

Architect Peter Gluck believes there's beauty and a lesson for today in a centuries-old craft.

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It was 1965. My wife and I were on our honeymoon, and we'd just arrived in Venice. That's where I first saw this *fórcola*. Gondoliers have used these sinuous oarlocks for more than seven centuries to steer and propel their boats. This particular one was made in 1965 by a man named Giuseppe Carli, considered one of the modern maestros of the form.

A *fórcola* is a purely functional thing, and those functions, when carried out perfectly, are beautiful, which for me calls to mind a modernist sense of beauty. You can feel how Carli's

hand shaped this object.

That connection to making is what's lost in many architectural practices today. Too many architects are siloed, separated from the physical act of creation by an over-reliance on technology, one of the worst being virtual reality renderings. They're making something that exists somewhere in between an idea and a physical building, but it's not real. Looking at this object, you can sense that it wasn't designed by somebody sitting in an office and then given to someone else to shape. When you lose that connection to making, you lose a lot. ■



Venetian *fórcola*, or oarlocks, are fashioned to suit a specific gondolier's height and style of rowing. Peter Gluck's firm, GLUCK+, bases its work on a similar sensibility, albeit at a larger scale. As a design/build firm, GLUCK+ works directly with clients to develop, design, and construct private and public projects.