

Napa Valley's Italian Master: Sculptor Franco Vianello

by Terry Houts

Italy has given the world some of the best artists, masters of the arts, painters, and sculptors.

California has, among its resident, numerous artists who deserve to be counted among the finest; and Napa Valley has one outstanding Italian sculptor: Franco Vianello, Master Sculptor.

Vianello was born in Venice, Italy in 1937. His family heritage goes back over a century of sculptors and foundry owners.

Vianello began his formal training at about nine years old. His talent became manifest early, and by the time he was eleven the famous Italian sculptor Napoleone Martinuzzi accepted the promising young talent as his apprentice. The following years were a time of intense study and practical experience under the watchful eye of his mentor. By the age of 22, Vianello was already recognized and highly respected for his outstanding work, which included numerous creations in bronze. His curriculum vitae includes the restoration of many historic old works in piazzas, churches, memorial parks, and mausoleums, as well as for many well-known art collectors. Peggy Guggenheim took great interest in this young talented sculptor and commissioned him to restore countless art pieces in her collection over the years.

Vianello came to the United States in 1959. After serving in the U.S. Armed Forces, he and his wife Jane settled in California where he returned to a career as a sculptor.

Today, his works are found worldwide including Canada, Europe, North Africa, South America, and in the Orient as well as throughout the United States. Vianello has an accurate understanding of the anatomy of both humans and animals, an important ability if one is to make a realistic looking likeness. Vianello is equally talented in abstract and representational compositions. He is as much at ease when enlarging statues to audacious sizes as he is when

working with small models.

Vianello was commissioned to sculpt and cast numerous heroic-sized bronze statues. Among the most famous are the eighteen-foot high bronze **TUNAMAN MONUMENT** that was placed on Shelter Island in San Diego, the 18-foot high four horseman bronze statue for the National Cowboy Hall of Fame and Western Heritage Center in Oklahoma City; and the 18-foot **Leif Ericson** bronze for the City of Seattle.

Vianello's works, whether small enough to grace a desk or gigantic enough to stand in front of a building, are all masterpieces because, if he is not completely satisfied with the end result, he melts down the piece and makes another. Occasionally his wife Jane will inquire about a certain piece that she hasn't seen for a while only to find out that the piece has been melted down.

Vianello has worked for the following: The National Audubon Society,

Champion International, The Seattle World's Fair, The Scripps Oceanographic Institute, The Wells Fargo Bank (stagecoach and Clydesdales), The Dillingham Corporation, Levi Strauss, the San Diego Historical Society, The Bohemian Club in San Francisco, the San Francisco Academy of Sciences, and at the Napa Valley College, Napa, California (Mama Bear teaching her cubs to fish). Vianello's works have been shown in



Terry Houts/NVC Times Photo

Work by Franco Vianello on display at his studio.

galleries and are prized treasures by fine art collectors the world over. He is currently offering many of his works at **Generations Art Gallery**, located at Vintage 1870, Yountville, California.



Terry Houts/NVC Times Photo

"Narrow Escape," by Franco Vianello.

Art critics have honored Vianello as "The sculptor who can do it all—figures in action, portraits, animal life, anything..." "This highly capable artist has combined his creative genius and technical skills to the level of real perfection..." "One of the top contemporary sculptors of this era."

Vianello's on-premise art gallery is a delight for anyone who highly values the merits of fine sculpture. His most beloved sculpture

Art Store Offers Discounts

by Terry Houts

Napa Valley College art students, and others, who need a wide range of art supplies can find substantial discounts at Napa Valley Art Store.

The store first opened in 1984 as a consignment shop. Since then, owner Marjean Dittman and principal helper, volunteer husband John have become well-known in the art world.

In 1986 they began selling by mail order, offering deep discounts—as much as 60 percent less than suggested retail prices. The response was pleasantly overwhelming, report the owners.

Growth and success followed because the art community, both locally and at large, welcomed Napa Valley Art Store's new policy on pricing. As more and more products were added to their stock the need for a catalog was evident. A 52-page catalog was put together enabling artists everywhere to find what they need.

The store opens at 7:00 a.m. The staff is helpful, but it is highly recommended that artists and students have a list of needed supplies ready when shopping at Napa Valley Art Store. Catalogs are available at the store, 1041 Lincoln Avenue, Napa, California 94558. Tel: 257-1810 / 1-800-648-6696.