

INTERLOCKING PIECES FOR RECONSTRUCTION

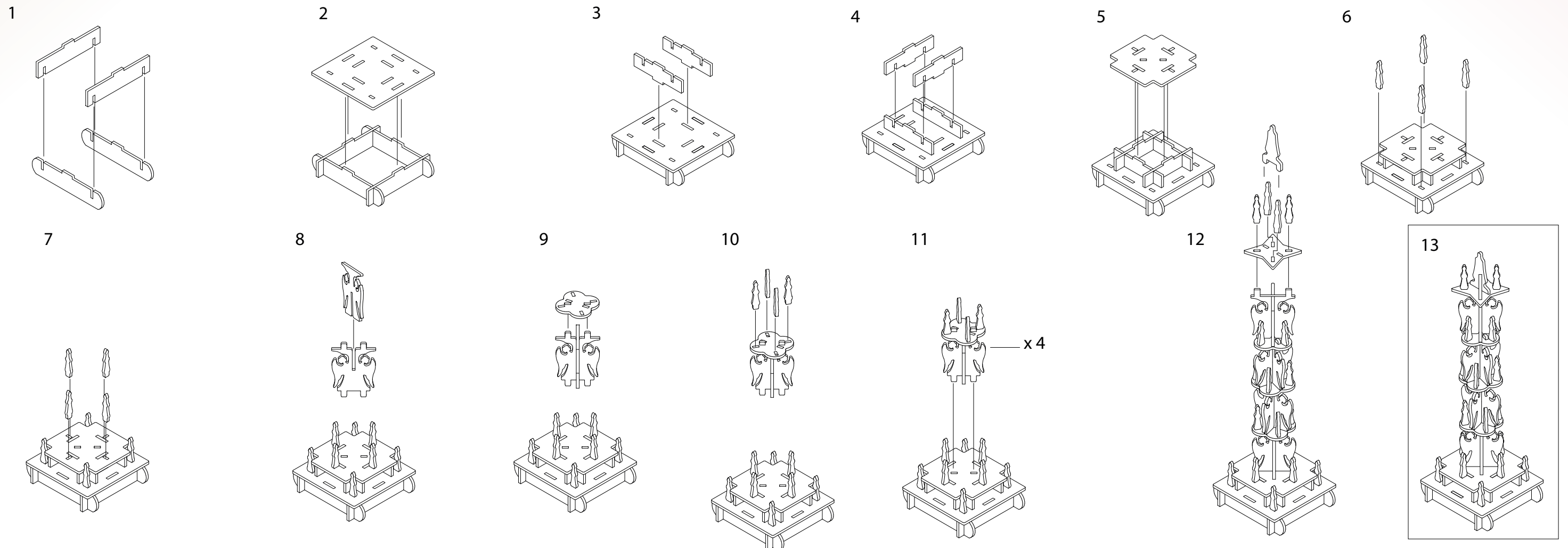
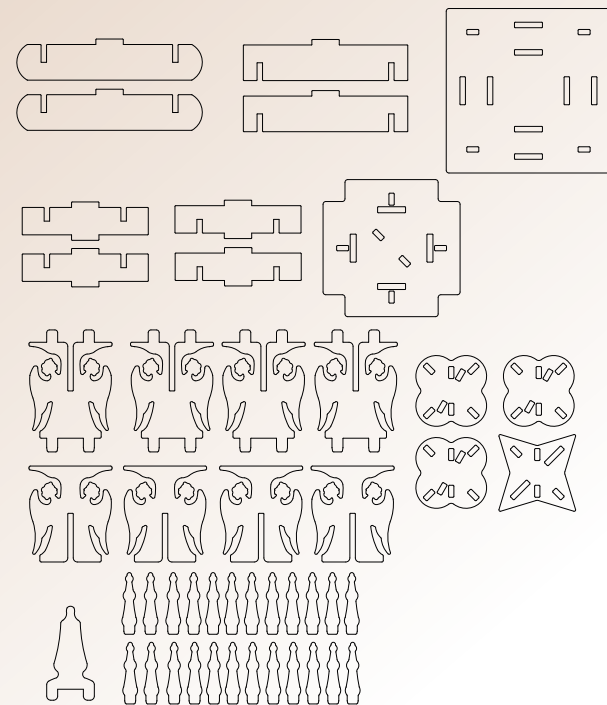
The project “Interlocking Pieces for Reconstruction” is the result of the work carried out by a group of individuals who are detained as part of the training activities started up by the Santa Rosa Study Center in Viterbo and the University of Tuscia since 2020, in collaboration with the Viterbo Penitentiary. It enjoys the support of the Lazio Region - Institutional and Personnel Affairs Directorate (Determination 24/11/2022, no. G16329) and is coordinated by Eleonora Rava and Paola Pogliani. The project is conducted in collaboration with the Association of Facchini di Santa Rosa and benefits from the design expertise of engineer Elena Starnini Sue, as well as the collaboration of Sister Lucia Di Martino, Lucia Maiorano, Lucia Malvinni, and Patrizia Tagliatti.

The idea behind the project is to promote creative and manual activities that ensure access to the world of work, starting from the knowledge of designing and producing a simplified, scaled-down model of one of Santa Rosa’s machines: the “Volo d’angeli” (Flight of Angels). The offered program is structured in weekly meetings where the protagonists of the design, construction, and transportation of the Santa Rosa machine – Raffaele Ascenzi, Alessio and Mirko Fiorillo, Massimo Mecarini, Giuseppe and Luigi Zucchi – participated. Practical activities are carried out using educational tools that adhere to the “learning by doing” learning method, aiming to encourage the free expression of the incarcerated individuals and engage them in study, research, and laboratory activities.

The result is the creation of a modular and limited-edition model, starting from wooden semi-finished products, using exclusively eco-friendly materials, including for packaging. The model is distributed disassembled into small parts that, when assembled using the interlocking technique, form the three-dimensional structure. This method of creating a scaled-down version of the Santa Rosa machine represents an innovation within the well-known cultural tradition of Viterbo.

The machine is an expression of the will to keep alive, between memory and faith, the tradition that binds Viterbo to its patron saint; the transportation of the machine is a symbol of the sharing of tasks, coordination, effort, and sacrifice of over a hundred men who take it upon themselves. Cooperation and teamwork are the values that animate the project developed with incarcerated individuals in Viterbo, creating the model of the Santa Rosa machine, a modular structure to be reconstructed and made solid.

The three-dimensional models are the result of the work of Kayhan B., Francesco B., Patrizio C., Pietro C., Christan C., Giuseppe D.M., Calogero F., Daniele F., Stefano F., Sebastiano M., Leonardo M., Giuseppe M., Salvatore N., Nicola S., Costantino S., Luca T., Jacopo V. The texts are by Francesco B. and Patrizio C. with the collaboration of Andrea M., Luca T., Giuseppe M., Salvatore N., and Stefano F.



SANTA ROSA:

BIRTH OF THE CULT AND TRANSLATION OF THE BODY

The beginning of the cult of Santa Rosa coincides with the date of the transition to eternal life of the young Rosa, which is commonly believed to have occurred on March 6, 1251, at the age of about 18. The life of the young girl was rich in exceptional events, considered by believers as true miracles that multiplied after her death. Tradition has it that her body was buried in the bare earth and after a year, in 1252, it was recovered and found to be uncorrupted. What is certain is that miracles immediately flourished at her tomb, and on November 25 of that same year, Pope Innocent IV, in the bull “*Sic in sanctis suis*,” at the request of the clergy and the Viterbo community, ordered a local investigation. In the meantime, the body of the young Rosa was buried inside the Church of Santa Maria in Poggio. The fifteenth-century Vita, contained in the process initiated in 1457 by Pope Callistus III, reports that after receiving Rosa in a dream three times, Pope Alexander IV instructed a second translation of the body. The pope himself, accompanied by four cardinals, led a procession with the body of the saint to the church of the monastery of Santa Maria of the Order of San Damiano (now Santa Rosa). On this occasion, seven years after her death, the body of Santa Rosa was found once again uncorrupted. In a medieval world where plague, famine, and the constant onslaught of epidemics made life difficult, this exceptional event represented a sign for all believers and took on the value of hope in the Christian faith. Thus, Rosa, thanks to her ability to “resist death,” became immortal in the hearts of the people of Viterbo.

FROM THE TRANSLATION OF THE BODY TO THE TRANSPORTATION OF THE MACHINE

May 15, 1512 marks an important date in the history of the Santa Rosa machine: the Council of Forty approved the proposal of one of the Priors to establish a “*luminaria*,” a procession with the offering of wax, in honor of Saint Rosa to be held every year on the day of the Saint’s feast. In the minutes of the meeting, transcribed by the notary Agostino Almadiani, the route of the “*luminaria*” was established – starting from Piazza del Comune and ending at the Monastery of Santa Rosa – and the participation of the Priors, other city magistrates, and all the guilds of the Arts was required. In the same meeting, it was decided that in honor of the Saint, on the day of the procession, people should abstain from work, and anyone who did not comply with the edict would be fined.

It is only in the 17th century that the actual transportation of the Santa Rosa machine began – in 2000, it was declared intangible heritage by UNESCO – following a vow made by the people of Viterbo to Santa Rosa during the plague. The Santa Rosa machine belongs to the category of shoulder-borne machines. In the most recent version, the “walking bell tower” has a height of about thirty meters and a weight of 5/6 tons, covering a distance of 1,260 meters from Porta Romana to the Monastery of Santa Rosa. The machine is carried by 113 porters who, arranged in rows, lift and carry the machine along the route through the streets of Viterbo. After accomplishing the feat, they emerge from under the machine, exhausted and sweaty but happy, bursting into tears and shouts of emotion and jubilation.

THE PORTERS OF SANTA ROSA

The porters are volunteers who transport the Santa Rosa machine. Every year, individuals who wish to carry the machine gather in the deconsecrated church of La Pace in the month of June to undergo the “carrying” test consists of carrying a weight of 150 kilograms on their shoulders for a distance of approximately 90 meters.

The porters are divided into: “*ciuffi*,” those who are underneath the machine; “*spallette*,” those who are on the sides of the machine; “*stanghette*,” those who are under the four beams protruding from the front and rear of the machine and serve to break the path.

The porters’ uniform is as follows: white knee-high socks, white trousers and shirt to symbolize the purity of Rosa, a pristine scarf tied bandana-style on the head, and finally, a red sash wrapped around the waist, symbolizing the four cardinals who, along with Pope Alexander IV, first transported the body of the Saint. The head porter, on the other hand, wears black pants, a white shirt, a blue sash around the waist, and a transverse band with the colours of the city of Viterbo: yellow and blue.

On the day of the transport, the porters gather at 2:00 PM at the Teatro Unione to complete the tour of the “seven churches,” necessary to seek the support of God and the citizens for the successful transport. They then meet in the garden of the Capuchin convent with their families to refresh themselves. At 7:00 PM, after bidding farewell to those present and listening to the final technical instructions and encouragement from the president of the Sodalizio and the head porter, they line up and head towards Porta Romana, where the machine is located. The ceremony of handing over the machine takes place: the builder hands it over to the mayor, who then hands it over to the Sodalizio.

Then, the bishop imparts the blessing in “*articulo mortis*”, first inside the church of San Sisto, then in front of the machine before departure. One of the porters takes on the task of reading the porter’s prayer, which contains key words such as “faith” for Saint Rosa; “physical strength” and “willpower” in completing the transport; “respect” and “humility” towards others, especially the older porters and the uniform they wear. Only at this moment are they ready for the transport of the machine.

THE TRANSPORT

On September 3rd of each year, the Santa Rosa machine goes through the central streets of the city of Viterbo, deliberately kept in darkness to highlight the machine, which illuminates the entire path with its lights. The transport covers a distance of 1,260 meters from Porta Romana to the Sanctuary of Santa Rosa, with five intermediate stops: Piazza Fontana Grande, Piazza del Plebiscito, Piazza delle Erbe, Corso Italia, and Piazza Giuseppe Verdi.

During the itinerary, the machine travels on roads with varying slopes and widths. Some are only 10 centimeters wider than the machine. In the last stretch of the route, the road becomes uphill with a 12% slope, prompting a change in the formation of the porters. Two long ropes are inserted into the front of the machine, pulled by another forty of them, and four beams called “levers” are added by an additional twenty porters. Both the “ropes” and the “levers” serve to stabilize the machine and provide assistance at the base to overcome the elevation. This final stretch is completed at a run: once in front of the Sanctuary, the machine performs a spin and, at the command “lower it gently,” is placed on supports.

Finally, at the last command from the head porter, “for Santa Rosa, out,” the porters leave the machine and conclude the transport.

“FLIGHT OF ANGELS”

In 1967, when Giuseppe Zucchi won the competition with “*Volo d’angeli*,” it was a true revolution. The models of the past machines predominantly had the appearance of a Gothic bell tower. This one, instead, was a 30-meter-high machine that combined, in a remarkable constructive synthesis, all the architectural characteristics of the city. It replaced the old internal lattice with a modern, telescope-shaped one, modified the arrangement of the porters under the machine, and eliminated the outer rows of the structure, making the construction appear taller and more majestic. Unfortunately, the first transport did not reach its destination. At the first stop in Piazza Fontana Grande, the porters complained that the machine was “twisting” on itself due to the modifications made by the builder. The transport stopped at the end of Via Cavour. The reasons for the halt were multiple: among them, the excessive weight and the fact that the porters did not undergo the carrying test, which became mandatory only the following year.

1967 is the only year in which the machine did not complete the planned route. It was a tough blow for Zucchi; however, the following year, by carefully selecting new porters one by one and modifying the machine to make it lighter, the transport was successfully carried out.

“Flight of angels” was used for transport until 1978, but it is still the most beloved machine among the people of Viterbo for its shapes and the innovation it brought, especially because it represents a symbol of restart after the difficulty of the halt in 1967. It also symbolizes hope and a fresh start for us prisoners after the prison experience. This is why its image was chosen for the “*Incastri per ricostruire*” (Joints for Reconstruction) project.

INCASTRIPER
RIG
STRU
IRE

JOINTS FOR
RECONSTRUCTION

