

GIUSEPPE PALUMBO

A LIFE SCULPTED

Sculptor, serial builder, furniture designer, philanthropist, explorer

By Colleen L. Fanning



“Palumbo shares with Rodin the ability to capture the strength, the character, and the uniqueness of men and beast, giving them divine vitality, as the breath of the Creator would, beyond mere grace and form” —Jose Luis Nazar, serious Palumbo collector, founder of Lexicon Marketing

ARTIST

Across the Golden Gate Bridge from San Francisco, there is an eclectic harbor town lined with boats from afar and fiercely independent individuals who forgo land to live a creative life on the water. Here in Sausalito you will find Giuseppe Palumbo sculpting on the hull of his 55' sailboat which he converted into his design studio and home. He splits his time between the water and the Rocky Mountains for the perfect contrast in an equally inspiring setting. His Rocky Mountain studio, situated near Boulder, Colorado is at the entrance to Eldorado Canyon State Park, known for its legendary towering canyon walls and world class rock climbing. It is here, at the Eldorado Springs Art Center that he founded and still operates, where many of his monumental sculptures are created.





Giuseppe Palumbo's work is incredibly diverse and a reflection of these surroundings. In Sausalito, his work takes on fluid characteristics, with experimentation of vessels and the graceful arching lines of the boats that surround him. In the mountains, his pieces are often more textural, sometimes cast assemblages of items found in nature, much like Deborah Butterfield bronze horses. In addition to casting branches Palumbo casts bronze rocks, with a wide range of patinas, creating a variety of figures that tend to evoke questions from the viewer about what they are truly seeing.

This body of work cleverly reinterprets the use of branches and stones to create imaginary artifacts, paying respect to the raw beauty found in nature. In other pieces he sculpts from clay or wax one can see the influences of Alberto Giacometti, Francisco Zuniga and Barry Flanagan. It has been said along with Flanagan's work, Palumbo's pieces share a "subversive irreverence." In his series titled "All Together Now" three

anthropomorphic sheep dancing in a chorus line are a subtle play on the similarities within our species. Traces of irony continue through his other works as he delves further into the state of the human psyche. He never tires of the figure and his "Plight of Man" series tends to be more stylistically exaggerated interpretations of the human condition.



Palumbo's sculpture titled "Little Bird Told Me" is an idiom expressed as a stylized human head reacting to the relayed message from a bird from another dimension. His recent "On the Edge" sculpture is his response to recent global events. Other sculptures relate to the concept of time or are contemporary interpretations of myth and metaphor.

The metaphor behind Palumbo's work titled "Modern Love" expresses a voluptuous, full bodied woman evoking similarities with the Venus of Willendorf more than the Venus di Milo. In "Modern Love" Palumbo alters the head of Venus to resemble a computer monitor as a symbol of how physical interactions have been hijacked by technology. The theme of duality and paradox is constant. He explores it further in his current project, a variation on the classic, "Europa and the Bull." Here he emphasizes the distinctions while merging the similarities between the masculine and the feminine.



Palumbo builds upon the palpable energy of sacred geometry, weaving it into the narrative of his work.

His foundation is built upon classical training. As a sculptor over 20 years, developing his own distinctive style he believes in returning periodically to hone the fundamentals of his craft. This summer he studied at the prestigious Florence Academy of Art in Italy. He travels to other rich cultural environments, sculpting at The Bellas Artes in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, Pietra Santa, Italy and Nanging, China. His work is forceful and textural; one can see his hand in the work, the imprint of his fingers and the construction from various tools. Stylistically loose, correct anatomical structure is fundamental to his technique and brings form and power to the abstract and expressive works. Curious of human nature Palumbo explores the intuitive subjective mind tapping into the unconscious. He

says "I am mainly interested in what is not apparent, in our hidden voice which we need to listen to closely."



"Giving breath to a fistful of clay or pulse to a crucible of molten metal defines art."



*"The fact that Giuseppe was one of the artists represented by the I.Wolk Gallery was one of the main reasons I decided to acquire the gallery in 2009. What I did not know is how much we would enjoy working with him as well! He continues to be one of the most collected artists that we represent." —Michael Polenske
Chairman/Creative Director Bespoke Collection*

EXPLORER

The natural world is always close by. His passion for adventure started early. With plans ordered from the back of a magazine he built his first kayak at the age of fourteen. He continued on to run some of the great white water rivers of the world, including the Alsek in Alaska, BioBio in Chile, the headwaters of the Amazon, and the Blue Nile in Ethiopia. He has kayaked the length of the Grand Canyon multiple times including a rare solo winter descent. Being on the water is still a large part of his life and when in Sausalito he paddles his kayak most days. He likes to joke, "Life is like a river, sometimes smooth, sometimes rocky but we all end up downstream, and now I am on the edge of the deep water of the ocean." He quips, "If anything, the life of an adventurer and risk-taker was mere preparation for the art business." Now as a yogi, he brings the same focus and intention to his work and he considers sculpting an active meditation.

"Great art and architecture have a tangible force which people visibly respond to. I am fascinated by this and strive to understand the reaction; the instinctive appreciation of beauty and proportion.



BUILDER

Palumbo's creativity has taken on many forms. Today, although focusing on sculpture, he sees little difference between art and architecture. He considers well designed buildings to be large functional art pieces. As many notable artists before him he has been involved with a variety of major building projects. His first 20 plus years were spent as a builder and boutique developer. From revitalizing derelict buildings in blighted areas to new urbanism projects, it has been almost an addiction. As a friend in the business has said, he would need a 12 step program to quit and wagered money he would never stop. Palumbo has said, "We have two options, to build or to decay"

In Denver he developed a reputation for taking on projects others would shy away from. As the consummate builder with his own crew he was able to make financially successful projects that others

passed on. One example in a gritty area near downtown Denver was an historic abandoned church he converted into 12 high-end residential lofts becoming a cornerstone to neighborhood revitalization. Before the sales team would have the open house to potential buyers he had to clear out the rougher aspects of humanity from the sidewalk in front of the project. His last major building project, "The Brianna Marie" is named after his daughter in the progressive, new urbanist development called "Prospect New Town" in Loveland, Colorado.

FURNITURE DESIGNER

It was a natural progression that between art and architecture he developed an affinity for furniture design. Taking its name from a play on his water and mountain locations, Duckspit Studios was born. It is a high-end contemporary line of home and business accessories using concrete, steel and storm-salvaged trees. His aesthetic incorporates an Asian influence with Zen like simplicity. The products range from seating and tables to bio-ethanol fire pits.

PHILANTHROPIST

His philosophy is simple; Gifts received are not to be hoarded but to be shared. This is put to practice at the Eldorado Springs Art Center where he renovated live/work studio space for other artists from a dilapidated Volvo repair shop. The center has hosted art exhibitions, workshops, a music series, international artist-in-residence programs and regular community and non-profit events. One favorite project was assisting a sculptor friend in Africa. He raised money to purchase pigs in Zimbabwe which provided a source of income and food so this artist could feed his family and continue making his art.

Palumbo's recent exhibitions and art shows have included the San Francisco Fine Art Fair, the SOFA Chicago and Red Dot Art Fair, Miami. He will be exhibiting with the William Zimmer Gallery at Art Palm Beach in January 2013.

HE IS REPRESENTED BY:

Auberge du Soleil, Rutherford Ca
Coda Gallery, Palm Desert, Ca
IWolk Gallery, St Helena, Ca
Ma(i)sonry, Yountville, Ca
Rosenbaum Contemporary, Boca Raton, Fl
Smith Klein, Boulder, Co
Sugarman Peterson, Santa Fe, NM
il Frantoio, Capalbio Italy

"Sometimes we overlook or underrate an artist's greatest strengths. With Giuseppe Palumbo, the ease of his execution and the humor that many of his pieces possess seem as if there were no efforts at all. That is the magic. Like Willie Mays making a miracle catch in the outfield. It always looked so easy." —Michael Sugarman, Owner Sugarman Peterson Gallery, Santa Fe, New Mexico
