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<http://www.upon-bamboo-fly-fishing-rods-and-reels.com/makers-of-bamboo-fly-rods-robert-stroh.html>

Makers of Bamboo Fly Rods: Robert Stroh, Germany

Hi, Robert! I first met you in Waischenfeld, Germany and then again in Sansepolcro, Tuscany (Italy) during the first European bamboo rodmakers gathering. Did you notice any difference between the two events, by the way?

Which was the highest moment in Sansepolcro, in your opinion?

To me the gathering in Sansepolcro was very special...the beautiful Tuscan scenery, meeting people from so many different countries and, of course, the excellent job of the host were really impressing.

Being together with so many good friends and rodmakers from around the world, talking about rodmaking, taking a look at various rods and casting them in this unique italien atmosphere was definitely the best thing to me.

Ok, let's go back to our interview and start by asking you where you live...Where do you live, Robert?

I live in the south of Germany, in Grünwald, a small town close to Munich.

When did you make your first bamboo rod?

It was in the year 2000 when I made my first bamboo rod. Originally I am a master cabinetmaker and for 11 years I worked in that business. In 2003 I quitted doing so and became a full time rodmaker on a professional basis.

Rolf Baginski suggested to try making bamboo spinning rods in Sansepolcro. Did you already make one or will you make a bamboo spinning rod, one day?

I already made several bamboo spinning rods especially for the very light and delicate type of spinnfishing.

Did you maybe attend the German fly fishing show, last May (2008)? If so, how was the audience acceptance of bamboo rods, over there? Did you notice any change over the years?

....which one do you mean? Since my start as a full time rodmaker in 2003 I attended between 5 and 10 fly fishing shows in Europe every yearI would say the interest and the acceptance of well made bamboo rods is very high.

Even in the realtively short time me being a rodmaker I can see a growing interest in this kind of rods as well as an inreasing number of new rodmakers.

Let's talk about your rodbuilding moments. Which moment do you like the most?

There are two: - working with the nodes and the straightening process of the bamboo strips. It is one of the most important steps in the process of rodmaking and you get a very intense feeling for the material when you do all this work with your hands.

- planing the stripes with a sharp plane....I love the sound of planing when a sharp blade cuts the bamboo.

And the less?

...well, I can't say. There is nothing I don't like about making rods.

Can I ask you how do you temper your bamboo strips, at which temperature and for how long?

Depending on the desired colouration and the material the

tempering is between 165° C – 175° C for about 45 minutes.

What about you finish? How do you apply the varnish?

I apply the varnish by dip varnishing, as most rodmakers do.

Do you make your own hardware as well (reel seats, snakes guides, etc...)?

You can buy guides and ferrules of such a high quality on the market that it is hard to craft them better or even in closer tolerances by yourself..... But apart from the guides and the nickelsilver ferrules I make everything by myself. Especially producing your own reelseat spacer and hardware gives you the opportunity to create something really special!

Which taper do you make and like? What kind of rod action do you prefer, I mean....?

Most of my rods are of that kind what is called "semi-parabolic" action. I like the special casting abilities of such rods because I think the rod should do the "work" of casting and not the caster itself.

Further on it is important that the rod works at close range as well as at distance and that the cast is very precise.

You also make nice bamboo ferrules. Is it what you prefer doing or do you also use nickel-silver ferrules? Are you staisfied with you bamboo ferrules? Doy ou make silver-nickel ferrule, by the way?

Many years ago when I met Bjarne Fries for the first time at a flyfishing show in Germany I was immediately very impressed by his FIBH ferrules. I started to try out different ways of doing bamboo ferrules by building a lot of them in different ways and styles...and now I am very satisfied with the bamboo ferrule and I make about 40 % of my rods with this type of connection.

Actually I build my bamboo ferrules in a modified way, that Alberto

Poratelli and Gabriele Gori introduced at the rodmakers gathering in Sansepolchro. Great work!!!

What about hollow-rods, do you often make them, i.e. on most of your rods or just a few ones? Any preference on the kind of hollow systems?

I do hollow my rods on customer request - especially in case of longer rods and heavier line weights. If I do so then I am using the "Powell" system.

Do you flame your rods sometimes?

Very rarely, only on special customer request. Flaming a rod in my opinion is risky. If the surface of the bamboo gets too hot the fibers easily become brittle...There are other and better ways to darken a rod.

Ok, esthetics or functionality, which one has the priority with your rods?

First of all a bamboo rod is a fishing tool and for that reason the functionality of the rod is paramount. BUT rodmaking is craftsmanship and therefore esthetics is of high importance, too. I would not be happy with a rod that casts like heaven but doesn't look appropriate.

You are a skilled cabinet-maker and you also make fly fishing accessories. Which one do you especially like to make? And which have the biggest success?

I have already done a lot of different flyfishing accessories starting with the grip of a flytying tool up to cabinets for rods and flytying... I like most doing flyboxes with special decorative designs and/or name inlays.

Do you make or have you ever tried to make a fly-fishing fishing landing net, as well?

No, I didn't.

Who are your clients, where do they come from? Do they ask for custom made rods that you have to prepare or do they prefer the finished rods that you sell?

My clients are mainly from the European continent but actually I start selling rods to USA and Canada, too. In 95 % of all cases I only make custom made rods. The clients can choose from different models and line weights (sometimes I make a special rod design on customer request, too) and then we create together the individual look of the rod.

What would you suggest to a person who would like to buy his first bamboo rod?

Have a look at as many rods as possible and cast them. First of all a bamboo rod is a fishing tool and therefore the rod should meet the ideal conception and casting skills of the customer. The second point is that a bamboo rod is a piece of craftsmanship and usually the rods aren't cheap. So have a close look on the quality of the craftsmanship. If the chosen rod feels good for you in both respects, well that's it.

Thank you, Robert! I leave you with any words you would like to say about your bamboo rodbuilding experience and hope to see you again at next gathering!

I produce something with my hands and my soul... I do not only sell people a fishing tool I offer them the idea of something tailor-made only for them. They are willing to wait for their rod for a long time and to pay for it. In the end when they come to pick their rod up I can see the joy in their faces. It is such a great feeling to get the chance to see if I have done a good job and the joy of the satisfied customer upon his new rod!

Contact: Robert Stroh Flyfishing Lindenstraße 8 D- 82031 Grünwald
Tel: ++49-89-64186397 Fax: ++49-89-64186396 e-Mail:
robert.stroh@rs-flyfishing.de Website: <http://rs-flyfishing.com/>