

Immortalizing daily objects in pinewood

Livio de Marchi, Venetian sculptor, is faithfully recreating almost everything from daily life in wood, mainly in cirmolo (It.) (*Pinus cembra*). You name it, he immortalizes ordinary objects in wood such as ladies' and men's garments, underwear, shopping bags, ties, shoes, raincoats, umbrellas, suitcases, flowers, various houses build in several continents, motor scooters, various kinds of cars, etc. He recreates them with a view of an art and a grace that they always possess, but which we normally do not consider in using them each day. It is even more miraculous when in summertime a life size wooden Volkswagen Beetle is chugging through the canals of Amsterdam (The Netherlands), a floating woman's shoe propelled by 16 oarsmen is gently moving through the Grand Canal in Venice (Italy) or what in November 2000 happened that an ultra modern, real scale, pine wood Ferrari F50 Cabriolet was presented at the Essen car show (Germany). Another observation is the remarkable high production rate of sculptures. This article presents more about the artist and sculptor de Marchi and his wide-ranging variety of sculptures. To appreciate de Marchi's work and to obtain a good impression of his extraordinary achievements, provision of sufficient and adequate pictures are essential.



Livio de Marchi on sculptured horse

Livio de Marchi, from marble to wood

Livio de Marchi was born in the '40s and grew up in Venice, Italy. As a small boy and long before he had any serious artistic ambitions he worked in an antiques restoration workshop. It was during this period that he developed an appreciation for wood as an artistic medium. Initially, he worked on ornamental sculptures in the Venetian tradition in a crafting workshop, while in the meantime studying art and drawing at the "Accademia di Belle Arti" in Venice. During his artistic development he worked first in marble, then bronze, and eventually in wood. In 1970 his wood activity started, when at once he was displaying an astounding skill in molding materials. In 1985 he stated to make the large works like the Floating Hat in origami style. Wood has always been his favorite material because it is a living material, has energy and it is changing. Wood in sunlight or in water needs help and attention. And above that, it gives him a vitality, which other materials do not provide. According de Marchi, cirmolo is chosen because of its natural wood structures and colors. It has also a nice aroma, he feels. For over 35 years he has his own studio in Venice, where he is designing, sculpturing and exhibiting his work.

Wood usage, techniques and manpower support

de Marchi is using mainly cirmolo, Italian pinewood (*Pinus cembra*), and further pear (*Pyrus communis*), box-wood (*Buxus sempervirens*), ebony (*Diospyros spec. div.*), walnut (*Juglans spp.*), lime (*Tilia spp.*) and European cherry (*Prunus avium*). The cirmolo wood is obtained from the mountain area, where the Casa dei Libri (Book House) is located in Italy. His working techniques are classical, but for the rough work modern, 21st century equipment is used. Furthermore he is using about a 150 different

wood carving tools. Also modern glues which can withstand different climate conditions, are used. For the floating Mercedes a special marine glue was used. Thirty years ago, according de Marchi, it would have been impossible to make the car. For some parts of the Ferrari F50 (e.g. the numberplate and the Ferrari's logo), he used some woods which were brought from the US during a recent trip. With the demonstrated high production it is almost impossible to achieve this on your own. He gets support from his son Mattia and a permanent assistant. For the large projects de Marchi concentrates on the design and on the model building. A group of ten people is working on the constructions. To build the wooden house takes about six months in total.

Cirmolo, Queen of the Alps

The Italian pinetree, cirmolo, Pino cembro or Cembro is known as the "Queen of the Alps" and in various neighboring countries under: Zirbe, Arve, Zirbelkiefer (Germ.), Cembra pine, Swiss stone pine (E.). The tree is a very slow-growing and therefor the wood obtains a very dense structure. They can be as old as 1000 years, have a stump diameter of up to two meters and be as high as 20 meters. Their distribution is in the inner Alps, Karpathian Alps and in large quantities in Russia, where the tree is known as P. Cembra var. sibirica. Cirmolo is really a wood for sculptors and carvers. The wood is very popular due to its light and beautiful color. The heartwood is bright red and the sapwood is yellowish white colored. It is rather tender, resinous, not heavy, it can be worked and be sawn in all the directions. The closely-ringed timber is considered to be very resilient and durable. It darkens rapidly and nicely when under light influence and is strongly smelling (ethereal oils). The wood is used a lot for furniture, in and around

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farmhouses, cabinet making, toys, altars, auxiliary material for furnishing (shelves) and paneling. It is used a lot for wardrobes, because its natural resistance against any vermin. In the past, cirmolo wood was much used as fuel to heat breweries and mountain farmhouses in earlier times, to build huts and shelters in the mountains for farmers and cattle, and it was used for milk buckets. Because of a high demand for the wood during the last years, the amount of trees have thus been greatly diminished. Apart from the wood another economic factor is the production of quality resins and of the edible, tasty and nutritious seeds (known as "Zirbelnuts" in Germany). Another product of the cirmolo is "Zirben-oil" providing a broad application pallet. The yellowish, clear liquid spreads the characteristic, aromatic smell, which is happily used for air improvement in lamps. It is also for soaps, sauna oil, sun oil, furniture polish and as a natural odoriferous substance with natural colors.


Wooden objects scattered throughout the world

de Marchi's achievements can be grouped into two main subjects, the first group representing a very large variety of ordinary daily objects as: ladies' and men's garments, underwear, shopping bags, ties, shoes, raincoats, umbrellas, suitcases, flowers. The second groups includes the large scale projects, such as a floating hat in Origami style; a floating woman's shoe, propelled by 16 oarsmen; a peace dove in Origami style; a floating Jaguar SS 1937; a Fiat Topolino A 1930; a Vespa motor scooter; "A

Dream in Venice" floating pumpkin coach with 4 horses; Love for Venezia, floating vase with 12 flowers (8 meters high); a floating Mercedes Seagull SL 300 1955 (life size in several kinds of wood); a floating Volkswagen Beetle Cabriolet and recently (November 2000) the Ferrari F50. Worldwide three "Bookhouses" have been completed in Italy, Germany and Japan. Seven more are planned, somewhere on the planet. The further immediate impact of de Marchi's work is: The many exhibitions (Japan, Germany, Switzerland, Austria and The Netherlands); The museum collections (Germany; USA and The Netherlands); The various publications in well-known international magazines and several TV and radio broadcast documentaries (England, The Netherlands, Switzerland, Germany, Japan and Italy).

Pictures only can tell the full story

A few pictures can tell more than a thousand words, therefore many pictures are provided to illustrate the essence of de Marchi's work. For those who want to see all the sculptures should look in Internet: Livio de Marchi's Virtual Museum at www.liviodemarchi.com; www.hardwoodgallery.com and www.lievehemel.nl.

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Volkswagen Beetle sailing in Amsterdam canal



Ladies underwear

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Montgomery raincoat



Bag and purse



Table, hat and bra



Ladies shoes and stockings



Magic table



Paper shopping bag, umbrella, shirt



Wardrobe



Chair-asparagus



Chair-cutaway coat