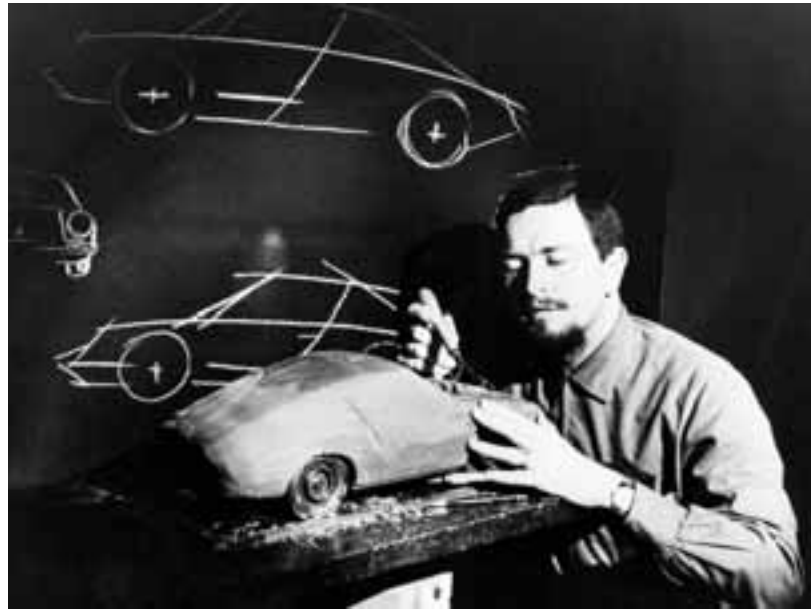
Throughout his life, a well-deserved reputation for functionalism always preceded Professor Ferdinand Alexander Porsche. But if asked to explain how the design that brought him such fame came into existence, he saw no contradiction in turning to the world of emotion: "I simply believe that the heart plays a key role." Harmony in action fit perfectly into his understanding of form and function. Someone who could put his heart and mind into a project to such a great extent could also evoke empathy through clarity, culminating in his crowning achievement: the ever-modern, classic contours of the Porsche 911.

In a matter-of-fact way, but with a dash of quiet coquetry, Ferdinand Alexander Porsche spoke of how he envisioned the successor to the 356: "There could be no mistaking it for anything but a Porsche: that was the challenge." It was a challenge that he solved with aplomb and a solution that lives on. And all of his other successes notwithstanding, the umbilical cord between the designer and the 911 was never cut. He said, "It was just as intense an experience as the birth of a child." This gift of empathy

was one of F. A.'s great strengths, both at work and in his personal life.

And yet it would be a mistake to reduce Ferdinand Alexander Porsche to number series—he also created the pioneering 804 and 904 Carrera GTS race cars, for example. Born in Stuttgart in 1935, F. A. was not a fan of constraints, whether in word or deed: "My design work is based on a very specific approach to freedom. This approach requires you to question everything, and then to take the resulting freedom and work with that in a consistent, responsible manner." From his perspective, responsibility meant to keep things moving and not to be satisfied with things as they are. When he spoke about good design, he enjoyed surprising his listeners by making comparisons to a good carpenter. It takes considerable emotion and expertise to create a door that not only provides years of reliable service but remains attractive as well.

And what emerges from this is his deciding hypothesis for his own craft: "Design should have a connection to the heart of the function." Form follows function—a phrase



Sculpting the **designs**:
1968—a Plasticine model of the
Porsche 911 takes shape.

from architect Louis Sullivan that is nearly synonymous with F. A. himself. The exacting design concept was a life-line for him. It contributed to the numerous successes and awards he reaped in industrial and product design—shifting his horizons beyond automotive engineering—after he left the family company. These include such classics as the world’s first black chronograph, the Yoko Ono sunglasses, and a modern pipe with cooling fins, for which he himself could have posed as the model.

Ferdinand Alexander Porsche was demanding on himself as well. Serviceability was an absolute priority for his products: “Design must be functional, and functionality must be translated visually into aesthetics without gags that first need to be explained.” Without this quality, he felt, a design would lack honesty. And it’s this very honesty that is so integral to the vaunted Porsche purism: “A formally harmonious product needs no decoration; it should be elevated through pure form.” This has been proven, time and again, by the 911. F. A. Porsche gave shape to dreams.

Even as a small boy accompanying his father and grandfather on their Sunday visits to the Porsche factory, “Butzi”—as he was nicknamed to distinguish him from the

other Ferdinands in the family—absorbed all that he heard and saw: “I was proud and happy to be a part of all this. I imagine that some of the hours I spent there must have lingered on in my subconscious.” His career path was preordained: he enjoyed making his own toys, and if asked what he would like to be when he grew up, the answer he gave at the time was, an architect. Even later on, in the age of 3-D computer graphics, he could not part from his drawing board in the studio in Zell am See, Austria. Not to maintain a legend, but simply for inspiration. Design can be timeless, but should never be thoughtless.

In 1958, Ferry Porsche’s eldest son joined Porsche KG’s design department. His talent in this field was soon revealed in the form of a Plasticine model of the legendary sports car that would come into existence just five years later: the 911. This demonstrates the speed with which F. A. Porsche scaled the ladder of design success: he was twelve years old when the first Porsche 356 was launched on the market. By the age of 28, he had designed the 911. But he soon wanted to move on, to explore new spaces, and to design other items. The art of the feasible: this became the business foundation of his Porsche Design GmbH.



A look at the engine:
1958—**Ferry Porsche and his son F. A.**
with the 356 A Carrera.

In writing F. A.’s obituary, sports-car writer Ulf Poschardt described this as the “gentle aesthetics of distinction.” He writes, “It’s all about being, not appearances.” And he compares the simple grace of Porsche’s creations with Apple products, which have similarly revolutionized our existence from an artistic standpoint: as a promise and vision of a more beautiful world. According to F. A., design is a fusion of the emotional and the rational, of culture and civilization, of art and technology.

Matthias Müller, CEO of Porsche AG, does not hesitate to promise: “As the creator of the Porsche 911, he established a company design culture that continues to leave its mark on our sports cars. His philosophy of good design is a legacy to us, which we will continue to honor.” His legacy of spartan extravagance is in good hands. “Brilliant” is how Porsche’s head designer Michael Mauer describes the company’s classic approach: “What our products show is what they can do.” Mauer enjoys telling what happens when children are asked to draw a sports car. They intuitively draw a silhouette reminiscent of the 911: a shape that is simple, swift, and sublime. The shape created by Ferdinand Alexander Porsche. What remains is a clear contour. ■

F. A. Porsche

Key milestones in his life

1935 Ferdinand Alexander Porsche is born in Stuttgart on December 11. The family moves to Zell am See in 1943. In 1950, F. A. attends a Waldorf school. He later enrolls at the Ulm School of Design.

1958 F. A. joins Dr. Ing. h.c. F. Porsche KG and in 1962 becomes head of the design department. He designs the 911, which debuts at the 1963 IAA as the 901. He designs the 804 and 904 Carrera GTS sports cars as well.

1972 Porsche becomes a corporation and the family gives up the operational side of the business. F. A. starts his own business: the Porsche Design Studio, which moves to Zell am See in 1974.

1999 The Austrian federal president awards him the title of professor.

2005 F. A. Porsche resigns from the Board of Directors of Porsche AG, where he served as chairman from 1990 until 1993. He assumes the office of honorary chairman at the same time.