

# Niche of his own

## Master carver demonstrates skill in area visit

By Barbara Ziomba  
special writer

In a world flooded with assembly-line manufactured products, Albert Moroder has carved a niche for himself as a master woodcarver for the House of ANRI, the world-famous woodcarving studio in northern Italy.

Moroder displayed his considerable skills in a demonstration at Heslop's Yankee Peddler in Livonia recently.

For over 300 years, woodcarving has been the principal source of income as well as a favorite pastime among the inhabitants of the Groden Valley, a secluded area tucked away in the South Tyrolean Alps. Chateau-style homes cling to the wooded hills that rim the valley, a scene reminiscent of "The Sound of Music." In fact, the "Groden" is an old derivation of a word meaning "enclosure."

Isolation impelled Groden's people to travel to other countries and market their exquisite handmade carvings. As the popularity of their cottage industry grew, the demand for carvings increased.

FINALLY, IN 1912, a man named Anton Riffesser convinced many of the craftsmen of the valley to unite in order to increase the number of figures yet maintain the highest standards of quality. Riffesser took the first two letters of his first and last names, and the House of ANRI established its headquarters in the city of St. Christina.

Currently, the studio employs over 250 carvers and painters, 80 to 90 of whom work as production carvers. The amount of time required to carve the average figurine is approximately 10 hours per day for six to seven days. Limited editions can number from 750 to 7,500, so a particular allotment can take up to two years to complete.

MORODER HAS BEEN WITH ANRI for two years, but he seriously began carving when he was 14 years old.

"I learned to carve from my father, and he learned from his," said Moroder. "My father is now 81 years old, and he is still carving."

Moroder's sister is one of the women employed by ANRI to paint their figurines and his brother sells carvings in his store in St. Christina.

When he grew older, Moroder received formal training in carving and design to obtain his credentials as a certified master woodcarver.

"There are also academies in Munich and Vienna where anatomy is taught," added Moroder, displaying a charming but erroneous vision of leather-clad woodcarvers magically churning out masterpieces with little thought or effort. In fact, his training is the equivalent of a doctoral degree in the United States, he said.

Moroder's artistic efforts aren't confined to ANRI's workshop. His home is fitted with a small studio where he pursues his interest in other art forms. A photo album of his work ranged from woodcarving to paper cut-outs Matisse-style to graphic design. An avid hiker and outdoorsman, his favorite subjects are animals.



ART EMANUELE/staff photographer

### Albert Moroder fanciful interpretations

BEFORE HE CAME to ANRI, Moroder traveled to Milan, Italy, to open his own graphics studio.

"It was difficult," he remembered. "Milano is an industrial city. And in the winter there is much fog. I missed the country air — so I came home."

One of ANRI's projects is reproducing the art of Sarah Kay, an Australian housewife whose drawings of children and animals have found their way into homes around the world.

For his demonstration at Heslop's, Moroder chose Kay's interpretation of a young bride entitled, "To Love And To Cherish." Sculpting with a wooden mallet and selected chiselling tools, Moroder transformed a block of Cembra pine into the bridal figure. (ANRI also uses Alpine maple for its carvings.)

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— Albert Moroder  
House of Anri master carver

A figurine of such size (approximately 1 1/4 feet) and detail usually takes 70 hours to complete; near the end of four hours of carving much of the subject's elements were clearly defined.

A modest, personable man, Moroder's appearance belies his 42 years. He is married and the father of a 4-year-old girl named Indra, and a boy, Laurin, 11 months old. It's still to early to see if they will follow in their father's footsteps, but if they do they will have several generations of experience from which to draw.

Since he is one of the few woodcarvers employed with ANRI who speaks English, Moroder was selected to visit the United States and Canada last year, traveling to California and British Columbia. The overwhelming impression he has of the U.S. is its size and the friendliness of the people.

"Here, everyone asks how I am enjoying the food, if I am comfortable. In Europe, people are not so open," he remarked.

## Italian-American art on exhibit

An exhibition of the art of the Italian-American artist is on display through Aug. 14 at the County Galleria, 1200 N. Telegraph Road in Pontiac.

"Mostra D'Arte," juried by Sergio DeGiusti and Eva Boicourt and sponsored by the Oakland County Cultural Council in cooperation with the Italian Study Group of Troy, includes paintings by Joseph Maniscalco and Assunta Sera, photographs by Vince Luzzi and Roberto Sonnino and sculpture by Daniel Pinzani and Joseph Balone.

Other artists whose works will be in the juried exhibit include Roy DeFrancesco, Elaine Borruso, Phil Savaglio, Jennie Lenzi, Laura Operi, Rinaldo Minervini, Dante Melotti Jr. and Sandra Sonnino.

As a further tribute to the artistic contributions of the Italian-American culture, the Galleria I will display

the artworks of both living and dead artists in a special invitational exhibit. Extensive research contributed by Eva Boicourt on these artists, their biographies and promotional memorabilia will be displayed along with paintings, photography, architectural boards and design.

Artists in this category include Harry Bertola, design; Charles Campanelli, neon sculpture; Fred Petrucci, plaster casting; John Castellana, architectural design; Tony Spina, photography; and sculpture by Sergio DeGiusti, Joe Balone and Mike Vizzini.

The County Galleria I and II are open to the public during business hours, Monday through Friday. The Oakland County Cultural Council is made possible by the support of Daniel T. Murphy, county executive, the Board of Commissioners and a grant from the Michigan Council for the Arts.



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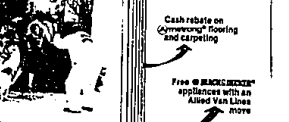
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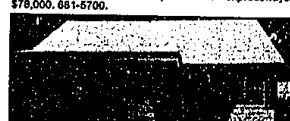
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