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BRAZILIAN ARTIST HUGO FRANCA TURNS LOGS INTO FURNITURE AT THE VANCOUVER BIENNALE

Posted by [John Thomson](#) on Tuesday, April 29, 2014 · [Leave a Comment](#)



"It's very much a creative dialogue," says the man who talks to trees. **Hugo Franca** is a renowned Brazilian sculptor who fashions furniture out of logs. Revered for their majesty and complexity, his works are displayed in museums and galleries around the world. Franca is one of 45 artists invited this year to participate in the third **Vancouver Biennale**, a celebration of global interconnectedness through music, dance, sculpture and film. Franca has chosen to refashion five Douglas Fir logs washed up along the BC coast and transported by barge and truck to a beach on the city's west side.



Starting the process (Day 1)

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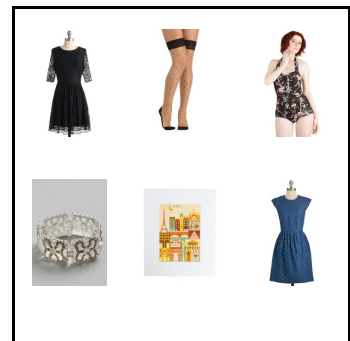
John Thomson



John Thomson is an award-winning filmmaker and journalist with a Bachelor's degree in Fine Art living in the beautiful city of Vancouver. Trained at

the CBC after college, he spent years chasing trends and ideas, from arts to politics, from one end of the country to another. He is currently taking a break from the complex machinations of broadcast journalism to concentrate on writing for print and e-zines.

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Breathing new life into a piece of flotsam is nothing new for the former engineer turned sculptor. Leaving his desk job in São Paulo in 1980 to learn woodworking from the indigenous tribes of Bahia, he spent 15 years in the jungle refining his craft and as a result takes a reverential, almost spiritual, approach to the task. He lets the natural contours of the wood dictate its ultimate shape. In effect he lets the material talk to him.



Carving with a chainsaw (Day 01)



"These logs have already given me an idea of what they want to be," he says. "It's a very intuitive process based on a creative dialogue with the raw material. My main inspiration is always the tree and the story of each tree."





Hugo Franca (right) with his assistant (left) on Day 04



Hugo Franca

He marks up the logs in chalk. That determines the where the cuts will be but that can change. He often deviates from his rough sketches. A knot in the wood? A piece of rot? No problem. He incorporates the imperfection into the design, cutting around it. "We usually use a curvy cut to better fit with the organic forms, the natural shape of the trees. A straight cut is a little too invasive in my conception. You have to go with the wood."



Franca supervises a cut during bench creation process (Day 04)



Working with his two assistants, Jhony Dos Anjos and Jailton Procopiox, Franca directs the operation as if he were an orchestra conductor. The fact he's using a chainsaw, which is normally associated with cutting down trees not re-purposing them, isn't lost on him. "It's a new use for the chainsaw," he says. "We are, in essence, using it to reverse the process, as a sculptural tool –to create."



Taking Shape (Day 06)



More carving (Day 06)

And then as suddenly as the process begins, it's over. Franca "knows" when to stop. Sanding the pieces accentuates the warm reddish tones which, when it rains, are particularly striking.



Large Bench takes shape (Day 06)



Sanding (Day 10)



Almost finished (Day 10)



The third Vancouver Biennale continues through to spring 2016. Now that Franca's art works are completed, the event's organizers are hoping to retain three of them as legacy pieces, likely placed throughout Metro Vancouver so the public can enjoy them forever.

Watch the video featuring the construction process

Hugo Franca



0:00 / 3:38

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