

French boost to Italian sculptor

Italian sculptor Dionisio Cimarelli says he owes his breakthrough as an artist not to his homeland but to France, the Louvre Museum and Napoleon.

An exhibition of the sculptor's works is now open at the Italian Consulate General in Shanghai, but it unfortunately consists of only five bronze sculptures. However, Cimarelli has also brought with him a collection of 33 photographs of his other works.

"It's a pity that only a small number of my sculptures are displayed here due to transportation and funding problems," says Cimarelli.

Born in Gessi, in the province of Ancona, Cimarelli began his career of an artist after graduating from the National University of Art Studies of Ancona. Until 1990, he had had a great interest in abstract sculpture but, as he now recalls, "the big twist and turn in my career came in 1991."

That was the year when Cimarelli was nominated by the Louvre Museum to restore the sculptures in Napoleon's Palace in Paris. It was a difficult and complicated job because, to give life to the ancient sculptures, he had to become totally familiar with the characteristics of the various materials they were carved from and to respect the original style of the works.

"I always say it was the experience in Paris that enabled me to appreciate the masterpieces of Italy," he adds.

However, the art training he had received couldn't satisfy his artistic needs so he entered the Wood-carving Department at Institution Silva of Valgadena in Italy. He patiently mastered traditional techniques in imitating the work of past masters.

The quality of his work as a sculptor can be seen in his work, "San Giovanni Battista" (2001), in which the saint is not treated as a historical heroic personage but as a man that has his own weaknesses and a heart full of sentiment.

Cimarelli believes that the soul of sculpture is to express the sentiment and feelings of the sculptor and his understanding of the work.

He has worked on the restoration of the Herumen Church in Copenhagen,

Doing restoration work on sculptures in Napoleon's Palace was the turning point in Dionisio Cimarelli's career and it enabled him to appreciate the beauty of his own country's art, writes Wang Jie



Denmark, the Strasbourg Church in France and the Royal Palace in Stockholm, Sweden.

"I have traveled around the world a lot," he says. "I was in China in the early 1980s."

Cimarelli says he can see the dramatic changes that have taken place in China but is worried about the lack of healthy contemporary art environment in the country.

"You can't ask for a quality piece to be created at a cheap rate," he says. "The people in charge should know this."

Perhaps more of the sculptures that Cimarelli has created may one day be seen in Shanghai — if there's someone generous enough to bring them out.

Date: through November 4, 10:30am-5:30pm
Address: 19/F, The Center, 989 Changle Rd
Tel: 6248-8600

Above: Italian artist Dionisio Cimarelli works on a sculpture in this file photo. Right: One of Cimarelli's works.

