



THE ART_{OF} MAKING

Interviews – English

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The Art of Making

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The Art of Making

When was the last time you bought something that was handcrafted? Do you know how it was made? What do you know about the person who made it?

Due to the surplus of industrial products and their prompt availability, we often forget the people and the work processes behind the things we use in our everyday lives. This exhibition shows exactly that: the working methods, the workshops, and the stories of craftspeople.

I am an architect, carpenter and photographer. I am Cypriot and German.

I recently moved back to my hometown, Nicosia. When I left Germany, I wanted to capture what fascinated me most about the time I spent working on my craft, which was the passion and dedication of the people I got to know. This attempt developed into a documentation project about craftspeople in Germany and Cyprus.

For seven months, I visited, photographed and interviewed carpenters, metal workers, potters, wood turners, saddlers, organ builders, tailors and other craftspeople.

In talking to them, I became familiar with people's stories, the courses of their lives, their motivations and the difficulties that define their work. The stories are moving, and some are amusing. All are worth telling.

Making people in Cyprus more aware about the subject matter of craft and creating a basis for discussion regarding this form of professional practice is something that is close to my heart, as it does not get much attention. During my childhood and adolescence in Cyprus, I hardly came across this subject matter myself. My path towards the crafts was a cumbersome and long one. It is important to me that, through this exhibition, more attention is given to the crafts and that it becomes easier for people to have access to them.

Georgios N. Paparoditis

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Osman Altunoğlu

Osman Altunoğlu (1980)

Kareklopoieio Kostakis Katsiaris - est. 2001 - Nicosia

Chairweaver
Cypriot
Team size : 1

Osman Altun-Ogluk is a chair weaver in Nicosia.

He studied art after school, but then worked as a car mechanic. By chance, he met an elderly chair weaver in the historic centre of Nicosia, who taught him his craft.

At present, he works with him in the workshop, making traditional Cypriot wicker chairs in all shapes and sizes.

What was the first contact you had with your craft that you can remember?

Although I always wanted to build and tinker with things as a child, I didn't really have many opportunities to do so. Nobody in my family was a craftsperson. After school, I studied painting. We also had pottery seminars during our studies, and I noticed how much I got out of working with my hands. I then started working as a car and bicycle mechanic. Later, by chance, I found this workshop in Nicosia where I learned from my old master how to weave baskets and chairs.

When was the moment that you decided to practise your craft professionally?

After I learned how to weave chairs from my old master, I posted photos of it on Facebook. That's how I got my first order for chairs that were for a café in the historic centre of Nicosia. The owner contacted me and asked if I could make eight chairs for him. After that he wanted another twelve, and then he ordered several more. I then realized that as long as I love what I'm doing, the money will come naturally. It was a hobby, and it somehow still is one to this day. However, nowadays I also earn my money from it.

In regard to your working conditions, which of them is most valuable to you and which would you most like to change?

I am very proud that I practise this traditional craft. I know how few people do this job nowadays, and I feel that if I stopped, the profession would cease to exist. I am keeping something alive through my work, which is what I value most about it.

However, the job is very taxing on the hands and arms. I always notice that when people come to me and want to learn the craft. They are very motivated when they weave a chair, but they then realise that the process is very strenuous and they do not want to do the job. But I wouldn't change anything. I like that it takes effort to produce something.

What makes the material you work with special for you?

There is something very meditative about the entire work process for me. It is very arduous getting the reed leaves for the weaving. We always go to different mountainous areas in Cyprus in the late spring to collect the leaves. You have to go into the water and cut the long stems. This must be done at the right time of year so that the leaves are long enough but not too dry. After that, we need to properly dry the reed leaves and make a rope out of them. Then you can start the weaving process. Of course, you could stress yourself out further: buy ready-made materials, work faster and produce more. But I like that the material allows you to work slowly and carefully.



Benjamin Auer

Benjamin Auer (1981)

Comform - est. 2010 - Freiburg, Merzhausen

Precision Mechanic / Electro-mechanic

German

Team size : 1

Benjamin Auer is a precision mechanic and electro-mechanic in Freiburg.

After dropping out of high school in 10th grade, he attended vocational school to learn radio and television technology. He then completed an apprenticeship as a communications electronics technician. At the same time, he educated himself in the field of mechanics.

When the company in which he was employed as a mechanic, designer and draftsman went bankrupt, he decided to found his own company called 'Comform' in 2010.

He manufactures test equipment, tools and specialized machines made of metal and plastic.

What was the first contact you had with your craft that you can remember?

I had great difficulties in high school; I didn't get along with the teachers and felt that I had no prospects. Then, when I dropped out of high school and was in vocational school, that changed. What we were being taught was all of a sudden being applied and was practice-oriented. Suddenly, the subjects made sense to me. The teaching material also included a small mechanical section-turning, filing, milling parts-that was very exciting for me.

When did you decide to practise your craft professionally?

I've actually always wanted to be self-employed. When my employer went bankrupt and I realized that I would never find such an interesting job again, I knew I had to create it myself. The first jobs came through my contacts in the company I was formally employed at and then one thing led to another.

In regard to your working conditions, which of them is most valuable to you and which would you most like to change?

The most valuable parts for me, are the diversity of the assignments and the multi-step tasks within an assigned job. However, I have deliberately devised my work to be like this; I avoid manufacturing as much as possible, and I specialise in prototypes and smaller parts.

Preferably, I would work fewer days a week. A 3 or 4 day working week would be nice. Being self-employed in this trade is very time-consuming. It is very difficult to reduce the hours spent and the workload. The legal system in Germany makes it very hard to amass financial reserves that would allow you to work less.

What makes the material you work with special for you?

What makes the metals and also many of the plastics that I work with special for me is the high degree of mechanically achievable accuracy. The high level of precision that metals in particular allow is very satisfying for me.



Behice Sönmez Biran

Behice Sönmez Biran (1956)

B. Biran Handicraft Center - est. 2013 - Nicosia

Embroiderer
Cypriot
Team size : 1

Behice Sönmez Biran is an embroiderer in Nicosia.

She attended a technical school for crafts. As she had already distinguished herself during her training with the high quality of her work, she was immediately given a job teaching embroidery and other handicraft work. She then went into research and intensively studied the various traditions of embroidery and their techniques.

After a few years she began selling her own work. She went on to other universities and colleges to earn degrees in the other aspects of her job, such as, amongst others, financial management and digital drawing.

In 2013, she decided to open her own workshop in the historic centre of Nicosia. At present, she produces a wide range of decorative fabric objects and silk work.

What was the first contact you had with your craft that you can remember?

In 1982, I did traditional Cypriot embroidery at school and I really enjoyed it. The work I did at school at the time was then used by a teacher for seminars and courses at the technical college. Since then, I have never stopped delving into this craft, whether through historical research or through my own projects.

When was the moment that you decided to practise your craft professionally?

There was no exact moment. After my studies, I taught and gave courses on the various embroidery techniques that I had learnt. After that, I started selling my work, and when I saw that it was going well, I opened my own little workshop. I still enjoy doing both simultaneously; I continue to teach courses and I'm involved in many cultural events.

In regard to your working conditions, which of them is most valuable to you and which would you most like to change?

What I value most is the freedom and diversity that my work grants me. I can decide every day what I want to do and with what technique I want to work.

The only thing that I would like to change is to make contact with the outside world a little easier. I enjoy the fact that this craft, which is very special to Cyprus, often provides a basis for cultural projects. However, due to the political situation, there are always many difficulties when it comes to working with the other half of Cyprus or with Europe.

What makes the material you work with special for you?

Every year I harvest the silk cocoons from my caterpillars and turn them into silk. Of course, I also buy different threads, but I really like to follow the process from the beginning. The fact that I get to see how the material is created and that I start from scratch every year makes the material very special for me.



Mehmet M. ÇOBAN

Mehmet M. Çoban (1980s)

Cobi's Leather Workshop - est. 2013 - Nicosia

Leatherworker
Cypriot
Team size : 1

Mehmet 'Cobi' Çoban is a bag maker in Nicosia.

While he was studying International & Public Relations, he started sewing small bags and pouches out of leftover leather. Initially, he sold these in various friends' shops. In 2013, he founded his workshop in the historic centre of Nicosia, where he at present does a variety of leatherwork.

He makes tobacco pouches, wallets and bags of all kinds.

What was the first contact you had with your craft that you can remember?

As a child, I was always very enthusiastic about working with my hands. I disassembled devices and built all sorts of things. I believe this came from my father. My parents did all the work around the house. Handymen never came to our house to do any work. However, there was no direct connection to leather.

When was the moment that you decided to practise your craft professionally?

During my studies, I had an old leather jacket that fell apart at some point. I sewed a wallet out of the material. A friend of mine had a small shop and asked me to sew some wallets similar to the one I had made so that he could sell them in his shop. I did this until the leather from the jacket ran out. After that, I collected leather and fabric leftovers from upholstery shops in order to be able to continue.

In regard to your working conditions, which of them is most valuable to you and which would you most like to change?

What I like most is that I can produce new things, come up with new ideas, sell them to people and make them happy. The fact that my ideas are positively received by people is very valuable to me.

I would like the opportunity to expand the workshop and hire a few employees. However, the market in Cyprus is so small and the circumstances are so particular that it is very difficult to develop your business.

What makes the material you work with special for you?

What I like about working with leather is that I can be quick. Other crafts require a lot of patience in order to produce something and the projects take a long time. I've worked so much with leather that I can now make a wallet or small bag in 5 minutes. I don't think you can do that with any other craft.



Δημήτρης Κωροκαρτίου

Demetris Constantinou (1987)

XYZ - est. 2018 - Nicosia

Concrete Artist
Cypriot
Team size : 1

Demetris Constantinou is a concrete artist in Nicosia.

After leaving school, he took an art and design foundation course in Nicosia, and then studied product design in Brighton, England.

In 2011, he returned to Cyprus and founded a small 3D printing company. After he lost interest in digital work, he oriented his attention elsewhere. In 2016, he took a concrete course in the US, then he returned to Cyprus and converted his 3D printing workshop into a concrete studio.

He produces furniture parts, furniture and concrete objects for various practical or decorative uses.

What was the first contact you had with your craft that you can remember?

My family built our house when I was 15-16 years old. I remember helping at the construction site. I was very fascinated by concrete and, sometime later, I tried to cast a concrete bench and give it a wooden structure through the formwork. I remember being fascinated by the textures you can create with concrete.

When was the moment that you decided to practise your craft professionally?

Following the launch of my 3D printing workshop, I lost interest in the digital process after 2-3 years. I was looking for something different when I came across a concrete design course in the US. I decided to attend and realized that I felt real passion when working with the material. I knew I wanted to bring the knowledge that I had acquired there to Cyprus.

In regard to your working conditions, which of them is most valuable to you and which would you most like to change?

What I like best is the moment when I remove the formwork and I can see how something solid has formed out of the mixture I poured in.

I would love to have more financial opportunities to invest in equipment and tools. I do the jobs I do to pay the bills, but my ultimate goal is to create art, to create my own designs. However, at a certain point, you simply need better equipment in order to be able to make progress.

What makes the material you work with special for you?

I like how different concrete can be, depending on how you alter the mixture. The shape, the surfaces, the textures, the colours. It's always fascinating and amazing what you can get out of the material, since there is the misconception that you can only make walls out of concrete.



MARTIN FESER

Martin Feser (1981)

Freiburg, Merzhausen

Wood turner
German
Team size : 1

Martin Feser is an educator and wood turner from Freiburg.

After graduating from secondary school, he completed an apprenticeship as a wood turner. At that time, the craft of wood turning was already 'dying out', so after completing his apprenticeship, he decided to pursue a different career path. After studying social work, he became an educator, and he now works in non-formal education.

He continues to practise his craft on the side. He makes bowls, vessels and vases from wood.

What was the first contact you had with your craft that you can remember?

When I was 12, I had a classmate whose brother was 4 or 5 years older. He was a journeyman wood turner. I always looked up to him and thought he was very cool. He turned vases at the Freiburg Christmas market, and I was very impressed by the process. After graduating from school, I did my apprenticeship in the workshop where he worked.

When did you decide to give up your craft?

It was a very pragmatic decision. When I was an apprentice, the wood turning trade as such was already dying out. The workshop where I did my apprenticeship had become much smaller during my time there. In my first year there were seven of us, while in my last, there were only three. At the time, my master was facing a life crisis. The atmosphere in the workshop was very bad, and I knew that I wanted to leave. I then travelled for a long time. During my travels other things occurred. From my current perspective, I think it was a good decision. I'm glad that I can now practise my craft on the side without having the financial pressure to make a living from it.

In regard to your working conditions, which of them is most valuable to you and which would you most like to change?

The best thing about wood turning, is that I am able to go into the workshop for two hours and by the end of that time I usually have something concrete to show for it. Crafting for me is not about working on huge projects that come hand in hand with multiple responsibilities. I think about what I want to do a few days before, and then I am able to create something in a relatively short amount of time. For me, this is very fulfilling.

I don't really know what I would change. Somehow, everything is a part of it. However, surface treatment is not that much fun for me, for example. Oiling or waxing. It's a necessary step, but I think I'm just too lazy or impatient for that.

What makes the material you work with special for you?

I don't necessarily see myself as having a direct, intimate and deep connection to wood. However, I know that whenever I walk in the forest and see felled wood, I always imagine what I could do with each piece.



Fabian Fischer

Fabian Fischer (1983)

Fabian Fischer Handcrafts - est. 2010 - Badenweiler

Chairmaker, Wood artist

German

Team size : 1

Fabian Fischer is a social worker and wood artist in Badenweiler.

After graduating from high school, he completed a teacher training degree. During his teacher training, he began to work with wood in his basement. Through a series of coincidences, he began taking on jobs. In 2012, he moved to the US for four years. He initially worked as a floor layer and upholsterer, but then set up his own business as a chair maker.

After his return to Germany, he worked as a social worker, initially with refugees and later on with young people with behavioural disorders.

He continues to make chairs, stools and wooden objects on the side.

What was the first contact you had with your craft that you can remember?

I remember wishing for 2kg of nails for my ninth birthday so I could build my own huts in the forest. I enjoyed a certain freedom in the forest when I built things out of wood with my friends that I couldn't find anywhere else. This longing for play and freedom is still the focus of my work.

When was the moment that you decided to practise your craft professionally?

There was no exact moment. During my teacher training, I found myself 'escaping' through my craft. I saw it as a hobby that allowed me to escape from a job that wasn't good for me. A series of lucky coincidences followed: I met an old carpenter who taught me his craft in the evenings and let me work in his workshop. I then built two chairs as a wedding present for my sister. Some guests that attended the wedding loved my designs and wanted to order chairs as well. So, one thing led to another.

In regard to your working conditions, which of them is most valuable to you and which would you most like to change?

The most valuable thing for me is my woodstove in the workshop. It makes the room very cosy and the morning ritual of turning it on creates a very nice working atmosphere.

What I would change, I think, is the financial situation. I don't work full time as a chair maker. Sometimes it feels more like a hobby. However, I would like the freedom to spend more time doing manual work.

What makes the material you work with special for you?

For me, wood always has a connection to the forest, which has surrounded me wherever I have lived. I feel that if wood is treated with reverence and respect, it can be allowed to live on with dignity. Through the material, the tree's story can be revealed.

Yena Hacısevki

Yena Hacısevki (1985)

Atelier Kabuk - est. 2016 - Nicosia

Flute maker, Instrument maker
Cypriot
Team size : 1

Yena Hacısevki is a flute maker in Nicosia.

After her graduation from high school, she studied archaeology in Turkey. She then worked in Florence as an archaeologist and restorer. Following her return to Cyprus, she worked as a tour guide for archaeological sites and was introduced to the handicraft of making reed flutes by chance. Currently, she makes various flutes from reed, including her own invention called 'Loveflutes', which is a flute that is played by two people at the same time. She also runs a yoga studio in Kyrenia.



What was the first contact you had with your craft that you can remember?

During the time I was working as a tour guide, I met a man and a woman who had handmade reed flutes with them. I asked them about it, and over the next few days they showed me how to make the flutes. I then started collecting reeds and my house became filled with them. After that, I spent a very long time focusing on the physics of instrument construction. In the beginning, I got help from musician friends, and later I met an old man who made traditional Cypriot flutes. He was open with his knowledge, he shared it with me and taught me his craft.

When was the moment that you decided to practise your craft professionally?

A year or two after I started making flutes, my friends said to me, 'Yena, your house is full of flutes and you keep giving us flutes as gifts. We think it's time you opened a shop so you can sell them'. Since then, I have had my workshop and my shop. I actually never intended to become a professional flute maker.

In regard to your working conditions, which of them is most valuable to you and which would you most like to change?

Flute making is not the profession I studied. So, I feel free when I practise it. I'm not forced to work here, I don't feel the responsibility or pressure to succeed that I experienced in other jobs. Therefore, I know I'm here of my own free will, and that is good for me.

I would love to change other people's attitudes. It would be nice if other people really took a moment and looked at what I'm doing. It's very easy for people to belittle my work or say things like, 'It would be better if you had a real job'. I would like it if these people gave my work an honest chance instead of dismissing it.

What makes the material you work with special for you?

I try to use whatever bits of reed I can find. Reed grows very differently every year, depending on the weather. Therefore, the length and thickness always vary greatly. As a result, I have to adjust to the material, which is positive for me, as it makes me more flexible and adaptable. I like that I have to look at the new reeds every year and then ask myself, 'What can I make of them?'



Τα ένοι Μπαμπά

Genny Mpampa (1959)

Genny's Thoughts - est. 2015 - Nicosia

Doll maker
Greek
Team size : 1

Genny Mpampa is a doll maker in Nicosia.

She was raised in Greece and, after school, she studied graphic design and decorating.

After her studies she worked as a freelancer in Kozani, Greece. In 1989, she became a mother and housewife. In 2012, she sewed a doll for her daughter, and this was the reason that her workshop, 'Genny's Thoughts', developed in 2015.

She makes dolls out of cloth and various other materials.

What was the first contact you had with your craft that you can remember?

I loved dolls as a little girl, but there wasn't really a lot to choose from back then. My mother was a housewife and used to make dolls with me out of all sorts of household objects and sewed the clothes for them. We even sometimes used the remains of corn cobs for the bodies.

When was the moment that you decided to practise your craft professionally?

It kind of came gradually. I saw Tone Finnanger's Tilda doll in a magazine in 2011 and was very impressed with the design. I then started making dolls as a hobby, like I used to do with my mother. Over the next year, I sewed a doll for my daughter as a gift when she was starting college. Her friends then also wanted dolls. They then encouraged me to make dolls professionally and set up a website for me and designed my logo. In 2015, I founded my own workshop.

In regard to your working conditions, which of them is most valuable to you and which would you most like to change?

The most valuable thing regarding my work is the imagination and creativity which goes into it. I daydream a lot, I imagine things. When I have seen a film, picture or a theatre performance, I sometimes get lost in thought looking at a piece of fabric and I start pondering what I can make out of it.

I would like to have a greater choice of materials. The market in Cyprus is very limited and materials always take a long time to arrive when ordered from Europe.

What makes the material you work with special for you?

Fabric is endlessly fascinating to me. It can take on so many shapes and textures, you can make so many different things out of it that I never feel that I've reached the material's potential.



Achim Neub

Achim Neub (1985)

Achim Neub Schreinermeister - est. 2014 - Freiburg, Merzhausen

Cabinetmaker
German
Team size : 7

Achim Neub is a cabinetmaker in Freiburg - Merzhausen.

After graduating from a technical college, he attended the woodworking technical school and completed his carpentry apprenticeship in Freiburg. The Baden-Württemberg grant gave him the opportunity to do an internship in France. He then continued to work in Toulouse and Bairritz.

In 2012, he returned to Germany and attended master school in Freiburg.

In 2014, he founded his workshop.

That is where he and his team manufacture furniture, spatial solutions, kitchens, stairs and camping beds for cars.

What was the first contact you had with your craft that you can remember?

During my civilian service, I had a friend who was doing his carpentry apprenticeship. I visited him in his workshop a couple of times and watched him work there. I recall how the work process and the things that were created there were mysterious to me. Carpentry has made a lasting impression on me ever since as a 'cool' job. During my civilian service, I had worked in landscaping. I enjoyed it, but what I didn't like was that you were constantly standing outside in all kinds of weather, getting soaked and having cold fingers. Over the years, carpentry has established itself as a good compromise between physical labour, creativity, precision and working independently of the weather.

When was the moment that you decided to practise your craft professionally?

There was no 'that's exactly what I'm doing' moment where I made a defining decision regarding my profession. There was just the realisation that I never wanted to have a boss again. Becoming a carpenter was a good opportunity for me to achieve that. I wanted to do what I felt like doing, which was far removed from other people's way of reasoning. I just wanted to only have to justify things to my own self. Early on, a few people, such as foremen and bosses told me that I would be self-employed, and they were right about that. I suppose that has to do with my way of not being able to just accept something, but always wanting to knock it over and alter it. I don't know if that is wise.

In regard to your working conditions, which of them is most valuable to you and which would you most like to change?

The most valuable thing for me is the freedom to do what I want, when I want, how I want. As well as the freedom to do many things. So many things can be made from wood. Maybe you can make these things out of other materials, perhaps even better. But the material gives us the freedom to be able to make them.

I would love to spend more time in the workshop. I miss the times when I would be alone there and I would turn on music and plaster edges or oil surfaces and get lost in the work. I think if I could change something, I would want the workshop to myself one day a week. No customer appointments, no consultations with employees, just working by myself.

What makes the material you work with special for you?

Wood has properties and characteristics that can make one's life incredibly sweet, but that can also make it hellish. That's the beauty of it for me. You have to discover the material, look at it, and see if the pieces fit together. Interns and trainees so often say that wood is such a beautiful, warm, living material. I've heard it so many times that I almost can't stand hearing it anymore, but there is definitely a truth to it.



Souzana Petri

Souzana Petri (1992)

Souzana Petri Crafts - est. 2015 - Nicosia

Ceramicist, Metal worker
Cypriot
Team size : 1

Souzana Petri is a ceramicist and metal worker in Nicosia.

After leaving school, she studied 3D Design & Craft in Brighton. She then completed her Masters in Ceramics and Metallurgy. She completed artist residencies in Normandy, India and England.

In 2015, she returned to Cyprus and set up her workshop in an old warehouse. The following year she moved to the historic centre of Nicosia, where she still has her workshop to this day.

She makes various objects out of clay and copper.

What was the first contact you had with your craft that you can remember?

That was at university. I actually wanted to be a jewellery maker. In the first ceramics course during my studies, I had a very negative experience, as everything went wrong while making a clay pot. Somehow that really drew me in and captivated me, I wanted to learn what it was about and I wanted to grasp the material.

When was the moment that you decided to practise your craft professionally?

That was when the opportunity arose for me to start my own workshop in Nicosia. I was still relatively young, and I thought to myself that if I try starting my own business now and things don't work out, I would still be young enough to begin something new.

In regard to your working conditions, which of them is most valuable to you and which would you most like to change?

The most valuable thing for me is the thought that, through the work and objects I produce, I can somehow touch the people who look at them and use them. That you can either make people think or inspire them. In the end, I'd like to be someone who had something to offer to other people, regardless of whether it was objects, knowledge, or the passing on of traditions.

What I would change is that I would like to have more time for the creative part of the work, the design. The financial aspect of work often makes this very difficult.

What makes the material you work with special for you?

When clay is in its wet form, I find it incredibly relaxing to work with. The material becomes more demanding during the later work steps and, as a result, the work is under time constraints and becomes tenser. As long as the clay is wet though, I lose myself in the process of working with it and can relax.



Dirk Schinker

Dirk Schinker (1967)

Schreinerei Dirk Schinker - est. 1997 - Freiburg, Merzhausen

Cabinetmaker
German
Team size : 3

Dirk Schinker is a cabinetmaker in Freiburg – Merzhausen.

After graduating from high school, he attended the woodworking technical school in Freiburg and then completed an apprenticeship as a carpenter in Bavaria. During his apprenticeship, he worked in a carpenter's workshop and for a barrel organ builder.

In 1997, he attended the master school in Freiburg and then founded his own workshop.

At his workshop, he now manufactures solid wood furniture, built-in furniture, doors and stairs.

What was the first contact you had with your craft that you can remember?

My father did a lot of things at home himself, so manual work was never really foreign to me. I also attended the Waldorf School, where handicraft lessons were part of the curriculum and, so I came into contact with the carpentry trade quite early on.

When was the moment that you decided to practise your craft professionally?

After master school, I received an order for a piece of furniture through some acquaintances. Eventually the customer wanted an invoice from me. Because of this I had to register a trade and that's how my company was founded. There was never really a plan as such. I never went looking for things, things rather came to me, and I took them as they came.

In regard to your working conditions, which of them is most valuable to you and which would you most like to change?

In terms of the work itself, the most valuable moment for me is when the furniture has been completed and you can see that the people for whom it was made are happy about it. In general though, the most beautiful moment for me is when you come home and my children think that it's great that I smell like wood.

What I would most like to change is to not have to varnish anymore. This step simply has too many negative aspects for me - the smell, the material, the feel.

What makes the material you work with special for you?

For me, the special thing about wood is the smell. When processing solid wood, you notice that each type has its own smell and is so individual. When I think about it, every step of the process of technically refining the material actually makes it less and less appealing to me. Raw wood is something very beautiful.



Sotiris Sevastides

Sotiris Sevastides (1947)

Scrap Metal Art - est. 2012 - Nicosia

Scrap metal artist
Cypriot
Team size : 1

Sotiris Sevastides is a scrap metal artist in Nicosia.

During his adolescence, he worked in his family's marble factory in addition to going to school. After graduating, he studied business administration in London with the aim to continue the family business.

In 1972, he returned to Cyprus and joined the family business. In 1974, the family had to flee and leave their factory behind. In the years that followed, he worked as a marble dealer and collaborated with companies in Italy and Saudi Arabia. Any time dedicated to his craftwork was done so as a hobby.

In 2012, he retired and decided to make his hobby his profession. At present, he produces various sculptures from scrap metal parts in his workshop in the historic centre of Nicosia.

What was the first contact you had with your craft that you can remember?

In my father's stone factory, there was a metal workshop where we often made templates or other metal parts that we needed in order to work with the stone and marble. I always worked in the factory during the summer holidays. It is there that, in addition to working with stone, I learned the basics of working with metal.

When was the moment that you decided to practise your craft professionally?

After Cyprus was affected by the euro crisis, my work as a marble dealer wasn't going so well and I retired. But how long can you sit at home and do nothing? I first started working with scrap parts in the garage at home. At some point, it got too cramped and so I rented a workshop.

In regard to your working conditions, which of them is most valuable to you and which would you most like to change?

I like to make sketches for my designs, even though you never know what your idea will end up looking like. The most valuable aspect to me is when you come to know whether what you had in mind can be realised and what it is going to look like.

I would like to have more space in my workshop for larger sculptures.

I remember that I once made an enormous bull sculpture and the workshop was then completely full. I could hardly move. I was lucky, as the bull was sold the day after it was completed, and I had space in the workshop again. I haven't made any large sculptures since unless they were commissioned.

What makes the material you work with special for you?

Due to my father's factory, I used to work with stone and marble a lot. After losing the workshop, I continued working with stone as a hobby, but at some point the process became boring for me. It is the complete opposite with the scrap parts I work with now. The shapes of the pieces I find inspire me. The pieces of metal already have a shape and I have to reinterpret them, imagining that a pipe could be a flamingo's neck, or that a pair of scissors could be the ears of a donkey. Thus, I can give new life to parts that are scrap and seemingly 'worthless'.



Σίμος Σιμάκης

Simos Simakis (1946)

Periglypta - est. 2004 - Nicosia

Wood turner
Cypriot
Team size : 1

Simos Simakis is a wood turner in Nicosia.

After graduating school in Kyrenia, he worked for a while as a bartender in a hotel. He then trained as a flight attendant. Having had a passion for the craft since he was a child, he began, during his stays in England and France, to visit the exhibitions and workshops of woodworkers and turners. He collected machines, tools and knowledge, and practised wood turning as a hobby.

Shortly before retirement, an opportunity arose to use a space in the historic centre of Nicosia, and he founded his workshop Periglypta.

He makes wooden bowls, pots, toys, pens and pepper mills.

What was the first contact you had with your craft that you can remember?

As a child, I used to build small boats and airplanes from discarded fruit crates with my friends. That was my first contact with wood as a material. Many years later, I wanted to build a small boat for my son. In order to be able to manufacture masts, I bought an old lathe from a carpenter. I realized though that I lacked training. I was a flight attendant, and every time I was in England, I would buy books or visit wood turners and ask them questions. That's how I gradually learned to turn wood.

When was the moment that you decided to practise your craft professionally?

I used to have my hobby workshop at home in my garage. A friend told me that a workshop in the historic centre was becoming available and that it was time to move out of my garage. It was at the Chrysaliniotissa Cultural Centre. I sent an application to the municipality with pictures of my work, and it was accepted. I've been here ever since.

In regard to your working conditions, which of them is most valuable to you and which would you most like to change?

I was a flight attendant for 38 years and worked as a service provider. I made coffees and served food every day. When I came home at night, I never had anything to show for all the work I had done. Now I'm a craftsman. If you ask me, 'What did you do today?' I always have something to show.

In the past, I would have liked to have had bigger machines and a bigger workshop. Now, I would rather have a better extraction system installed in the workshop. The woodworker's greatest enemy is dust.

What makes the material you work with special for you?

Wood has a property that makes it very similar to humans: it is born from a seed, it grows and dies. Thus, it is alive, it has a story. And when I have a piece of wood on my lathe and I work on it, it slowly reveals its grain, its life story. Therefore, I often adapt my plans according to what the wood has shown me while turning.



Tilmann Späth

Tilmann Späth (1984)

Freiburger Orgelbau - est. 1862 - March. Hugstetten

Organ and Harmonium Builder

German

Team size : 25

Tilmann Späth is an organ builder in Freiburg-March.

After graduating from secondary school, he attended the woodworking technical school in Freiburg and then completed an apprenticeship as an organ and harmonium builder. In 2008, he attended master school, and the following year he took over the management of his family's business, 'Freiburger Orgelbau'.

With his 20 employees, he manufactures pipe organs for churches and concert halls all over the world. The organs from his workshop can be found, among other places, in Germany, Switzerland, the US, Tanzania, China and Korea.

What was the first contact you had with your craft that you can remember?

Organ building has always actually been a part of my life. The house I grew up in is right next to our workshop. I can remember how I used to sneak through the workshop as a child, since I wanted to see what was being done there. I always got in trouble with my father because I wasn't supposed to keep the employees from their work. At weekends, I often ran through the workshop with my friends who were visiting us. We loved these rooms as children.

When was the moment that you decided to practise your craft professionally?

That goes back a long way for me. Since the organ building workshop has been in our family for 5 generations, I grew up knowing that I would one day become an organ builder. In kindergarten, there were these rounds of questions where all children were asked: 'What do you want to be when you grow up?' All the other children said astronauts, firemen, or something similar, yet even then I knew I wanted to be an organ builder. My parents certainly had a lot to do with that, but it never felt like this path was being forced on me. There was a time shortly after I took over the running of the business when the order situation wasn't so good. My father was pretty sure that the workshop was not going to survive for much longer, as he believed that there would be no more jobs that requested the building of new organs. During this time, I started thinking about what I would do if I could no longer be an organ builder. After about a year, the order situation improved again. Regarding the question of what I would do otherwise, I still have no answer to this day.

In regard to your working conditions, which of them is most valuable to you and which would you most like to change?

The most valuable thing for me is the end product: the moment when a new organ is finished. After years of planning and manufacturing, there is this giant box that makes music and for the next 100 years will remain exactly where we have installed it.

I would like to change the financial pressure. Considering the size of the company and the projects we work on, you have a lot of responsibility as a manager. You're constantly trying to keep an eye on the economy, as you are responsible for the salaries of so many people. However, I presume that without this background pressure, we would not have achieved the productivity of the last few years.

What makes the material you work with special for you?

I'm just going through all the materials in my head that are used in organ building: wood, metal, leather, plastic. However, I realize that these are not really the materials I work with. I'm now the managing director. So the 'material' I deal with the most is people: employees, customers, architects, artists, specialist planners. This is very special for me, as every person I deal with is different. Employees, for example, have individual strengths: some work quickly and efficiently, others work very precisely. It is fun getting to know people and finding out how to best work together and in which area each person feels most at home.



TAHSIN ÖZLER

Tahsin Özler (1938)

Özler - est. 1930s - Nicosia

Cabinetmaker, Chair maker

Cypriot

Team size : 4

Tahsin Özler is a chair maker and cabinetmaker in Nicosia.

As a child and teenager, he spent a lot of time in his father's carpentry workshop. After school, he worked in a wheelwright's workshop and learned the craft of chair making.

He then took over his father's workshop.

Furniture, doors and windows are currently made in his workshop.

What was the first contact you had with your craft that you can remember?

As a child, I was always in my father's workshop, which now has become my own. I was in the workshop even when I was a baby. I can remember how we used to go to the workshop with my grandfather and my siblings. As children, we would sit on a donkey on the way there and watch my father at work.

When was the moment that you decided to practise your craft professionally?

I used to work in the workshop only as a helper. After I was there for a while, I gradually learned the steps of the work process. At some point in the evening after work, I had the courage to try doing my own things, and I realised how much fun it was. That was the point at which I decided to carry my father's workshop on as my own.

In regard to your working conditions, which of them is most valuable to you and which would you most like to change?

For me, the beauty of craftsmanship is, when you do your job with love and passion, it becomes apparent when the work is done. If you love your craft, you may sometimes not sleep at night, but it's always rewarded.

What I would presently like to change is the material we work with. It has become very difficult to find wood, as there is hardly any Cypriot wood left, and everything is currently being imported.

What makes the material you work with special for you?

Wood was a point of contact with many other people on the island for me. We would buy various kinds of Cypriot wood (pine, sycamore) which was felled on the island from Greek Cypriots. I learned the craft of chair making from a Greek Cypriot who used to have a workshop in Athens for a long time. He was the only carpenter in Nicosia who wanted to hire Turkish Cypriots. There was something about the material that connected us, which is what makes wood so special for me.



月輪翼比古

Norihiko Tsukinowa (1981)

Sandalenwerkstatt Freiburg - est. 1977 - Freiburg

Leatherworker, Orthopedic Shoemaker
Japanese
Team size : 3

Norihiko Tsukinowa is a saddler and orthopaedic shoemaker in Freiburg.

After school, he studied economics at Kyoto University. However, after his studies, he decided to follow a craft oriented path. He trained at the college for orthopaedic shoemakers in Kobe and then completed dual training as an orthopaedic shoemaker in Münster, Westphalia.

From 2016, he was employed near Ulm as an orthopaedic shoemaker. In 2019, he successfully applied for the Baden-Württemberg scholarship and thus came to the sandal workshop in Freiburg. He is currently a permanent member of the workshop's management.

He makes sandals, shoes, bags and other leather objects.

What was the first contact you had with your craft that you can remember?

I remember owning a pair of leather shoes when I was 15. At the time, I was very fascinated by the process of caring for leather. I really enjoyed polishing and caring for the shoes.

When was the moment that you decided to practise your craft professionally?

Originally, I wanted to study economics and go into research. When I was young, I was always more interested in social science subjects. However, during my studies in Kyoto, I developed a fascination for handmade objects. This fascination grew over time and I started visiting makers of these objects in their workshops. It caught my attention then that the old craftsmen, whether they were potters or shoemakers, seemed livelier and healthier than my professors at university. This impacted me greatly back then, and I decided to work in the crafts myself.

In regard to your working conditions, which of them is most valuable to you and which would you most like to change?

The most important thing for me is freedom. I can start working when I want. Sometimes I work longer and sometimes shorter hours; I don't have to justify this to anyone. It would be very difficult for me to give that up and be employed again. What I would probably change is that I'd like to have a little more light in the workshop spaces. Our workshop is in a backyard, and although it has a very nice atmosphere, some things need to be modernised.

What makes the material you work with special for you?

Leather has, for me, a very pleasant, warm feel to it. I really like touching it. It has a property that, when it is touched for long periods of time, it forms a patina that makes the material even more beautiful. For me, that is something very special about leather.



Татяна Васильева

Tatiana Vasilyeva (1990)

Tochka Ceramics - est. 2018 - Nicosia

Ceramicist
Russian
Team size : 1

Tatiana Vasilyeva is a ceramicist in Nicosia.

After graduating from school in Izhevsk, she studied journalism in Moscow. During her studies, she worked at Greenpeace Russia, and after her graduation, she got a job there in the communications department. Alongside her work, she took pottery courses. She remained at Greenpeace Russia until 2017, most recently as communications director.

In 2017, she moved to Cyprus and worked for Greenpeace International. The following year she founded her ceramics workshop, which was initially meant to be a hobby workshop. She later decided to dedicate herself full-time to ceramics.

In her workshop in the historic centre of Nicosia, she makes pottery, vases and vessels.

What was the first contact you had with your craft that you can remember?

I've always liked beautiful tableware. My mother and grandmother always appreciated good tableware and china. There was a special display case in the house where the good pieces were exhibited. At some point, I wanted to find out if I could make my own crockery. I took a course in Moscow and was very fascinated by all the steps involved in the craft of pottery.

When was the moment that you decided to practise your craft professionally?

For a few years, I had my workshop alongside my job at Greenpeace. However, I eventually understood that you can't treat clay like something on your 'to do list'. I saw that ceramics required time and that my work and skills only improved when I invested more of my time. It was a difficult decision which scared me a lot because I was leaving a really good job at Greenpeace, that I greatly enjoyed and where I had many great experiences.

In regard to your working conditions, which of them is most valuable to you and which would you most like to change?

The most valuable thing for me is the feeling you get when you look at a finished piece and see how an idea that only existed in your head, has suddenly become something real that you can touch.

If I could change something, I would like to be able to know what a piece will look like after the last firing. The moment when you open the kiln can be very frustrating. Two weeks of work may have just gone to waste or the end result may have turned out badly, in ways that weren't anticipated.

What makes the material you work with special for you?

Clay is alive, it always reflects the emotions you have while handling it. If you're in a bad mood or in a hurry, the clay will not be forgiving. It absorbs whatever mood you are in and will later break while drying or during the firing. However, if you give clay your time and attention, it will give back. With clay, you can express whatever it is that you want to express. And if through the finished piece you can express something that you felt while working on it, then that's a beautiful feeling.



MAHmut Yağmur

Mahmut Yağmur (1953)

Ceyiz Yorgan Dikim Evi - est. 1982 - Nicosia

Tailor
Turkish
Team size : 1

Mahmut Yamgur is a tailor in Nicosia.

He grew up in Turkey. As a teenager, he started working in a workshop where he learned the traditional craft which he practises today. He moved to Nicosia in 1979, took over an old company and set up his workshop.

He makes traditional Turkish blankets and pillowcases.

What was the first contact you had with your craft that you can remember?

The first contact I had was when I started working for a sewer. I was very young then.

We were 13 siblings and our parents didn't have much money. They couldn't pay for schooling for all of us, so we had to start working quite early on. It was more or less by chance that I became a tailor.

When was the moment that you decided to practise your craft professionally?

For a long time, I worked for my master in Turkey. He made blankets and pillows, as I do now. I had a friend who lived in Cyprus who said I would definitely find clients on the island. I moved here and took over some old tailors' workshop. That's how I started getting jobs, and I've now been doing it for 40 years.

In regard to your working conditions, which of them is most valuable to you and which would you most like to change?

The beauty of working with fabric is that you have to be patient in order to sew something. When I started learning the craft, I told myself that I wanted to be able to be patient. Now it's what I enjoy the most. You always need to take the time to handle the material properly.

What I find sad is that my craft will eventually die out. People from the authorities once visited me in my workshop and I told them that the craft needs to be preserved somehow. They said that they would come back and talk to me about how it might be taught in schools. However, I never heard from them again. I would love to have someone to teach my craft to. When I come in contact with young people and ask them whether they would like to learn the craft though, they only care how much they will be paid or what you can earn in such a line of work. But these are not the reasons why one should choose this profession.

What makes the material you work with special for you?

It is very important to me that the materials I work with are natural. I once worked with wool made from synthetic fibres because a customer asked for it. My machine was almost destroyed from this and my workshop almost burned down, as the plastic threads melted and the machine became overheated. I never worked with synthetic fibres again.



Jochen Zimmermann

Jochen Zimmermann (1963)

Architektur-Modellbau Zimmermann - est. 1998 - Freiburg

Architectural model maker

German

Team size : 1

Jochen Zimmermann is a model maker in Freiburg.

After graduating from school, he first did an apprenticeship as a gardener, followed by an apprenticeship as a carpenter. Thereafter, he studied architecture in Berlin. During his studies, he already had a great passion for model making, which was partly due to his training in crafts.

After completing his studies, he worked as an employed architect with the aim of opening an office where he could practice both architecture and model making.

Ultimately, he decided to make models. In 1998, he founded his workshop in Freiburg im Breisgau, where he produces presentation and competition models for architects.

What was the first contact you had with your craft that you can remember?

I remember that when I was a boy, around 8 or 10 years old, there was a boy from my neighbourhood whose grandfather practised wood turning in his shed. That was incredibly exciting for me. The smell and the shavings flying are burnt into my memory. I kept returning to watch him. Since then I have been fascinated by the process of working with wood.

When was the moment that you decided to practise your craft professionally?

Following my carpentry apprenticeship and my architecture studies, I worked as an architect. That's when I realised that I missed working with my hands and so started taking on architectural model making jobs. Initially, I wanted to do both the craft and architectural work at the same time. However, after the first architectural project, I observed how lengthy the architectural process is and what a great professional distance there is to the client. I then decided to only do model making. The projects are of much shorter duration and the customers are architects. So I have no interactions with lay people.

In regard to your working conditions, which of them is most valuable to you and which would you most like to change?

What I value the most is the freedom to schedule my day the way I like. I can work nights if I want, or work more hours one day and then fewer hours another.

Regarding what I would change, I would like to reduce the time I spend on scheduling. The constant organising of appointments and coordinating with customers often takes me away from my work.

What makes the material you work with special for you?

I feel that my material is wood, even though you also work with other materials as a model maker. Maybe I feel that way because I did my apprenticeship as a carpenter. For me, wood is a special material because you can even work with it as a child, its workability makes it very familiar and diverse.

