The Joiner's Museum 1

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Ancient
joiner's work-shop tools:

a collection of pieces of the 17th, 18th, 19th centuries

and of the beginning of 20th.

(Part One)

"The
desire of gathering up antique and old tools employed in carpentry
is born inside me with the passion for the joiner's work...
The work of gathering and restauration never ends. It often
happen to me to find new unknown pieces; so the settlement is
never defined, for this reason I become more and more fond of
it, because it is something lively, which is always restored,
even with a little addition. Why did I do and continue to do
all this? Because I love this job and all that serves to tell
its story; because I have the opportunity to communicate with
other people, who will want to visit my Museum, the pleasure
I feel seeing these objects and understanding what they represent:
ingenuity, hard work, epoch, art and most of all the love for
one of the trades old as the man is".

With these words Tino Sana explained the reasons why he had
founded the Almenno S.Bartolomeo Museum, which was inaugurated
the 20th June 1987. Known as the "The joiner's museum", the
only in Italy, but for its dimensions and for some peculiarities
the only one in the world, in the reality it is an articulated
and complex collection, which is not easy to classify .

It
could be called the Museum of the wood artisans;like every collection
it mirrors the interests, the culture and the capacity of the
collector. It is also the evidence of epochs and places, of
customs and usages. The nearly four thousand pieces of the collection
are in prevalence from the 17th, 18th, 19th and the beginning
of the 20th century. They come especially from the North of
Italy. Every Museum tells a story, Tino Sana's tells about different
ones. Every story is guided back from the minor History, which
does appear neither in the books of History nor in those of
History of the Art. That never written History, only handed
down from the oral evidences and from things, which participated
in different ways to his construction and survived until us.

The History, which people are going to write with difficulty
in the last decades, to hand down, not to forget and not to
disperse. Every object, every tool, every machine becomes a
very important documentary source, which is often the only one,
from which people can draw news useful to define every definition
of a chapter, a monument, a procedure; the unreplaceable ring
to recollect a before and an after, to justify an assumption,
and to built the History. That of common life, of country life,
which mingled with that of the artisan shops through strong
inter-relations, which were indissoluble at least until the

half of the 19th century, when people begun to move from country towards the city.

This till the dawn of the true industrial era, at the beginning of the century; the stories of the Almenno Museum concern mainly about the wood manufacture, its change for purposes and different usages, and also for several human activities: domestic, agricultural, artisan, cultural, amusing, sporting and artistic ones. From the cutting of trees until the turning into furnitures, tools, machineries, means of transport; everything has been hardly conquered with energies, applications and big efforts, but also with little improvements, which are the result of experience and observation; with experimentations in order to obtain slow changes, carefully considered and suggested from the endless repetition of always identical gestures.

These gestures were perfected from the knowledge of secrets, working techinques, different characteristics of the materials and of the culture slowly assimilated from the environment. They were also dependent from the individual experiences, which were dictated by the personal initiative, love and gratuity, not only by productivity. Technics, tools, and service machineries were often practiced by one only operator or by a laboratory, where experiences fermented and conquests and secrets were jealously protected.

These laboratories represented the places where trade and art were complementary and parallel, and where the operator was able to do every kind of thing: he planned, adorned, carved and inlayed, or was improving himself doing these activities, as a specialist at the direct or indirect service of other shops. The domestic furnitures were born in these shops, those of common use or those, more demanding, for churches, rich houses and for offices; here were made also barrels and equipments for agricultural activities; carts or gigs, violas and violins, the same machines for the wood manufacturing, toupies and lathes, planes, carved or inlayed frames, locks for country houses or for luxurious buildings and parquets.

Different people met there to exchange ideas, to consult each other and to realize together a project or a demanding work; during the visit at the Museum many readings can be made and many aspects can be caught.

The exposition criteria, conditioned by the great bulk of material at disposal, the limited space and by the variety of themes, leave a large liberty of approach to the visitor. The 1,500 square metres of exposition area offer an arrangement of the whole material on two levels, assembled according to homogeneous themes: tools, machines and finished goods, or it is paged into simple movable wings, which are arranged as real artisan shops.

First Floor.

On the pavement many wooden machines of the beginning of the

century are distributed; they are realized by the different joner's shops at their own use. These are the plaining machine, the circular saw, the toupie, which are used for simple works. Along the wall and in the centre of the room several LATHES are proudly showed; they are obviously made of wood and some of them are really valuable and very rare. One of them, which is "primitive", comes from the Peralatti family of Imagna Valley, it is called "leg-lathe" used for the horizontal lever system, which impress the rotatory movement at the worked piece. It is well preserved and eqipped with tools used for the turning, hung on the walls behind the operator, as always used. And also the "rope-lathe" of the 19th century with a pedal movement and a big flying-wheel.

There is a very beautiful example of the 17th century, which has an articulation with a crank-shaft and the pedal-work. Another one, from the 19th century, has a double articulation with crank-shaft. The mechanization advent is testified by a transmission, placed on the wall and able to action at the same time different lathes. The shops arranged on this floor are two: that of the joiner and that of the carver. The JOINER's shops is composed, besides the typical working table, by trestles, hammers, files, raspes, braces, and by common tools.

In the corner there's the typical pedal grinder, mainly used by the knife-grinders, who carried out their activity in urban shop or moved from village to village. On the walls there are many shelves with tins of paint and aniline powder, and also the unfailing picture of St. Joseph, who is the joiners' protector.

The other shop, the CARVER's one, is realized with the material all belonged to Enrico Manzoni, called "risulì", who was one of the most famous Bergamask carvers-golders of the beginning of the century; he's the author of many appreciated puppet's heads. They are exposed together with gouges, chisels and shears, some life-size drawing of frames and decorations; the tools for cutting and manual transport of trunks are hung on the walls along the corridor.

Many are the compasses and the planes from the 19th and 20th century, some from the previous centuries; many curious and valuable tools are ordered in show-cases: planes, scratchers, hammers, squares and shaping pliers.

Basement Floor.

In the hall a old little TAVERN is prepared with wine-shop counters, the shelves with white decanters and blue decorum, the leaded measures, an accordion of inlayed wood and mother-of-pearl. Curious are the progenitors of expresso-coffee machines, made of brass and copper. In the adjacent place is settled the typical furniture of a "FARMER'S HOUSE" with a layed table, and with dishes and saucepans on the walls; it is also provided with a go-cart and a cupboard.

The double-room is very rustic and Bergamask, it has the bed, the cradle, the night-tables, the wash-basin, the kneeling-stool, the chest of drawers and the unfailing sacred effigy on the wall. The first big expositive place is reserved to the farmer's tools and machineries, which were employed in the fields or in the house, or for agricultural and domestic works, but also for the transformation of goods.

On
the walls there's a collection of hoes, hay-cutters, rakes, winnowing-fans, yokes, hatchets, steelyards, balances and various tools for the milk working. On the floor there are ploughs, mechanical hoes, gins, churns, wood measures and many other tools. A complete wall is occupied by curious spinnig-jennies and wool-winders, but also by various tools used for carding and wool spinning; the little frame for the weaving is very singular.

The second room is all occupied by real artisan shops, some of them are defined with furnitures and tools from different origins, others were completely belonging to an artisan and entirely exposed there.

Text by CESARE ROTA NODARI - end of Part One.

MUSEO DEL
FALEGNAME

(THE JOINER'S MUSEUM)

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