

Volandia, close-up on the Moon

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“Wow, what a nice display: hope to see you soon, Charlie”. It was with this text message that Charlie Duke, the pilot of the lunar module on the 1972 Apollo 16 mission responded to Luigi Pizzimenti when he saw the photo of his space suit and of Casper (a mock-up of the module that, from today, Saturday 22 March, is on display in Volandia) at the inauguration of the new Space Pavilion.

It was a genuine restyling, the result of a collaboration between the Astronomic Observatory Foundation of Tradate, Messier 13 (FOAM 13) and the Flight Park and Museum. In accordance with this agreement, FOAM 13 will run the Space-Planetary Pavilion, thanks to the commitment of its employees and volunteers. And Casper was the undisputed star of the day at Volandia, attracting the curiosity of a large crowd of adults and children, all of whom were enchanted by an object that was the result of the patient work of a team of technicians and engineers.

In the whole of Europe, the only working capsule from Apollo is today in Volandia and, soon, people will be able, at times, to savour the thrill of being an astronaut for a day, and climb aboard Casper.

“We’d like to thank the Air Force Museum Foundation and all of the volunteers of FOAM and Volandia, who provided their time and their skills to make all of this possible. Our thanks also go to Prof Vallerani, who has always dreamt of a museum dedicated to Space, in Italy. Working with all of you has been a bit like working at NASA ...” Pizzimenti, one of the greatest Italian experts in the astronautics field and head of the section of Astronautics of the Observatory, said during the inauguration.

Pizzimenti explained, “In this new exhibition in the Space Pavilion, **there are some truly unique pieces that belonged to the astronauts and that have never been exhibited before, from models of the N1 and Saturn V, the two biggest rockets ever built, to the food used by the astronauts during the Apollo mission, to reproductions of the space suits, to the backpack worn by Duke himself, to the cue cards used by the astronauts, even with instructions on how to use the capsule.**

And exclusively for Volandia, there are even components of the German V2s, the first rockets in history launched by the Germans against London, which have kindly been provided for the museum’s exhibition, by Paolo Prevosto.”

Words of satisfaction were said also by the **Chairman of Volandia, Marco Reguzzoni, who explained that the Space Exhibition is “an additional upgrade in the museum’s development.** Our intention is for an increasing number of enthusiasts to come to Volandia, and today, they have an extra reason to come and visit, namely a pavilion that’s been completely renovated, where so many professions will be able to make a valid contribution. We’re here, in this new projection hall, with a capacity of about 60, which we intend to use for teaching purposes and to show films about space.

“I’d remind you that Casper is a unique model in Europe, and we’re proud to have it in Volandia, because Volandia is a place where we’re used to dreaming and to making these dreams come true. Achieving this takes courage, audacity and determination, and we’re going on, whatever. It’s the courage that marked Galileo, and this is why we wanted him at the entrance to the new pavilion. **The whole world knows who Galileo was, no one remembers who tried him.**”

The Mayor of Somma Lombardo, Guido Colombo, and the Chairman of Volandia’s Science Committee, Claudio Tovaglieri, were equally enthusiastic about the initiative. Both praised Reguzzoni for giving the Province a jewel like Volandia, which has drawn on the past to look to the future. **And tomorrow, Sunday 23, there is a workshop on how to build your own spaceship, for children aged 3 years and over, in the Baby Volandia area (14-18).**

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