

Jewelry Designer Training

Background

Jewelry is not only loved and valued by women - in Afghanistan, it is still the only possession that women are allowed to have without any objections. It functions, so to speak, as a hedge against the unpredictability of life, such as economic ruin, divorce, old age, and so on.

With marriage, the woman leaves her family and becomes a member of a new family, that of her husband. Her original family now has no obligation to her, she can expect nothing from them - no care, no support, no inheritance.

So that she does not move "unworthily" into her husband's house, this "dignity" is negotiated before the marriage. The future husband must not only pay for the wedding, but also give gifts to his bride - precious gifts that are negotiated beforehand between the two families. A large part of these bridal gifts consists of jewelry. It is her possession, which she alone can dispose of. In times of need, it has enabled many a family to survive.



Jewelry design

This profession is highly respected in Afghan society and guarantees economic independence. It is very demanding and requires certain talents. The profession of jewelry designer traditionally consists of two crafts:

- Gold/silversmithing
- Stone cutting

At the NAZO center, a silversmith and a stone cutter teach. Here the students learn everything important about the precious stones of Afghanistan and their processing into jewelry, but also into belts, bags, wall hangings etc.

Our students are the first jewelry designers in Afghanistan. They combine their silver jewelry with bright stones: deep blue Afghan lapis lazuli; blue-green Iranian turquoise; brown-red carnelian, bottle-green serpentine, ebony-black onyx, etc. They learned to make beaded necklaces from women in northern Afghanistan. To date, 45 women jewelry designers have been trained.



The silversmiths



The department of stone and pearl necklaces



Stone cutting



In full sun the silver jewelry gets the most beautiful shine.

Goldsmith Saber says:

„I have been working as a master jeweler for about 20 years. I am very satisfied with the students here. Of course, they have different levels of talent. I hope that by the end of the training they will have learned about 50% of the field of silver and stone processing. Jewelry design is a very demanding profession. But to that I can say that I don't know any master jeweler who has mastered 100 % - I would rate myself at 70 %.

A master craftsman is a lifelong learner. A lot of work and practice - that's how you can expand your knowledge.“



Persistent traditions

Traditionally, a master has 1 to 3 journeymen, almost always his own children or their cousins. Very rarely it happens that he accepts a stranger as an apprentice. These students work for the master for up to 10 years and thus take over his artistry. As a rule, he does not teach his students, especially if they are not his own children. The student must "learn" the knowledge and experience from his master.

The master has a reluctance to impart his skill to the student. His envy towards the students has a long history in Afghanistan and is now accepted as a given. This envy sometimes goes so far that the master does not take on a student at all.

Against this background, it has been very difficult to recruit teachers for the jewelry department. In addition, men hardly ever work with women - firstly, because society separates men and women, and secondly, many men still feel it is "beneath their dignity" to work with women, let alone teach them their craft.

From hardworking student to workshop manager

Rahima says:

„I studied at the NAZO Center to become a master jeweler. Master Saber made me his assistant. I'm proud of that - and I'm trying even harder. I definitely don't want to disappoint him. What do I wish for the future? We should start a jewelry workshop - then we could all continue to work together. After all, this is a man's profession - and to gain a foothold there is very difficult. But we women - together - yes, we can do it that way.“



Rahima became the manager of all workshops at the Ahmad Shah Baba Mena site after her successful training.



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