

A Different Kind of Artist

Guillermo Bazan is a model-builder extraordinaire

By Ann Cooper



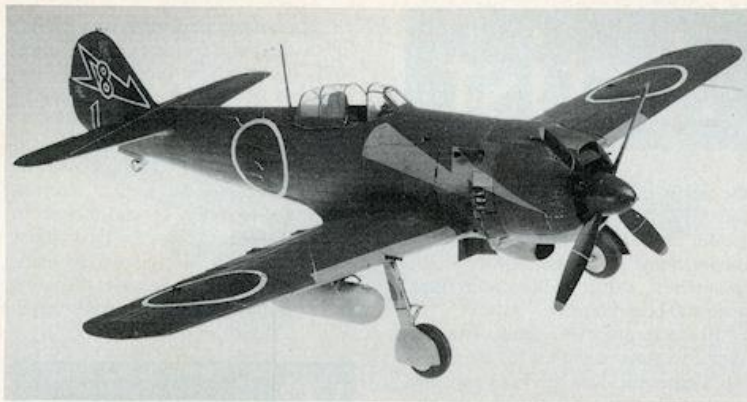
AVIATION ART IS OPEN to a variety of interpretations and expressions. The many mediums include everything from sketches, plastic models, oil paintings to paper airplanes. Add to that list the scale replica aluminum models hand-crafted by aviation artist Guillermo Rojas Bazan of Buenos Aires, Argentina.

When Bazan was a teenager, his father was recognized for his unique ability to create aircraft models from tin plate. His replicas were not for sale, however; they were created for his own pleasure. Bazan inherited his father's talent; but unlike his father, Bazan turned the hobby into his profession.

As a child, Bazan was intrigued by airplanes, so he began building plastic airplane models. When he was eight years old, he wanted to build a Martin B-10 bomber but found that plastic kits were not available. Instead of stopping in his tracks, he accepted the challenge and

Bazan puts the finishing touches on *Spirit of '76*, a sheet-aluminum scale replica of a WW-II F-4U Corsair with a 37-inch wingspan.





This Nakajima Ki-84 is a 1/48-scale version of the actual WW-II Japanese fighter.

scratchbuilt his Martin bomber out of cardboard.

Bazan continued to hone his talents, exploring the sculpture qualities of wood, tin plate and aluminum. In 1981, he was hired to work as an aircraft illustrator, technical draftsman, and designer of exhibits for the Army Air Force Museum of Argentina. Bazan created a number of highly accurate sheet-aluminum scale replicas for exhibition in the museum.

With his reputation as a model-builder growing, Bazan moved to Spain in 1988, where he was commissioned to produce his unique aluminum replicas for a London gallery of aviation art. Orders from distinguished aircraft replica collectors throughout England and Europe were received through the gallery.

It was in England that Bazan's fine creations were discovered by Chuck Austin, a retired cinematographer, who has converted his home in Park Ridge, New Jersey, from a photographic studio

to a small gallery of Bazan's models. In fact, Austin is Bazan's agent in the United States.

"You have to see one of Bazan's creations up close to appreciate the level of craftsmanship. His works are not merely models, they're truly works of art," said Austin. "He goes beyond a recreation of the real thing. The special quality of Bazan's work is that he captures the operational look of these airplanes. They don't have a bright-shiny-toy look. His P-51 Mustang, for example, looks as if it has flown a dozen missions over Germany and is sitting on the ramp ready for the next mission."

BAZAN DOESN'T JUST assemble parts and finish the exterior surfaces of his models, he loads them, inside and out, with rich, realistic detail work.

"He never regards a model as completed until he has created incredibly accurate detail inside of each cockpit, inside the wheel wells and underneath



Bald Eagle is a P-51B Mustang with a 30-inch wingspan.

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Artist

the cowl." Austin explained. "Everything is delicately finished. Each of his model aircraft are shown in varying modes. Some are on static display, some have their wings folded and some appear to be airborne."

Bazan recently traveled to Israel to complete a major project for the Israeli Air Force Museum. He was asked to create scale replicas illustrating the history of Israel's air force. He has been commissioned for similar projects in Argentina, Spain and several other countries in Europe and South America. In addition to the aircraft themselves, Bazan also designs the exhibits in which they are displayed.

Bazan works exclusively with sheet aluminum because, said Austin, "the natural aluminum finish cannot be equalled for reproductions of aircraft. After all, the real aircraft were built of this marvelous material."

LIKE OTHER AVIATION artists who depend upon research and archival data for accuracy, Bazan studies available information prior to the creation of any model. Because he is commissioned to produce each of his works, he creates them according to his clients' detailed specifications.

One former WW-II P-51 pilot and collector remarked, "It's like looking at the real aircraft through the wrong end of a pair of binoculars. The details in this Bazan model are the best I've ever seen—the lighted and instrumented cockpit, guns and ammo belts in the wings, the fuselage, wing and tail pan-

els, operating controls, nav and landing lights, the prop, the detail in the wheel wells. It is exactly as I remember the aircraft that I flew. This model is incredible."

To determine the specifications for each model, Bazan computes details from dimensions of original aircraft. "Each replica takes several months to create," Austin explained. "First comes the research, which is followed by drafting detailed plans in 1/8-scale, preparing the aluminum, and, finally, constructing

Bazan doesn't just assemble parts and finish the exterior surfaces of his models, he loads them, inside and out, with rich, realistic detail work.

the aircraft. It takes longer when the model is of a very complex aircraft or when extra details and features are required."

Bazan usually creates single-engine models in 1/8 scale with an approximate wingspan of 30 inches; multi-engine models usually have a wingspan of 40 or more inches. Upon request, he creates fully operational aileron, elevator and rudder controls connected to the stick and pedals in the cockpit. He also offers the option of building in a battery-powered electrical system that operates the propellers and all of the navigation,



This P-51D Mustang has a 31-inch wingspan and features wing and fuselage panels that can be removed to reveal intricate scale details inside.



Big Beautiful Doll is another of Bazan's exquisite P-51 Mustangs.

landing and cockpit lights.

One aircraft museum curator in Washington, D.C., expressed the opinion of many when he said, "These models far exceed typical museum quality. Their actual sheet-aluminum construction is the perfect medium. You can't fake the look of real aluminum any other way. Where was Bazan when we were asked to make a model for President Bush?"

ALTHOUGH BAZAN was educated in technical engineering and art schools abroad, he now resides in the United States. His preference is working with propeller-driven warplanes from the 1918-1950 period. He believes that aircraft designed during this period are representative of a time when aircraft design aesthetics were at their peak.

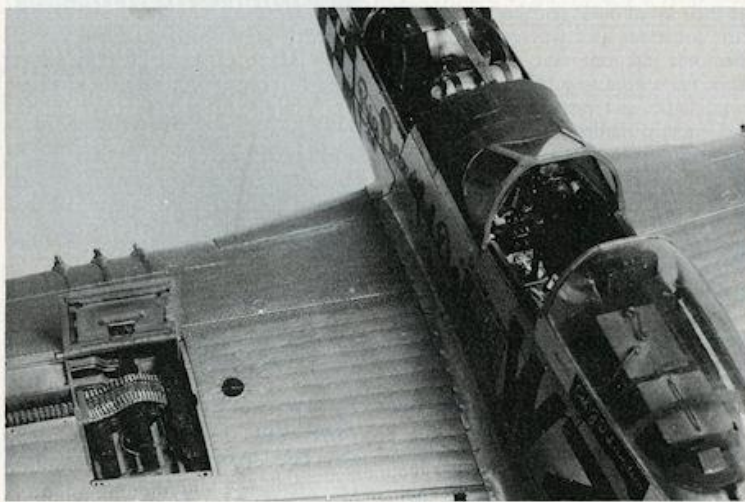
Bazan celebrates more than 40 years

of admiration for airplanes by building the finest scale reproductions he can. He honors the designers, builders, pilots and crewmembers of vintage aircraft with his creative reproductions.

Said a model aircraft collector, who is honored to have a Bazan original in his collection: "My Bazan-built F-4U Corsair is a direct link to the plane my brother flew in the Pacific in WW-II. I wish my brother could see it."

Chuck Austin added, "Like other examples of fine aviation art, Bazan's aviation sculptures help to preserve the history, technology and art of legendary aircraft. He helps to keep memories alive."

FOR MORE INFORMATION, contact *Chuck Austin, Metal Wing, 126 Warren Rd., Park Ridge, NJ 07656; telephone 201/391-4598.*



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