

Savoia-Marchetti S.55 X Flying Boat Update

March 1, 2018 WarbirdsNews Aircraft Restoration, Aviation Museum News 0



A replica S.55X is now under construction in Italy. See inside the story to see the progress they have made so far. (image via Wikipedia)

Back in May 2016, **WarbirdsNews** published a story about an ambitious project in Italy to build a replica of a Savoia-Marchetti S.55, the famous twin-hulled flying boat which broke fourteen long distance, altitude and payload records during the 1920s. The S.55, as a type, was produced in large numbers for its day, with over 240 examples of all variants becoming operational. The restoration will focus on recreating the S.55X variant, which made headlines in 1933 when a squadron of the aircraft, under the command of the Italian Air Marshal, Italo Balbo, made a formation crossing of the Atlantic for a tour of the United States, culminating in a 24-ship 'Balbo' at the Century of Progress International Exposition in Chicago.

Sadly, only one complete S.55 still exists. This is Joao Ribeiro de Barros's S.55 nicknamed Jahù, which crossed the Atlantic Ocean in 1927. It is currently part of the collection within the now-shuttered TAM Museum in Sao Paulo State, Brazil. With the museum's closure, some years ago, it is uncertain what future lies ahead for Jahù, but she is in magnificent condition, so it is likely that the aircraft will eventually find a new home worthy of her inclusion.

Given that there is nothing substantive remaining of any S.55 in the nation of her birth, the Savoia Marchetti Historical Group decided to improve the situation. They are currently collaborating with several different like-minded groups to fulfill their ambitions. Although they initially hoped to build a fully airworthy example, the regulations in Italy would not permit a flying boat like this to fly from the nation's lakes or coast, so they are instead building a static replica, faithful to the original design. Once finished, the replica S.55 will be placed on display at the **Volandia Museum** near Milan, Italy.

Over the past couple of years, the organizations involved in the project have been scouring the earth for original components of S.55s and also scanning the 900 or so technical drawings which still exist. Using these drawings, the restoration teams have produced several major components for the replica, including the complete empennage. WarbirdsNews received the following breakdown from the Savoia Marchetti Historical Group concerning which tasks have been accomplished so far, and what is in progress as well as the names of some of the people involved in the project.

WarbirdsNews received the following message from the restoration team at Volandia, "The first components are currently displayed in the "Officina Caproni" area, they will need adequate signage and a screen with video support to highlight the "work in progress", giving visitors a better idea of what is going on, what has been created so far and what will come in the next months/years. This display is to be considered temporary, since the area is dedicated to the history of Caproni. It has been suggested to use the former "S.79 hangar" once the addition of the tail booms will dictate a need for more room. We would like to remind the idea of registering the Non-Profit Organisation "Savoia Marchetti Historical Group", even if the financial management and the property of the S.55X project is with GLS SIAL, which together with the Volandia association could formally communicate with the Italian Air Force and Leonardo. ... On today's meeting [in January Ed.] we have had the most welcome visit of Mr. Lorenzo Teucci, grandson of the Atlantic Giuseppe Teucci (Captain at the time, then General), who was the captain of the S.55 I-TEUC, red squadron leader. We hope he will keep on following and supporting us with the same passion!"

For more information visit
www.savoiamarchetti.it

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