



## A PASSION FOR ART

**MINIATURE SCULPTURES AND DANCING BEARS  
ARE THIS YEAR'S CREATIVE PROPOSALS FROM QUINTA DOS VALES**

**K**issing hippos, voluptuous nudes and giant frogs are just a few of Karl Heinz Stock's creations gracing the gardens of his rural wine farm Quinta dos Vales. Now Karl plans to expand his collection of sculptures by producing miniatures of his much-loved figures, which can be seen from the EN125. Fifty-five-year-old Karl bought the 50-hectar estate, nestled in the outskirts of Estômbar, after retiring from a fast-paced business lifestyle in Russia almost two years ago.

The old winemaking plant was completely renewed, and now Quinta dos Vales is a successful producer of award-winning Marquês dos Vales wines, which this year won a number of international prizes, in a venture that Karl describes as "a symbiosis between fine wine and good art".

But it is his passion for art that is truly fulfilling. An enthusiastic sculptor, Karl once visited the famous Carrera marble quarries in Italy, where Michelangelo himself would source his marble, to learn sculpting



techniques. Karl originally sculpted from marble and stone due to their strength and million-year history, in which he found solace in the permanent repetition of the craft. Karl also experimented with wood, but it was from the inspiration he drew from the work of Niki de Saint Phalle, the French artist whose archetypal female 'nanas' were made of papier mâché, wire and cloth, that Karl chose to experiment with polystyrene and fibreglass to make his own voluptuous ladies.

As a traditional sculptor, Karl first found it difficult to accept working with such an unnatural product, but he soon discovered the freedom of movement and creativity that came from working with the extremely flexible polystyrene. Karl enjoyed the fascinating freedom of being able to cut off pieces of the sculpture and glue them back on to change the perspective and movement, and although a challenge arose when the sculptor tried to unite polystyrene with polyester, he began to successfully produce his vibrant sculptures six months later.

Quinta dos Vales has enabled him to return to his artistic roots and, unsurprisingly, the grounds are home to Karl's

unique over-dimensional sculptures. His eclectic pieces include fibreglass nudes of voluptuous proportions, each in a different vivid colour, and an array of abstract animal sculptures of different sizes.

Hoping to make his creations more accessible to those with less space, Karl decided to produce miniatures of his well-known sculptures, which would be right at home in any owner's living-room.

The enormous sculptures have a price tag that exceeds most people's budgets, so Karl also wanted to market something more affordable for art lovers to be able to enjoy his work.

In a process that took four months to perfect, the sculptor has embarked on a project to produce these downsized pieces, which so far include the ladies and the kissing hippos. Karl's unique method begins with drawing the figure and making its mould. A 'skeleton' is made of steel or hard wire to support the statuette, and the original model is made using a fast-hardening material to maintain its shape until the process has finished.

To make the mould, Karl and his team cover the entire surface of the original mould with a liquid substance to avoid



any material sticking to it. After making sections of the mould from clay, plaster or silicone is poured into each section. Once it has set, the statuette is complete, allowing copies to be made of the original.

“I am very pleased with the result, although I haven’t decided whether each miniature should be a unique limited edition or whether I will make copies of each piece,” says Karl. “I made my original sculptures with Quinta dos Vales in mind, so I wanted to make something similar but more affordable and for a smaller home.”

Another venture Karl has embarked on is the unique artistic project ‘Dance of the Bears’, which he is exhibiting this summer.

The vision behind the project is the representation of ‘evolution’, a concept that Karl considers to be the driving force for positive changes for mankind. Based on a proverb by the ancient philosopher Lao Tse, the working title “The journey of ten thousand miles begins with the first step” is an apt representation of man’s ability to develop and overcome all obstacles.

The near-lifesize polystyrene bears were designed and sculpted by Karl and his team and painted by various artists of different nationalities. There are currently 27 artists – and the number is growing – who have painted and designed their own interpretation of the theme ‘evolution’ on each bear.

With 45 bears already produced, Karl hopes to complete 50 of these unique works of art for the exhibition. The

wonderful pieces include images of Native Americans, bathers, gods and footprints made only of mosaics.

The bears, chosen because of their strength, endurance and kind heart, will be exhibited exclusively in locations around the Algarve this summer. Exhibitions already confirmed are: July 11 at Praia do Carvoeiro; 1 August in Monchique town square; 18 September in Loulé. More venues are set to be confirmed soon.

To also admire the complete range of large sculptures, Quinta dos Vales is open to visitors on Mondays, Wednesdays and most Saturdays. ■



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