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ONE PIECE AT A TIME

Pieces of Venice, i.e., when industrial design brings new life to the remnants of a city to create new opportunities for those in need



– “we do everything together, even interviews; ours is a story of personal and entrepreneurial love”, she says – has built a sentimental and working adventure which, starting from their first date (and subsequent wedding) in Venice, found its *raison d'être* in the Lagoon. “It all started,” Luciano recalls, “reflecting on how the city is a gold mine of hidden resources, of stories to tell, of values and how to recover all this”. And that is how Pieces of Venice was born, “an all-encompassing project whose values – first and foremost, a love for Venice, the recovery of discarded materials, social commitment – have been with us since before everything started”. Which material to reuse is easy: it is the wood with which Marson has a lifelong familiarity – from the little propellers he used to make with popsicle sticks as a child to the most daring experiments as creative director of Horm. “One of the treasures of Venice are the bricole (the poles that signal the navigation canals, ed.). When they are replaced, they end up in warehouses on the Lido or the Giudecca, if not directly in landfills. They are made of precious woods, oak, larch, which is the wood used for the piers and the gangways. Riva1920 recovers them for its beautiful furniture. I, who in my life have always brought new things into existence, thought of something different”. Thus was born in a very short time a collection of design objects presented in January 2018. “I’m close to so many international designers, from Steven Hall to Toyo Ito to Kengo Kuma, but it’s with Italian designer friends that

Good morning, Signor Architect... “Architect?”, Luciano Marson responds, indignant. “I’m an accountant. Okay, so I’ve won four Compasso d’Oro design awards, but I’m still an accountant”. A number cruncher by training, salesman by vocation, entrepreneur by ambition, he became a designer somewhere along the way. And in fact Marson enjoys, smiling wryly, to underscore the eccentricity of his career path. There is no contempt or haughtiness, but, as Karin Friebel, his partner in life and work, explains, “when they call him an architect or a designer, he replies ‘I can’t claim qualifications that I don’t have’. It was life, experience, and a taste for beauty that brought him here today”. It is through that different way of seeing things that the couple





Top, from left, Water taxi – San Pietro di Castello 364, design by Marco Zito. Shoehorn – Castello 3829, design by Giulio Iacchetti. Center, Luciano Marson and Karin Friebe. Bottom, Gondoliere caps – San Polo 16/17. Opposite page, Walking stick – Castello 3968, design by Giulio Iacchetti. Venice's bricolage.



I choose to work. The first was Giulio Iacchetti and in April 2017 we presented his walking stick". The collection ranges from refined souvenirs for lovers of the city to useful objects, each with a name that refers to those places and presences that are the many excellent 'signatures' of Venice. "All our collaborators on this journey came on board enthusiastically because they share the values of the project, which provides for the protection of the environment but also of the most disadvantaged people, because it is they, the 60 young people of the Cooperativa Sociale Futura of San Vito al Tagliamento, who make the collection". This is the beauty of industrial design, to the extent that ADI (the Italian Design Association) has rightly awarded Pieces of Venice the XXVI Compasso d'Oro in the Social Project category. Karin and Luciano, however, are not just resting on their laurels, partly because he is a volcano of ideas and projects, and partly because that Compasso has opened many doors for the small start-up. "We started out in Italian museum bookshops, but now we have retailers in Miami, Santiago de Chile, Tokyo, New York, Paris, and London. Then there's the online store, although people want to feel the wood, smell it". So, to tickle the public's senses, new products are already on the way. "We'll be presenting flexible wooden placemats in these days, and by the end of the year we're planning to recover Murano glass remnants to make tableware". In Venice, however, there is still a lot of waste to give new life to: from "That of the weaving mills to the tops of the vaporettos", Luciano explains. "We're open and flexible", Karin concludes. "When there is the will to recover and do good, we have no limits".