

Rivista d'informazione sull'acquariologia



SCAPER *mag*

Aquariums Information Magazine

**SPECIAL
EDITION**

**OVER 100
PAGES**

ITAÜ
ITALIAN
AQUASCAPER
UNION

ITAC
2022

IN COLLABORATION WITH:



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WELCOME!!!



SURPRISE!!!

The new issue of **SCAPER MAG** was scheduled for March but this issue is a gift I give to readers!!

This is a special edition, it was to be published during the Christmas holidays but, for various vicissitudes, it has been delayed.

In this issue, divided into two parts, you will find the interview with **TEAM ITAU** and a special dedicated to the first contest of aquascaping Italian **ITAC 2022**.

William Fantini, Editor

STAY IN TOUCH

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RECAP OF THE YEAR



2022, for me, has been a year full of changes, satisfactions, new projects and concretions. During the year I had the privilege of becoming part of the wonderful **FLUIDO Team**, knowing so many experts in the field with whom to chat and exchange opinions; in July was published the first edition of this magazine that has been quite successful reaching every corner of the world, **all thanks to YOU!!**

In October, in Cremona, there was the **PetFestival 2022**, where I participated together with some members of **FLUIDO**, there I had the good fortune to know and share exciting moments with many colleagues and friends.

In November there was the first Italian contest of aquascaping **ITAC 2022** organized by **FLUIDO** and we saw win the amazing tank of **Rennier Recio Katigbak**.

To close the year in style, towards December I became Brand Ambassador of **ABA AQUARIUM - Authentic Biotope Aquaristica**.

On the world scene we saw in July the victory of **Rahul Mukherjee** at **WAUC 2022**, in August **Matthew Manes** won first place at **IAPLC 2022** with his wonderful tank **ASCEND**, in September the Indonesian **Jamaluddin** reaches the first place at **AIAC 2022** with the tank **KILIMANJARO**, in the same month **HoŪtan Maftoonian** gains the first position at **KIAC 2022** with the tank **ENCHANTED FOREST** and then in October also wins at **SEASCAPE 2022**, in November at **RFLAC 2022** we saw the return to the first place of **Jamaluddin** and as for **AGA 2022** we had the following winners:

Tank <28L **Ittipong Deewan** with **MY MINI FOREST**

Tank 28~55L **Muhammad Yusuf** with **FALLEN TREE 2**

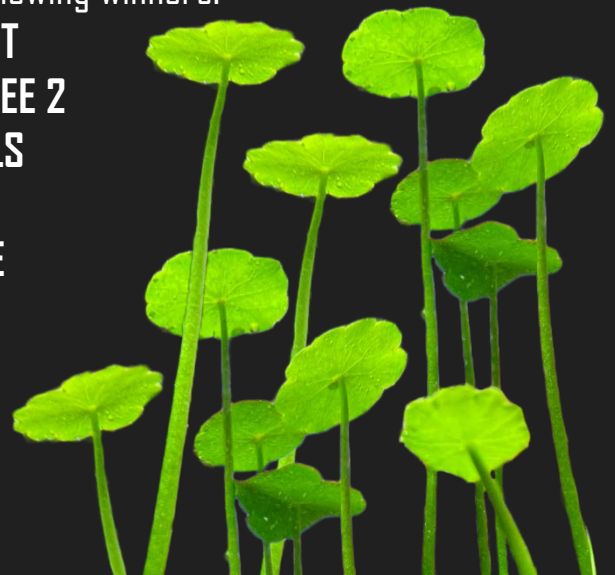
Tank 55~80L **Tereza Lazar** with **COLORFUL HILLS**

Tank 80~162L **Inyoman Marwita** with **PRATIMA**

Tank 162~220L **Jesús Olier Pérez** with **ARIDANE**

Tank 220~320L **Matthew Manes** with **ASCEND**

Tank >320L **赵刚** with **THE UNKNOWN HOME**



ITAU

Italian Aquascapers Union



Today I present **ITAU - Italian Aquascaper Union:**

a group of enthusiasts who wanted to show the Italian Aquascaping to the world, and who wanted to introduce the world of Aquascaping to Italian aquarists and not! Everything was born by chance a few years ago, when in the rest of the world Aquascaping was an expressive art form, a way of conceiving the aquarium already consolidated, appreciated and followed, but in Italy it was still difficult to spread, to be understood and to be "emulated".

The initial core of **ITAU**, formed by **Giacomo Guarraci, Enrico Forntuna, Giuseppe Nisi** and **Fabio Lorusso**, came from a forum (**Aquagarden**) specialized in aquatic plants; they met on those web pages!

They began to exchange information and experiences, grew up and became great friends.

Thanks to the patron of the forum also had the opportunity to create events, make exhibitions and participate in competitions.

All this has given the awareness and the push to go beyond the forum itself, develop communication in the field, interact with people and show everyone what Aquascaping is.

From there it was a short step that led in 2016 to the birth of **ITAU**. Starting from that initial core, it was almost natural to expand and include other fans and friends who speak the same language, who have the same passion as us. So over time **ITAU** grew up with **Roberto Bielli, Alessandro Mascolo** and **Samuele Gamberini** first, later on with **Simone Castagnoli, Dario Torassa** and **Maurizio Acquati**.

Maybe more talented guys will join.

The mission is always the same: to introduce the art of Aquascaping through live, workshops, tutorials; to create a group of enthusiasts to exchange experiences and grow together, enjoying the pleasure of setting up and taking care of tank that express their concept of natural aquarium; raising the level of Italian Aquascaping in the international scene through the various competitions and photo contests.



FABIO LORUSSO



Fabio Lorusso,

TEAM ITAU President

1^o Layout contest (Hydraforum 2006);

La più bella vasca in concorso (NaQ 2011);

Best in Show (NaQ 2013);

Premio Originalità (NaQ 2015);

Rosso d'Autore (2015);

ITAU vs FACT (PetsFestival 2016);

Passage across the wood (IAPLC 2007);

Enchanted forest (IAPLC 2014 823^o);

Autumn River (IAPLC 2017 73^o; EAPLC 2017 28^o);

Le Grotte Segrete (IAPLC 2018 425^o);

Virtute duce, comite fortuna (IAPLC 2021 278^o);

The old trees (IAPLC 2022 233^o).



William: Hi Fabio how are you? Thank you for giving me the opportunity to interview you, for me it is a real honor to meet you!

Fabio: Hello William. All very well, thank you! And thank you for this interview with the ITAU team. Honored to be presented in your magazine!

William: Tell us a little about yourself, when did you start to approach the world of aquariums?

Fabio: I was very small, I would say about ten years, when I forced my parents to let me keep a small freshwater aquarium in my room.

I have always been attracted by Nature in general and the aquatic world in particular, so my first aquarium was literally the culmination of a great dream. Over the years the aquariums in the house have grown in number and size, fed by the passion and curiosity for life inside the 5 glasses, which showed no sign of diminishing. Curiosity regarding not only animals, but also and especially aquatic plants, culminating with the discovery of Dutch aquariums.

The 90's come, and with them a new brainwave: the photos in magazines specialized aquariums created by a semi-unknown Japanese aquarist/photographer called **Takashi Amano**.

A new world opened before my eyes, a new way of conceiving the aquarium that since then has conditioned my being aquarist.

The transfer to Bologna in '98 before, and the work in the aquarium department right after that, he made my passion explode beyond the walls of my house.

In the space of some years I have begun to collaborate with some companies of the field (including Anubias, Aquaristica, Sera, NgTank, Ferplast, Mantovani, Prodac, Vitrea, Tropica, Oceanlife) for live and off shows at trade fairs, Expo and other events.

The birth of ITAU in 2016 has strengthened even more the love for Aquascaping and the desire to get involved, even in groups.





William: What fascinates you about the aquascaping world?

Fabio: It fascinates me to observe a mature and well-structured tank, in which sometimes it is not understood if it is an aquarium or a photo taken in Nature. It fascinates me to design an aquascape, research the material, start sketching the hardscape, plant, and take care of the development and evolution of this tiny submerged natural angle.

William: Who or what inspires you when you create an aquascape? Do you have an inspiring muse?

Fabio: Of course my inspiration is Nature. My poet, **Takashi Amano**.

William: How long does it take to finish a Hardscape?

Fabio: It depends very much on the complexity of the same, from the finding of the material to be used, from my "creative" state. Normally in a few hours I finish the main draft. Sometimes I return again and again in the days to come, bringing corrections and changes, until I am satisfied with the effect achieved.

William: How do you choose plants for a Hardscape, go to feeling or have you studied everything in detail?

Fabio: Generally when I imagine a scape and study hardscape, I already choose the plants that I will use to achieve the desired effects.



William: As many enthusiasts think that aquascaping is a relaxing hobby and not tiring, tells our readers how much perseverance, effort and passion is needed to be able to cure and maintain a tank that will have to participate to **IAPLC?**

Fabio: I agree that Aquascaping is relaxing, especially when I stop to admire the result of months of work. As for non-strenuous activities...uhm... it depends on the type of setup we have carried out. There are tanks that require months of care, meticulous pruning, care maniacal that must lead to a certain "scenic effect", but are especially those aimed at photo contests to absorb attention, care and time. On the other hand you can set up and manage tanks much more "easy", especially in the long term, equally noteworthy and rewarding. In all cases, you enter into such an immersion in Nature, that any effort made, slips away!

William: What advice can you give to those who want to participate in the **IAPLC** for the first time to have an impact layout?

Fabio: Unfortunately there are no universal "rules". I recommend at least to observe and "study" the pools that have reached the top 100 places of the ranking of the year previous, to identify common tastes, preferences or trends in the jury, of go out of town and look around to get ideas, and above all to **set up and re-build tanks to train** (and have fun!)

William: Which is your favorite tank and why?

Fabio: I've done a lot of tanks, and they're all my creatures, so I can't have one of them. No, my favorite is the one I still have to set up!!!



William: Can you describe the tank including the technique? Filtration, lighting, fertilizers etc or is it a secret?

Fabio: No secret. My larger tank (120x60x50) is filtered by a Pratiko 400, although I am considering the purchase of a thermo 600 Biomaster, two Twinstar 1200 S, obviously CO2 plant, bottom Prodibio, fertilization in column oceanlife.

William: Could you give us your ideal water parameters? Kh, Gh, Ph and so on?

Fabio: I generally keep my tanks at pH 6.8, Kh 4-5, Gh 8-10, NO3 10 mg/l, PO4 1 mg/l, Fe 0.5 mg/l.

William: Is it easy to find the material suitable for setting up an aquascape in Italy?

Fabio: Until recently it was really difficult to find decent material for our installations. In recent years many companies in the sector have started (it was now) to market materials more and more consistently various, although unfortunately in Italy the prices of rocks, sand and woods still tend to be high.

William: Your favorite aquatic plant?

Fabio: I really like all the plants, but maybe **Pogostemon stellatus** distances the others. I have grown it in the past with alternate fortunes. Since it is difficult for me, for its size, to insert it in any aquascape, it remains my little secret dream.



William: What's your favorite fish?

Fabio: Sawbwa resplendent.

William: What's your favorite substrate?

Fabio: In recent years I have used almost exclusively the Prodigio Aquagrowth soil.

William: Do you have any favorite woods and rocks?

Fabio: They are a classic: Seiryu stone (and similar) and Driftwood (and similar).

William: What advice can you give to a newbie?

Fabio: **Study, observe, and practice a lot!**
(obviously respecting the living that you will host in your tanks!)
The results will come sooner or later, with fun and satisfaction assured!



VISIT FABIO LORUSSO'S SHOP BY CLICKING HERE: www.acquariocrocecoperta.it



GIACOMO GUARRACI



Giacomo Guarraci, Founding member of Team Itau, Aquascaper Italian born on Lake Maggiore in 1982, since childhood attracted and fascinated by the flow of water in streams and on the shores of the lake, enchanted by the life forms that populate the intricate plant systems on the banks.

William: Hi Giacomo, tell our readers a bit about you?

Giacomo: I got into aquascaping as a kid before he got a name! Since I was a child I always had a weakness for the views of landscapes and I tried more than anything else on tanks for turtles and terrariums for lizards then arrived the first aquarium and the definition of **Nature Aquarium** by **Amano Takashi**, I was struck by that, by the glimpses of light between the shadows created from the ravines of the rocks and the contortions of the branch wood, just what I had always seen in nature!

William: What fascinates you about the aquascaping world?

Giacomo: What fascinates me most is the possibility of working in pairs with nature, I was born as a craftsman and for years I shaped the material for work but in this discipline **man's work is 50% the rest is chemical, physical and biology;** we can only learn by letting the living organisms we host in the aquarium express themselves to the fullest.

William: Who or what inspires you when you create a layout?

Giacomo: Although I don't follow a particular style and my pools are generally very different from each other, I always have a guideline that I follow. What inspires me most is **the autumn light that tends to create shades** between the vegetation rather than sharp separations of colors.



William: How long does it take to create a hardscape?

Giacomo: I am an aquadesigner by profession, I deal with hardscape every day and this allows me to be very fast in execution!
It is also true that generally for customers I avoid complicated hardscape, when instead the aquariums are for the gallery of my store or for some exhibition I take more time for details, but I certainly don't spend days in front of tank.



William: As you choose plants for a hardscape, you are guided by feelings or is everything studied in detail?

Giacomo: Generally when I plant I don't stick to the final result but insert a little what I have in my hands, start from the cryptocoryne darker in the areas that so they will be darker then epiphytes like bolbitis and microsorum, subsequently I pass to the stem plants distributing them never in distinct areas, for a month I am look at how these grow and subsequently thicken and model the bushes, I keep the plants that grow better and eliminate those that do not they are fine... I basically let it go, sometimes you want a species that then in that layout not even good and the most banal plant is perhaps the one that suits!
In the second month, however, I deal with the second step of planting: anubias, bucephalandra and mosses.



William: As many enthusiasts think that aquascaping is a relaxing hobby and not tiring, tells our readers how much perseverance, effort and passion is needed to be able to cure and maintain a tank that will have to participate to **IAPLC?**

Giacomo: **For every aquarist there is an aquarium, don't worry!**

In my case the aquascaping is just a discipline, I deal with a lot of aquarium types and I am of the opinion that the aquarium must never be a frustration otherwise you have to buy yourself a poster! I am not a fan of the contest, your aquarium can be intimate and personal without necessarily having to be photographed! I saw crazy aquariums that moved me but that in photos were not of certain "from contest" and tanks that on Instagram make tons of like but live really tasteless and without a soul! So the advice is made an aquarium, do it well because **an aquarium done well and one done wrong cost equal**, not be afraid to be followed by a professional and enjoy your aquarium even if not by contest!



William: What is your favorite aquascaper? Do you have any advice for those who approach aquascaping for the first time?

Giacomo: I am undoubtedly linked to the style of the early 2000s when there was not much material available, at the time **Nature Aquarium** were however aquariums of plants, perspectives, volumes, lights and shadows were created with those. To those who are now approaching this world my advice is to go and look at the dawn of what subsequently it was called aquascaping. Belongs to that school my favorite aquascaper, **Vincenzo Maisto**, one of the in my opinion the **greatest masters in Italy** and beyond, its aquariums transmit an incredible naturalness! I remember when, one day, he published a tank inspired by a photo I took in a walk in the mountains, were three stones in a tank of sixty centimeters, but the *Utricularia graminifolia* that used as the only plant looked rippled by the gusts of wind, I still have that wonderful tub imprinted in my mind!





William: Can you describe the tank including the technique?

Giacomo: In my tanks I always use very large and powerful filters even if they are not I fill totally of filtering materials, if I exceed the meter I always use two in order to always have a good circulation.

I'm not used to using stadium lights and I hate the carousel effect on the water of some rgb too pushed!

A few years ago I set aside the soil to return to inert, I prefer to drive the nutrients that dosed in column, both micro and macro.

I adjust the carbonates to about 4 and the gh accordingly to 8, in this way I won't need to lower the pH too much to have a good amount of CO_2 I give 24 hours a day.



William: Is it easy to find the material suitable for setting up an aquascape in Italy?

Giacomo: I don't know if it's easy to find the material for the end user!
I have a shop and this definitely allows me to offer my customers a wide choice of materials that I choose personally.



William: Your favorite aquatic plants?

Giacomo: There are plants that I love and that are almost always found in my tanks, one of them is the **Bolbitis heudelotii**, I love this fern!
Its bearing is unique, as it moves pushed by the flow of water, the transparency of its tissues and how it stops the pearling under the leaf page.



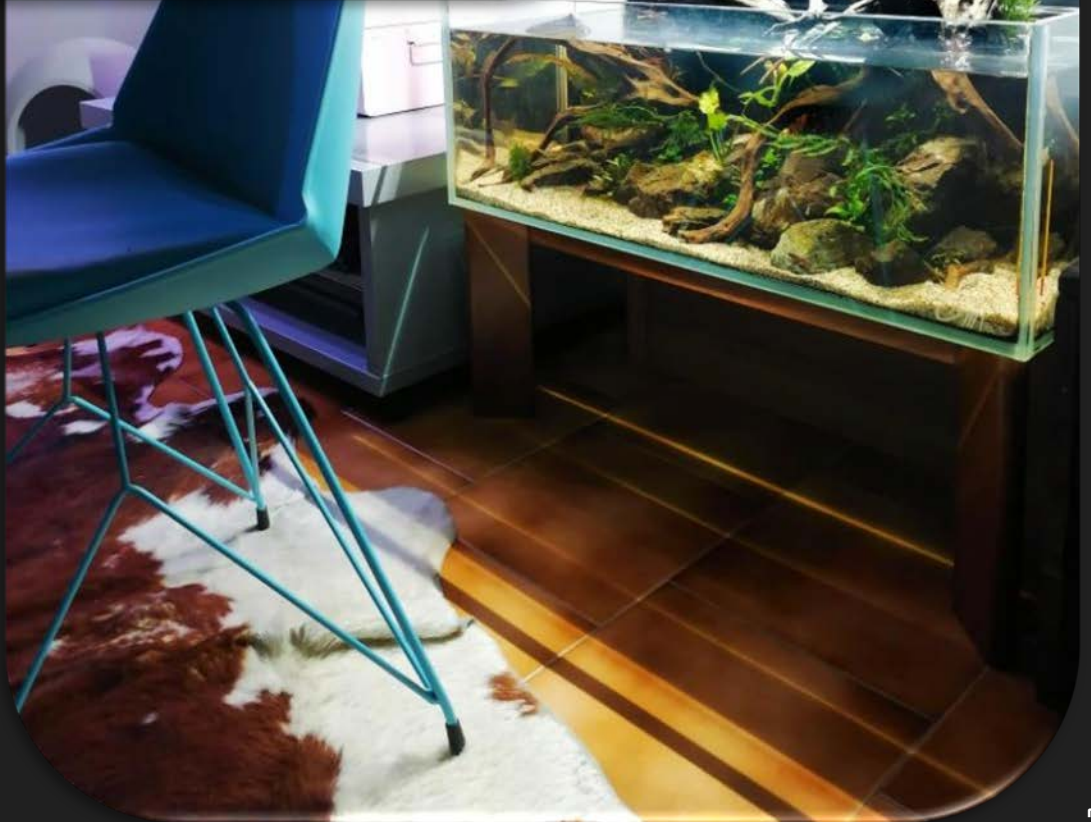


William: What are your favorite fish?

Giacomo: I do not have a favorite fish, as I said I deal with aquariums and in the store I always a **thousand species** even of those that in a pool of plants certainly can not stand! For aquascapes the ideal are always spp. that move like the flocks of birds, an "insignificant" **Rasbora dorsiocellata** in a large group can give an extraordinary appearance to many **Nature Aquarium** and, given the characteristic color of the eye, accompany a small group of **Pseudomugil geltrudae, paskai or furcatus**.











VISIT GIACOMO GUARRACI'S SHOP BY CLICKING HERE: www.acquarishop.it





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What is aquascaping?

A philosophy that promotes inspiration from every aspect of nature, with special attention to detail in the creation of small-scale underwater landscapes. This need for perfection is also what drives the development of our products and technical solutions.

Aquascaping

ScaperLine includes aquarium tanks and cabinets in various finishes, as well as soil and care products. All components complement each other perfectly for the setup, creation and maintenance of unique underwater landscapes, which add fantastic touches to any living space. Let us inspire you with our components and solutions!

Be inspired by the beauty of nature in the broadest sense.

Every little detail is given the same level of dedication as the overall result. Passion and creativity come together to set the tone. High-quality materials, plants and fish – plus a little care and patience – are as important to the aquascaping philosophy as being able to enjoy your own design for a long time after it's complete.

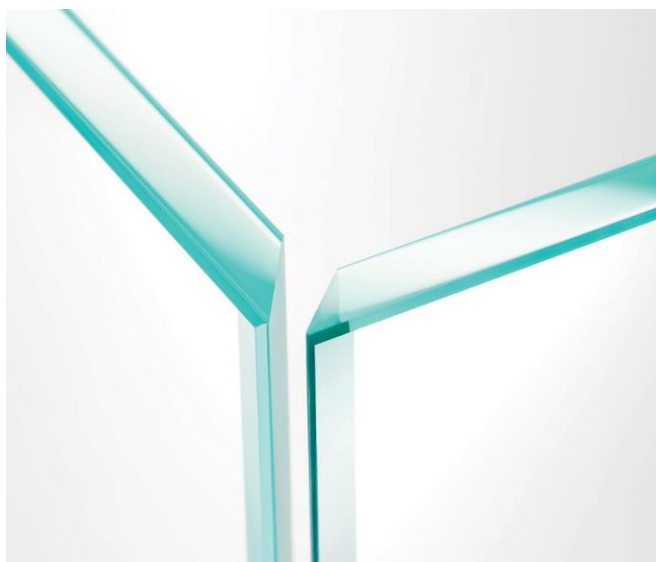


The beauty of nature serves as the basis and the inspiration. There are virtually no limits to your imagination.

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Our ScaperLine aquaria are designed to fulfil these special requirements and are packed with exciting details: distortion-free Optiwhite glass, bevelled edges, high-quality materials in an elegant minimalist design, tidy cable routing and practical storage options for your aquascaping tools. The aquarium and cabinet are a perfect match. Choose between three sizes and two different finishes in grey or natural - the perfect setting for your scape. ScaperLine aquariums provide the perfect setting for your artpiece that combines nature and design, It is available in black, grey or white.

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ENRICO FORTUNA



Enrico Fortuna, Born in 1982 in Ancona passionate Aquascaper since 2003. He has collected various collaborations with various companies in the sector including Équo, Anubias, Amtra and Elos. He has organized numerous workshops and events dedicated to aquascaping in various Italian and European cities.

William: Hi Enrico, how are you? I would like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to interview you, it's a real pleasure!

Enrico: Thanks William, my pleasure to be able to exchange opinions and ideas about our common passion.
In Italy we have countless talents , initiatives like this magazine are a great incentive to grow even more.

William: Tell our readers a little about yourself, what was your first approach to the world of aquariums?

Enrico: I've always had aquariums since I was a child, first my father, then my brother, finally dragged by the beauty of the underwater world I got involved in the full of this philosophy. In 2007, particularly in a shop in my town, I saw the book "**Zen Aquariums**" of the master **Amano**, written in Italy by Nardelli, together with some ADA products (the first in the shops), was a shock, I struggled to believe that the world of design could blend so perfectly with nature, also I bought the book and read it in a maniacal way, studying all the materials used, the shapes, the proportions (before that time, in aquariology, there was very little talk of shapes and proportions).

So I totally penetrated into this philosophy. **AQUASCAPING.**

In 2008 so I abandoned a huge marine tank of 110x110x70cm that I had in the house and turned it into my first aquascape.

From then on, thanks to the forum "Aquagarden" I got closer and closer to this world, knowing then friends and current colleagues of the **ITAU** group.

Actively participating in various fairs, events, and collaborating with various companies in the sector.

Over the years I have become increasingly interested in the creation of nano aquariums, from there was born the project "**NANO CUBE AQUA**".



William: What fascinates you about the aquascaping world?

Enrico: The most fascinating aspect of aquascaping in my opinion is the perfect **DYNAMISM AMONG THE NATURAL ELEMENTS** (such as plants, woods and stones), proportions, aspects related to chemistry and water biology, design, to constantly get involved with new and different ideas and projects. is a continuous flow, a continuous becoming. In Japan, the aquascaping mother defines it as "**Nagare**" literally "**flowing**".

William: Who or what inspires you when you create a layout?

Enrico: It seems obvious to say this, but the first inspiration always starts from the landscapes and environments that surround me. From **nature**. In addition there are many aquascapers that have always left a mark on me, among the most famous faces always remain **Takashi Amano, Masashi Ono, Oliver Knott, Filipe Oliveira, Takayuki Fukada**, Pasquale Buonpane and **Diego Marinelli**, there are many aquascapers that have **LEFT A MARK** on me... and I hope in a future to be able to leave a mark myself on other young aquascapers.



William: How long does it take to create a Hardscape?

Enrico: It depends on the situation, in some cases it takes a long time, particularly in the attention to detail and play of shadow and light, I could take a month. In other circumstances, when particularly inspired I come almost immediately and in one day I completed the scape. Let's say I never have a fixed time, it depends a lot on the context anyway.



William: As you choose plants for a hardscape, you are guided by feelings or is everything studied in detail?

Enrico: I always choose the plants according to the initial project, I hardly stray from that, it may happen that I add or remove something in progress but usually I remain faithful to the project.

William: As many enthusiasts think that aquascaping is a relaxing hobby and not tiring, tells our readers how much perseverance, effort and passion is needed to be able to cure and maintain a tank that will have to participate to **IAPLC**?

Enrico: It's definitely a relaxing activity. It can often happen that you have time precise to be respected, or simply for participation in a competition, or because you are part of a project where you have contracts to respect, such as timing and quality. Since the aquarium is not an aseptic, dead or fake object but a real "organism" you have to consider multiple variables and unforeseen to cope with. So anxiety can always be behind the door.
But with experience, study and practice **YOU DO WELL TO COPE WITH EVERYTHING!**

William: What advice can you give to those who want to participate in the IAPLC for the first time to have an impact layout?

Enrico: I am not the best person to give advice to the various entries in the contest. I hardly make a tank for the exclusive use of the contest, I follow always my taste and philosophy of natural aquarium, which in some years can come favorite, in others penalized in favor of perhaps landscape and diorama, much more artifacts and elaborate.

Let's say that working on the depth of field and favor the style "**V-Shape**" associated with an excellent photograph definitely helps in a contest.

Then it is always the rule to try and risk every year to get involved with something different and original. The competition then, year after year, has raised the level not just, both for the availability of materials, for the practice and knowledge increasingly.



William: Which is your favorite tank and why?

Enrico: Favorite tank.... Good question! There is not a particular tank, each one taught me and left a mark, positive or negative either.

But to tell the truth I am very attached to a scape in particular, made for the project "**Rosso d'autore**" in 2014 in collaboration with **ANUBIAS** and **ELOS**, under the patronage of Aquagarden.

This project is part of the author's red book, presented at Napoli Aquatica 2015. The theme is the red colour.



William: Can you describe the tank including the technique? Filtration, lighting, fertilizer and so on?

Enrico: Tank elos 80x40x40 soil and fertilization throughout elos, double Ligth always elos external filter. Redwood woods and seryu rocks .
 Plants: Althernanthera reinekii mini, Hygrophila pinnatifida, Moss, Eleocharis acicularis.
 Fishes: Caridina japonica, Hypessobrycon amandae and Pterophyllum scalare.
 Tank of great importance to me, since it was the first representation of autumn undergrowth (with the Althernanthera to simulate the fallen red leaves) that you saw around. **Filipe Oliveira** and **Oliver Knott** themselves were amazed at this realization.

William: What are the ideal water parameters for you? Kh, Gh, Ph etc.

Enrico: Chemical parameters are important in aquariums, but never as important as a probable biological stability. In principle, I always stick to a Ph6,5-7 ; GH 8 AND KH 4 TEMPERATURE NEVER ABOVE THE 24 °C (except for the summer period).





William: Is it easy to find the material suitable for setting up an aquascape in Italy?

Enrico: Now it's really easy to find all sorts of hardscape materials, from woods to stones to sands. But when I started it was really hard, if not impossible, sometimes with prohibitive prices. Moreover, the various techniques such as the use of glues have certainly facilitated and encouraged the establishment of increasingly complex scapes.

William: Favorite aquatic plant?

Enrico: Eleocharis, Anubias e Moss.

William: Favorite fish?

Enrico: *Hyphessobrycon amandae*.





William: What's your favorite substrate?

Enrico: There are several substrates used, I have always found very well with Equo terra nera e vigor plus, or with the prodibio soil.



William: Favorite woods and rocks?

Enrico: Each type of wood and rock have different and great potential!
I do not have a preferred type.





William: What advice can you give to a newbie?

Enrico: The advice I feel I should give is to **study, try, read up, not stop only at the surface of things, but go to the bottom and try again, especially after a failure.**











GIUSEPPE NISI



Giuseppe Nisi, Aquascaper born in Germany, of Italian origin, settled in Bologna since 1995, founding member of the ITAU team.

Participated in various international contests reaching the following results:

IAPLC 2012 382^o; IAPLC 2013 686^o;

EAPLC 2014 161^o; IAPLC 2014 698^o;

IAPLC 2015 300^o;

EAPLC 2015 Standard 55^o, Nano 39^o;

IIAC 2015 176^o, 182^o & 186^o;

IAPLC 2016 98^o; EAPLC 2016 19^o;

IAPLC 2017 66^o; EAPLC 2017 10^o;

AGA 2017 Nano Cube Ranking 2^o;

IAPLC 2018 63^o;

CIPS - CIAC 2018 21^o; IAPLC 2020 43^o;

IAPLC 2021 262^o; EAEC 2021 27^o.



William: Hello Giuseppe, how are you? Tell us a little about yourself and when you started to approach the world of aquariums?

Giuseppe: Hello William, all right thanks! My name is Giuseppe Nisi, born in Germany but originally from Puglia. Since '95 I live and work in Bologna. I have approached the fantastic world of aquariums already in childhood thanks to a neighbor in Germany who those days had a beautiful **Dutch Aquarium** quite large.

I spent whole afternoons watching him and asking questions.

It was only in 2008 that I finally set up an aquarium in my home, and I was immediately passionate about growing aquatic plants. So I started to attend with great dedication and interest the Italian Forum of Aquagarden.it.

Later I discovered the Aquascaping, thanks to the tanks of **Mr. Takashi Amano**, and from that moment a real shock for the natural installations is taken.

For years I set up and disassembled aquariums, until I acquired experience and maturity, obtaining many personal satisfactions. In the early days the greatest difficulty was to find those materials that were seen so much abroad through social media, but that in Italy unfortunately were in short supply.

Now fortunately things have definitely improved. I try to use social media, especially Instagram, as a photo album of my tanks, for keep a track over time of my achievements and observe at the same time the installations of aquascapers around the world. In 2016, together with a group of friends, we founded **ITAU**, through which we try to disclose the concept **"OBSERVING NATURE TO LEARN FROM NATURE!"** developed by naturalist and photographer **Takashi Amano** who in the 90's gave shape to the idea of natural aquarium.



Giuseppe: I actively participated in several online contests (IAPLC, AGA, etc.) with vouchers placings and some Contest Live, also reporting two victories in 2015 (Naq & PetFestival). What gives me much satisfaction are the Events and Workshop Live: I made a lot of them together with my friend brother Fabio Lorusso, an experience that I will always carry in my heart and of which I am very satisfied and honored is having had the honor and pleasure several times, together with Fabio Lorusso, working side by side with **Oliver Knott**. For Interzoo 2016 he entrusted us with a tank designed by him, set up with us, and then kept by us at a distance following his vision. **Great!!** Then there was the tank for Interzoo 2018, an even more ambitious project: installation of **4x1 meters** divided into 4 parts to be able to transport it to Germany.





Giuseppe: Fabio and I prepared the hardscape together with Oliver, and then planted and kept the tank (indeed, the tanks) until exposure, following as always its indications and at the same time also having a lot of free space of improvisation and management, and therefore above all trust. It was a lot of planning and maintenance, but the end result is excellent condition, thanks to all the support of the staff Anubias. The beauty of working with a humble person like Oliver is that from him you can absorb the great experience and the undeniable talent only by observing him at work, intuiting his reasoning, looking at him as he moves. This is also why I followed him in his various workshops in Italy. You never get tired of seeing him set up aquariums! For the same reason I love old videos of Amano, in which he showed step by step the stages of the exhibition of the tanks of the gallery or made around the world: he shared all his know and its art through a simple video on a social network like Youtube. To me and Fabio have also entrusted two very ambitious projects presented in two Zoomark editions in Bologna: the first year a 200x200h50cm, a **mega visible tank from 4 sides**, set up as if they were 4 different aquascapes that continued one another, and in the second edition always the 200x200h50cm set up for the magnificent Oranda with a spectacular area emerged and a 300x50h50cm.



William: What fascinates you most in aquascaping? Who or what inspires you when you create an aquascape?

Giuseppe: Aquascaping is a real artistic expression through which the aquarist recreates in his aquarium a natural landscape (Aquascape) very detailed and realistic. Or it revisits underwater environments emerged such as a meadow, a mountain, the foreshortening of a forest or a river, a waterfall, trees, etc. A good walk in the woods, along streams or paths away from the city help me a lot to find inspiration in the realization of the scape.

Aquascapers must have a good knowledge of both plants and fish.

Aquascaping goes hand in hand with photography.

Other very expensive hobby and full of rules for composition, which help a lot in the realization of hardscape.

Precise that the plants are the masters in the pools dedicated to Aquascaping. The skeleton of the realization (hardscape) is instead based on the use (studied often maniacal) of any type of rock, wood, gravel, pebbles or sand that can help recreate the idea of landscape that you have in the project.

The rest depends on the imagination and sensitivity of the aquarist/Aquascaper.

William: How long does it take to finish a Hardscape?

Giuseppe: Good question! Before the arrival of the daughters I could do everything even in a couple of days (between emptying and filling), while in recent years it takes a few weeks. I must confess that even so, in fact, it is not bad. Arrange some wood, stop to observe it, photograph it and then work on it a little at a time in the days to follow, all to give in 50cm of tub the greatest possible depth and proportion revived in a photograph.

The composition of an aquascape has many rules of photography.

In recent years I have had to skip a few editions of competitions; in life there are The European Parliament has always had its priorities, and the competition has, alas, fallen into the background.

William: How do you choose plants for a Hardscape, go to feeling or have you studied everything in detail?

Giuseppe: **Every hardscape must be studied down to the smallest detail.**

As well as the structure, also the plants, which often dominate the pools dedicated to Aquascaping, are chosen, positioned and maintained in a manner definitely maniacal, and everything depends on the imagination and sensitivity of the aquarist/Aquascaper.





William: As many enthusiasts think that aquascaping is a relaxing hobby and not tiring, tells our readers how much perseverance, effort and passion is needed to be able to cure and maintain a tank that will have to participate to **IAPLC?**

Giuseppe: Each competition tank requires a lot of study and dedication over time, until the final shot. If things are studied well, **the tank does not only last the year of the photo for the contest but lasts over time.**
For example, my last contest tank is still active today.





William: What advice can you give to those who want to participate in the IAPLC for the first time to have an impact layout?

Giuseppe: I can recommend to study very well the aquariums in the **TOP 100**, observing carefully **prospects, proportions, golden ratio, plants** and finally the **fish** used. Of course you must have a good experience with aquariums in general and a knowledge of the **chemical-physical dynamics of fresh water**.

Moreover, considering the great use of plants in this kind of aquariums, it is also important to be **good water gardeners**, so have **experience and sensitivity** with plants and deep knowledge of their needs in terms of light, fertilisation, CO₂, etc.

Last but not least, it is necessary to know **how to observe nature for be able to relive it in aquarium**, and have knowledge and/or innate sensitivity on the harmonic proportions. **An Aquascape is the result of a careful and long planning**, with necessary study and research of decorative materials and plants that will then serve to complete our living picture.

Subsequent maintenance is also aimed at the realization and maintenance over time of the initial project, so the containment on the growth of the plants, or on the cleaning of the furniture or on the siphoning of the sand must be **methodical, cared for and punctual**.



William: Which is your favorite tank and why?

Giuseppe: I don't just have a favorite tub: I love them all because each one still gives me something when I see it, and I hope it's the same for the others. The final result of an aquarium is the creation of a real work living, **a natural and pulsating picture of life**, a lively expression of the sensitivity and ability of the Aquascaper, which is renewed and comes into play every time you approach a new creation submerged.

William: Could you describe the technique you use behind your tanks?

Giuseppe: I used in the years T5, T5 + led and now I only use Led. As a filter I use a little bit of everything, as long as it is silent, which is very important to me **I hate annoying noises** especially if constant.

William: Tell us about water parameters? Kh, Gh, Ph and more?

Giuseppe: I use salts to rebuild water:
- If I use inert rocks Kh4 ,Gh 8, Ph 6.8 - 7;
- If I use limestone rocks Kh=0 Gh 8 with a ph always around 7.



William: Favorite aquatic plant?

Giuseppe: I love all the Rotalas and the Riccardia.





William: Favorite fish?

Giuseppe: One of my favorite fish is the *Hyphessobrycon amandae*.

William: What's your favorite substrate?

Giuseppe: I use many substrate indifferently, both from fertile bottom with over inert to many allophanes indifferently.

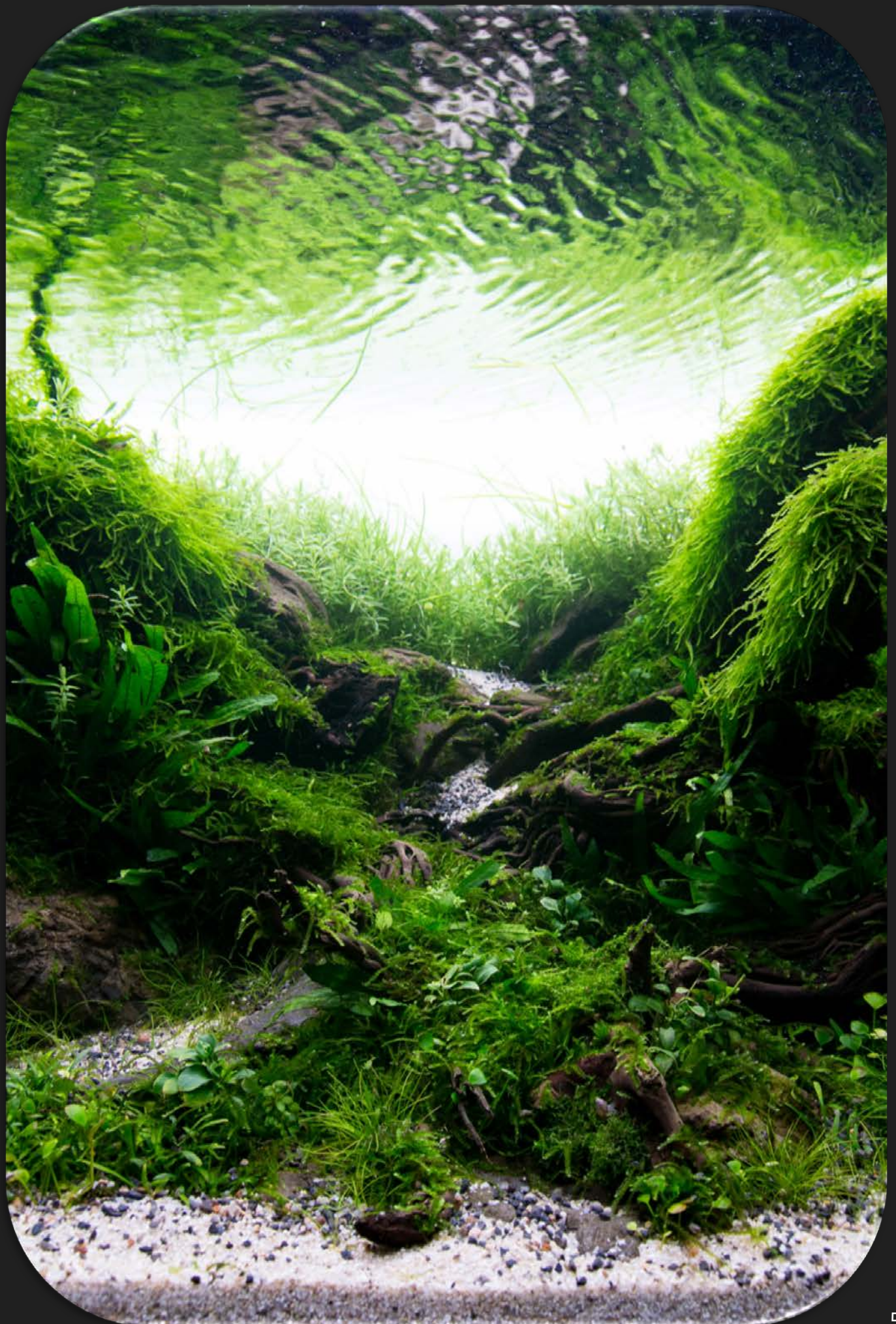
William: Favorite rocks and woods?

Giuseppe: All the rocks and woods I can find!

William: What advice can you give to a newbie?

Giuseppe: Try and retry again until they are satisfied with what they have created. Sharing and comparison help a lot to grow over time.











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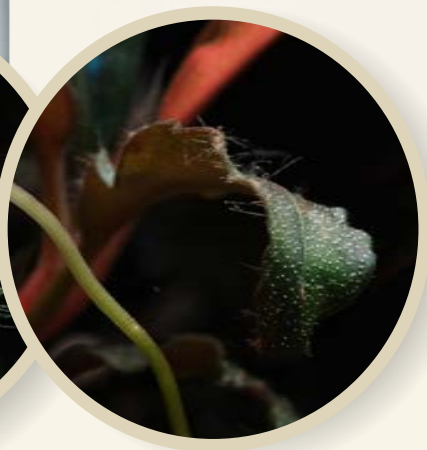
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DAY 0



DAY 2



DAY 7

SAMUELE GAMBERINI



Samuele Gamberini, Aquascaper professional Italian of 45 years. He sets up and maintains aquascaping aquariums for his customers. Two participations in IALPC, with a decent 159^o in the world ranking, A 18^o in EALPC.

William: Hi Samuele, how are you? It's an honor to interview you!
Tell us a bit about yourself and when you started to approach the world of aquariums?

Samuele: Hi William I'm fine and the honor is mine to be here!
It all started probably when my father gave me a small aquarium, when I was 7/8 years old no more.
Many, many mistakes, tests, tests...a few years of stop and then again and again errors and tests.
Then my passion for growing aquatic plants, years and years of testing before seeing tangible results.
Many hours of research and night conversations with some of my teachers, first of all **Marino Varetto** who really helped me to understand many things and who gave me the "LA".
Once I "arrived" with the plants (at the time I had grown practically everything) I tried to make my first aquariums in aquascaping key, then to use my beloved plants in more complex installations... In short, everything step by step without haste or desire to win competitions that at the time I did not even know of their existence.
After this I started to post some works in FB and to follow some groups of Italian boys who already practiced this discipline and more and more. Many, many km made in the most disparate fairs and events to attend aquascaping events to try to understand the tricks and know some mysterious characters who made dream aquariums.
Then one thing led to another and here I am in this team that is **ITAU** boys I admired and followed when I was at the beginning of my journey.
An incredible personal satisfaction.

William: What is the most fascinating aspect of aquascaping?

Samuele: **Aquascaping fascinates me a lot the initial period...**

I spent months watching the videos that Takashi Amano left us on YouTube. His facial expressions, the movement of his hands, his concentration... this is what fascinated me much more than the spectacular works.

I was looking at the technique, trying to figure out what he was doing by interpreting what I saw in my own way.



William: Who or what inspires you when you create a layout?

Samuele: In my works I'm not inspired by anything, normally everything starts from a rock or a wood that strikes me for some reason then I enter a world of my own and when I "wake up" the tub is over and I fill it up.

I am very fast in creating aquariums because I can not stay at home customers all day; so in two/three hours at most a classic 90p on average complex is already filled and with the filter switched on.

Watch the video in real time of this aquarium set up with **Gloria Ciriello** for **DASE** at **PetFestival 2022** (Click here!)

My biggest fear is to make aquariums that are the same or similar to others that I had already realized .

Given the amount of weekly installations that I realize sooner or later unfortunately it will happen.

William: How do you choose plants for a Hardscape, go to feeling or have you studied everything in detail?

Samuele: Plants are the last thing and get into an aquarium in a landscaping key. **Only once finalized the hardscape you can choose the plants taking into account their final shape, respecting leaf/shape proportions with the landscape that is being realized.**

For example if I'm doing a mountain landscape I would never use a 50 cm Echinodorus or water lilies because they would be out of place and disproportionate to the context.

In my case, instead, I am quite habitual and I mainly use mosses, meadows and a few types of stem so good or bad are good in almost all types of layout.





Samuele Gamberini

William: As many enthusiasts think that aquascaping is a relaxing hobby and not tiring, tells our readers how much perseverance, effort and passion is needed to be able to cure and maintain a tank that will have to participate to **IAPLC?**

Samuele: I don't feel like the right person to tell people how to deal with management of a competition aquarium, because there are many, many variables and many modus operandi that work.

There is no absolute best way to manage an aquarium but there are people who interpret this passion differently .

I divide them into 3 categories :

1- **Serial fertilisers:** they are those who if they do not fertilize daily the tank could explode and make everyone die in the house;

2- **Dependent tests:** are those who as above if do not do something or do not care about something life on this planet could end;

3- **Minimalists:** Who makes the least indispensable that is me... because I would go crazy saw the masses of tanks that I have to follow, so let's say I work the earth with all its nutrients leaving the column as thin as possible and accustoming the tank to the little...and not to the too much.

Because the little is easily manageable, the too NO.

William: What advice can you give to those who want to participate in the **IAPLC** for the first time to have an impact layout?

Samuele: One advice I can give to make an impact layout is to be inspired by some landscape photos and to get so much material before undertake any project... and especially a camera.

Our eye sees in a way and can compensate for some flaws, the phone is even worse while the camera is much more sincere.

An aquascaper who takes pictures with a mobile phone is like an F1 driver who runs on the track with a scooter!!

William: Which is your favorite tank and why?

Samuele: I have no favorite tubs even a style.

What strikes me this year probably next year is boring to me.

It's a bit like fashion... recently they mostly require me fittings with important woods coming out of the tank...



William: Tell us about water parameters? GH, KH, and more.

Samuele: Kh 2, Gh 8 where I have no calcareous material, while if in the tank I have calcareous material within only with osmosis and I never check anything or test anything.

William: Is it easy to find the right hardscape material in Italy?

Samuele: Yes, in the shop where I work you can find so much aquascaping material, more than you can imagine. It's that right now I don't have the strength or the time to be able to advertise this reality!

To make quality content, videos, follow social networks takes time, adequate staff and a lot of investment.



William: Favorite aquatic plant?

Samuele: *Vesicularia montagnei* (Christmas Moss).

William: Favorite fish?

Samuele: I don't like fish. But I find most rainbow fish beautiful.

William: Do you have any favorite rocks or woods?

Samuele: I definitely prefer the Seiryu rocks, as for the woods I love the Hornwood.



William: What advice would you give to a newbie?

Samuele: For those who want to try their hand in the "submerged landscape" I recommend before trying and understand the needs of aquatic plants and above all to never be in a hurry.

It's not a race against anyone, it takes calm and patience.

Starting from scratch with complex tanks spending hundreds of euros in material and then not knowing how to handle it is madness.

So as far as I can count something said by me my advice is to start with an aquarium of plants only. **Make your bones and only after try complex installations in a key landscape.**







VISIT SAMUELE GAMBERINI'S SHOP BY CLICKING HERE: www.agrizoonline.it



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I invite you to follow all my social channels to stay updated on future projects:



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