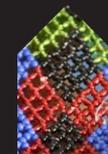


PRACTITIONER PROFILES:

TRADITIONAL CRAFT SKILLS WORKSHOP

CELEBRATING
FIFTY YEARS
guildhouse
50



MASUMA AKTHER: SPEAKING THE LANGUAGE OF BANGLADESHI QUILT EMBROIDERY.

Stitching is a language that requires precision and patience to learn. But once the stitches are known, any story can be told. Originating with rural women, Nakshi Kantha was a practical craft of communally embroidering warming quilts from recycled saris.

Memories are interwoven by rich threads drawn out of different layers of fabrics to embroider Classical motifs, sacred symbols and everyday events. Today's fashionable Kantha tell the global tale of celebrating traditional design detached from its cultural meaning.

By recalling and teaching the varied motifs and techniques she learnt through living in different regions of Bangladesh as a child, Masuma again feels the soul of the craft. It is her connection across culture and time, a window into the expression of other embroiderers' life experiences. It has taught her that each and every culture is unique in developing the world.

The workshops have allowed her a safe environment for experimentation and to build confidence in her communication skills. Masuma shows that letting go of what you think you already know enables a new perspective, creating embroidery that speaks to everyone.



Masuma Akther teaching. Photograph Grant Hancock.

It gives me confidence in terms of communication, teaching and leading.
Masuma Akther

Following page: Masuma Akther.
Photograph Jonathon VDK.



LADY SALAZAR: WEAVING A TALE IN COLOMBIAN FIQUE CROCHET BAGS

Fique, the fibre string used to make Colombian mochilas (bags), is so strong it is used to make ropes, shoes and fishing nets. Learning how to get the stitches right as a child, Lady saw the fingerprints worn faint on her grandmother's hands from a lifetime of crochet.

Retaining a connection to her home country, the fique fibre is imported from Colombia for the workshops. Traditionally the mochilla is made exclusively in a darker and lighter brown stripe pattern, each design identifying a different tribal group. But sadly indigenous traditions are now quickly disappearing.

Lady has come to value her skills, which were common in Colombia, and teaches regional design variations to keep the knowledge alive. Making mochillas also creates the space to relate traditional Colombian tales, which will make you fall in love with the culture, the way she has again.

When I started teaching I just realized how important this is... I want to keep this alive.

Lady Salazar

Following page: Lady Salazar.
Photograph Jonathon VDK.



AHMAD JAVID RASHIDI: HONORING MIDDLE EASTERN KNOTTED RUG WEAVING.

Mastery learnt through decades of apprenticeship is a practice almost lost in our hectic digital era. Devoted to his craft from childhood in Afghanistan, weaving carpets in Iran for 17 years before moving to Australia, Ahmad loves rugs. His deep understanding of the three thousand year old craft of hand-knotted rugs – potent symbols of wealth, power and refinement – was honed by his experiences of repairing artefacts for European museums.

Keeping his time-honored knowledge alive, Ahmed is encouraged by the keenness of Australian men and women to learn basic patterns and techniques using specialized tools in his workshops. To gain a sense of personal achievement in this ancient practice is hard work. However Ahmed recommends from his lifetime of experience - *if you relax, it will be easy*

Ahmed is encouraged by the keenness of Australian men and women to learn basic patterns and techniques using specialized tools in his workshops.

Following page: Ahmad Javid Rashidi.
Photograph Jonathon VDK.



MILETE-TSEGA OGBALIDET: VALUABLE LESSONS IN ERITREAN BASKETRY

Weaving brightly coloured wool around palm leaves to make baskets as a child in Eritrea, Milete could not foresee where this practical traditional knowledge would take her. Arriving in Australia 18 years ago as refugee, she discovered that everything she had learnt was useful, when the time was right, to create a new family and community.

Basket weavers learn through modalities of watching, questioning and doing. It is an intimate process of being with others and creating communities. Importantly this craft provides Eritrean's born overseas a recognition and respect for their cultural heritage.

'When they were doing this back home most times people do it together, with the neighbours... With this group... there are lots of moments when I think like I am back home because they solve their problems, they share things, and they talk about life..'

Traditionally a woman's craft, the specific Zigzag design of Meblee Kursi develops attentiveness and graphic and mathematical skills. Used daily for serving and storing food, and to keep precious possessions, this fusion of tradition and contemporary weaving both practically and metaphorically holds and feeds a culture.

Through teaching Traditional Craft Workshops Milete has found confidence in her own abilities. She is a new woman filled with joy brought by sharing her knowledge with others.

Following page: Milete-Tsega Ogbalidet.
Photograph Jonathon VDK.

My Mum passed it to me and I pass it to other people, it's not the end of the story, the stories keep going...

Milete-Tsega Ogbalidet







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Previous page: Abuyo Omot Gilo, Sudanese beading.
Photograph Richard Hamilton.