

The FINNFOREST Wooden Bath

As a child I often wanted a real wooden bath, not a zinc one. A bath and a boat-in-one, just like the dutch wooden shoes I was wearing and floated while playing near the water.

The zinc bathtub I remember from my youngest years was uninviting . Do you also have any such recollections about your childhood bath period? After the - luckily very short - zinc period we had a tiled shower. I hate tiles, they are cold and slippery. So I cannot remember really enjoying this period. Apart from that, it leaked; the tiler must have been an amateur. You had to take a quick shower without leaving the plug in, otherwise the water would flood the whole bathroom floor which meant that you had to work after the shower.... Apart from that, the tiles had the wrong blue colour.

Happily we moved out of the house I never really liked.

The first bathtubs came in; cast iron of best quality with off white enamel. When I got married, we had a number of houses built, each with a different kind of a bathtub. Rectangular or rounded, all in metal. Jean, our architect-designer-artist created some wonderful bathrooms.

The last bathrooms I had created were special ones and I paid a lot of attention to them into every detail. Instead of having the bath somewhere placed against a dull wall, I wanted a bath with a view....

So my wife and I had the children's bath placed inside a cocoon with three windows, overlooking the staircase tower. It was a very cosy place and the children loved it as much as I did. It was just like a bath in a tree-hut and the atmosphere was just like being on a remote island.

Our own bathroom had other features. The view was most special. The room was a large space with a high saddle roof. Two high windows were overlooking the large garden with a century-old beech tree. Total privacy and no one could disturb our privacy. So I decided to place the two-person bath just in front of the window, because of the view. Being in bath and overlooking a wonderful scenery is rather attracting than looking at dull tiles.... I tried to realize the effect of having a bath outside instead of inside. The high double windows were completely openable so the effect was really wonderful. It felt like being in bath underneath the sky.

But my wife rather preferred to have double curtains... (even with total privacy in the garden and without having close neighbours...)

Nevertheless the physical effects of the material were not satisfying to me: cold iron and enamel. So I insulated the whole bath myself with a number of layers. It's crazy that the industry could not realize any improvements over the last 35 years....

What would be my next step? When having my little sailing yacht built a few years later, I imagined that the ultimate luxury would be to have a bath in the yacht. In a sailing yacht. But the size was too small (of the yacht). But I didn't let the idea go out of my mind So we created a Wooden Washbasin after finishing the boat. A beautiful one with all rounded shapes which inspired me for the next step: a wooden bath.

Of course I knew the barrels used for wine storage etcetera. They should do just that job and were unsuitable for my ideas. The company that realized my yacht interior was specialized on rounded and bent forms and also had an advanced three dimensional CNC milling machine in operation.

My brains got the combination...

In my mind the Wooden Bath slowly took shape. To me a bath should offer relaxation and comfort. The bathtub has to be ergonomic for your body, with comfortable armrests and a perfect ergonomic shape.

From the moment you see it, it has to be inviting. Very inviting It should be pleasing to the eye in shape, in proportion, colour and material. It should offer you a warm welcome. To the eye and to the body.

I like a free-standing bath, not a built-in one. Preferably a movable one on wheels, so that you can decide whether having a bath inside or outside under the sky. The best way to experience that difference is when you swim in a covered pool or outside. Unfortunately, 99,9 % of the people living in houses have a shower or bath in the bathroom... Inside. Is it just prudery or lack of private space in our overcrowded society? The nicest thing is to jump overboard while at anchor....

(My favourite bathroom would be one with a sundeck outside on which you can roll-out the bath into the sun...)

After the shape of the bath the material came and I had read a lot of stories about FINNFOREST, being very innovative with their wood products. Finland and the Finnish design, the lakes, the purity of nature, water, air and design... World of wonders...!

Eero Saarinen, one of my favourite architects (I collect a few of his designs) inspired me in selecting the material and shape of the bath, creating a pure bath. Pure to the eye and pure to the body.

Combining all these elements, I got in touch with FINNFOREST and – to my surprise – I came across another very special person: Mr. Oläv van Woudenberg. I explained my project and asked whether he could help me to realize it.

After a short period I heard that FINNFOREST was willing to sponsor the raw material for the production of this unique bath. Birchwood multiplex. It came on a pallet and was transported with the MS Baltica.

Daily work took off all our hours and the pallet remained untouched in a corner of the factory here.

In the meantime a few other companies heard of my idea and offered their help: from Bison for the glue to Missler software and CNC Consult for the 3-D designing and programming. Plus Henk and Marcel Ritmeester for the actual production.... The hands on!

A few months later, the design was ready, the conversion of the programs for the CNC milling machine was in operation and on the last weekend of october, the first part of three was in production.

To me while looking at the CNC Machine it felt like I was watching Ettore Bugatti creating a work of art, which it is. Images of a Pacific Island came in my mind where the inhabitants are hollowing out trees for their canoes...

This world was a different one: a highly advanced three dimensional CNC milling machine was precisely milling out the programmed shape for the bath with an accuracy of less than 0,05 millimeters. A high tech sculptor.... Of course the production should not disturb the day tot day work, so we did it on saturday and during the evening. The late evening.

It is November 2 now and the first part is milled, the second prepared for assembly and glueing... Then CNC milling it inside and outside... The third part of the bath.

And then the lacquering process because that's one of the secrets Mr. Kun and Arie van der Dussen developed. A clear varnish shield just to cover the wood. 10 to 15 layers. It will take us some weeks....

(to be continued)....

The FINNFOREST WOODEN BATH *Continued Part 2.*

It's monday, November 7 and we had a bit of a problem this weekend....

Never mind: that's always the case with projects that exceed all bounds...

The second segment was to be milled, three dimensional. Henk Ritmeester noticed that the second segment was 8 to 9 millimetres too low. So: problem to mill this item, we would destroy more than mill.... Check and doublecheck is the motto. Decision was made to prepare the upper, third segment. So Henk, Marcel and I were busy in milling the parts.

The uppermost plate proved to be huge... So we decided to make a picture of it to demonstrate its size. If the bath is to be part of a megayacht, the owners' bathroom should have adequate sizes...

But:

**You sail a Feadship
Your garage houses a Bugatti
And you bathe in
a Finnforest Wooden bath....**

Just before lunch, I took our Ford, Model T and drove to the supplier to collect two new plates of birch plywood in 9 and 12 millimeters; the nine millimetre to add to the second part and the 12 millimeter to become the upper one veneered in length-direction to have the best picture when milled.

That's were we stand now...

William Schulpen

Part three... December 19, 2005

Since November 2 the idea of the bath even took off to another dimension. I felt that 'just' a wooden bath was not enough... It should become a real Masterpiece or even a work of art.

As a child I often played in the large hall of my grandparent's home which was a house built in the twenties design. There were a few leaded-glass doors with beautiful colours. I recall the moments when I was sitting there and touching the glass pieces.

Apparently my father must have had the same love for this type of glass since he had every window of his own-built house made of this material.

One day I had the idea of decorating the collar of the bath with small mosaic tiles. During my period at the nursery school, I made a wonderful 'painting' of paper mosaic pieces in brown and green colours depicting a large vase, filled with hydrangea flowers. A picture of my twin brother and I still is in my mind. According to my mother, the nuns must have kept that little artwork and it is the only item I really miss from my childhood.

Finding the best mosaic I surfed the internet and quickly found my favourite: Bisazza. Their website www.bisazza.com is a gem. I called Mr. Fokko Vos of Bisazza Holland to ask him whether the factory could help me with a shopping bag full of 'waste tiles'. He informed me that the Vicenza-based company would not do this, but he would ask on his next trip to Italy.

After his return the positive answer came through that a few kilos of different mosaics would be sent to Holland.. So I prepare to beat my childhood mosaic work!

William Schulpen.

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The total production of the bath
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