

On Becoming a Wood Carving Craftsman

Bulgarian transcript:

Петко Петков: Казвам се Петко Петков и се занимавам от 77-ма година, всъщност от миналия век, 77-ма година. Започнал съм от нулата, кандидатствах тия години в художествената академия дърворезба и всъщност баща ми ми купи инструменти от София - софийски инструменти - и съм започнал от самата нула. Значи, в началото ми беше доста трудно, защото нищо не се получаваше, макар че, нали, аз от малък рисувам, имам чувство за обем, нали, виждам ги нещата, мога да ги нарисувам, но когато се почне самата дърворезба вече там се получават ниски, високи места, нали, просто трябва предварително да го видиш какво ще бъде във съзнанието си и на самия чертеж къде да почнеш да го работиш.

Но след това понапреднах и вече 34 години само с това се занимавам. От 85-та година, пак миналия век, се занимавам с рамки за гоблени. Така в началото имаше доста голям интерес, в момента е намалял понеже има много готови такива - тия, които са позлатени и посребрени, и моите са може би малко по-скъпи, в някои моменти може и да са по-евтини, но хората предпочитат тях. Докато си има любители, които харесват дърворезбата и държат примерно рамката да е непременно от дърворезба, защото при нея се получава по-голяма красота - значи ъглите на рамката се получават еднакви, има среди, нали, във широката част и във дългата част, така че...

Интервюиращ: Да, а фигурите как ги измисляте, или...?

Петко Петков: Ами фигурите, някои ги измислям, имам, събирам си - любител съм на тия италианските списания, в които има стари дърворезби, и някой път вземам от там идеите, но си ги преработвам винаги в моя стил. Даже тука има едно пано, което съм го правил от ей това - Свети Георги. Значи той е от една пазарджишка църква - Успение Богородично, където ми хареса и нали самата изработка, като сложих мои идеи, и просто исках да пробвам и Дебърската дърворезба, която е на няколко пласта, така. И мисля че се получи защото хората, така, с голям интерес ги гледат.

Интервюиращ: А чужденци или българи повече, или...?

Петко Петков: Ами интерес има от всички, може да се каже. Сега в началото тука един англичанин така доста се загледа, взема ми координатите, питах го, нали, за какво по-точно се интересува - от пана. Аз, така, в паната влагам повече симетрия и растителни орнаменти, нали, което ми е... на мен ми харесва. Не съм, така, много по фигурите, колегата се занимава повече с фигури. При мене е растителни орнаменти, непременно симетрия трябва да има, и така.

English translation:

Petko Petkov: My name is Petko Petkov and I have been involved with [woodcarving] since '77, actually since the last century, since 1977. I started from scratch¹, back in the day I applied to the Academy of Fine Arts, [to the] woodcarving [department], and actually it was my dad who bought me tools in Sofia, and I started from scratch. So, it was quite difficult in the beginning because nothing was turning out right, even though I had been drawing since childhood; I have a sense of depth², like³, I can see [how] things [should be drawn], I can draw [what I see], but when you start the actual woodcarving work, you get low and high places, you just have to see what it should look like in your head beforehand, and [figure out] where on the sketch you should start working. But after that, I made some progress and I have been doing nothing but that [woodcarving] for 34 years now. Since 1985, again since the last century, I have been making tapestry frames. That was very popular⁴ in the beginning, but interest has declined at the moment because there are a lot of pre-made [frames] – those that are plated with gold and silver – and mine are perhaps a bit more expensive, sometimes they might be cheaper, but people [generally] prefer them [the pre-made ones]. However, there are admirers who appreciate woodcarving and insist that the frame be by all means carved wood because that allows for unique beauty⁵ - the angles of the frame turn out symmetrical, there are mid points [of symmetry] in the wider parts and in the longer parts.

Interviewer: Yes. And how do you come up with the designs?

Petko Petkov: As for the designs, I come up with some of them myself. I have... I collect... I am a fan of those Italian magazines that have old woodcarving [images], and sometimes I borrow ideas from there, but I always alter them to fit my style. I have old panel artwork here; I have made it based on this – [on] St. George. This [the idea] was [borrowed] from a church in the Pazardzhik region – “Assumption of Mary”, where I liked the artwork and added a few ideas of my own, and I also wanted to try out the Debar woodcarving style which has multiple layers. I think it turned out good because people seem to be very interested.

Interviewer: Who is generally more interested – Bulgarians or foreigners?

¹ The interviewee is using the popular Bulgarian idiom “Започнал съм от нулата” meaning “to start from scratch,” literally “from zero.”

² Lit. trans. “a sense of volume” – “чувство за обем.”

³ The interviewee is using the filler word “нали” which is similar to using “like” in English. Other than that, it is used as a question word which does not directly translate into English. For example, “isn't he” in the sentence “He is coming, isn't he?” is usually translated as “нали”.

⁴ Lit. trans. “there was a lot of interest” – “имаше доста голям интерес.”

⁵ Lit. trans. “for greater beauty” – “по-голяма красота.”

Petko Petkov: One could say that all people are interested. In the beginning [of the fair]⁶ one man from England looked [at the artwork] for a while. He asked for my contact information⁷; I asked him about his particular interests, [and he said that he is interested in] panel art. I include more symmetry and floral patterns in my panel artwork, which is what I personally like. I am not big on [geometrical] figures, my colleague's⁸ focus is on figures [points to a person at a stand nearby]. I work with floral patterns, symmetry is necessary, and that's about it.

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⁶ The interview was filmed at the International Fair of Arts and Crafts that is held annually in Varna, Bulgaria.

⁷ The interviewee is using the word “координати” which is the Bulgarian equivalent of “contact information” and comes from the Bulgarian word for the axes in a coordinate system.

⁸ In Bulgarian, the word for colleague “колега” can be used to refer to a person of the same profession, but not necessarily someone who is directly involved with one's work. Two “colleagues” can be strangers.