

The Monument to Francesco Baracca

The town of Lugo is the birthplace of Francesco Baracca, the “Ace” par excellence of the Italian air force. Born in 1888, he died in combat on the hills of Montello, near Treviso, in the summer of 1918, having won thirty-four victories. In memory of the airman, the Faenza sculptor Domenico Rambelli designed the town monument, opened on the 21st of June 1936 in the presence of the Duke of Aosta.



The wing, which rises to a height of 27 metres, presents high reliefs carved on the sides showing the prancing horse with the motto “Ad Maiora”, and the hippogryph, symbol of the legendary 91st Squadron. Standing high on a pedestal measuring almost six metres in height, the bronze statue rises up on a cylindrical base of travertine stone, carved with stylised flames, the dates and the names of the skies where the victories were won and the dedication: “Baracca invitta ala d’Italia nella grande guerra”. Today Rambelli’s work is considered by the majority of critics as one of the best examples of twentieth century Italian sculpture. As well as the monument, Lugo has dedicated the Francesco Baracca Museum (located in the house in via Baracca 65 where he was born) to its illustrious citizen.

The prancing horse

The prancing horse was the symbol which Francesco Baracca had painted on his aeroplane to make it immediately recognizable in flight to his friends, and above all to his enemies; a clear tribute to his time spent in the cavalry, in the 1st Squadron of the “Piemonte Reale” regiment. As destiny would have it, that little horse, symbol of courage and temerity, would go on to survive the man who had made it his own personal coat of arms, achieving worldwide fame as the mark of the most winning Italian product of all: the Ferrari.



Behind the symbol of the Maranello car manufacturer lies an intricate and fascinating story that Enzo Ferrari himself told just once and in 109 words, exactly as we can read in the Ferrari yearbook: “The little horse was painted on the fuselage of the fighter plane of Francesco Baracca, the ace of the aces of the First World War, the heroic aviator who died on the hills of Montello. When I won the first Circuito del Savio race, held in Ravenna, I met Count Enrico Baracca, father of Francesco, and this meeting led to the next, with the Countess Paolina. She said to me one day: «Ferrari, put my son’s symbol of the Prancing Horse on your cars. It will bring you good luck.» I still have the photograph of Baracca with the dedication from his parents, in which they hand the emblem over to me. The horse was and has remained black, and I added the canary yellow background, the colour of Modena.”

To celebrate the Prancing Horse, symbol of Francesco Baracca and Ferrari, Lugo organises a festival every year, welcoming Ferrari Clubs and the owners of Ferrari cars from all over the world.