

CULTURE

Italian Stories: tradition and innovation meet in Italy's artisan workshops

01/21/2015 | [SILVIA SIMONETTI](#) (/BY/SILVIA SIMONETTI)



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What's *Made in Italy*? The perfect combination of elegant taste, high quality products, and skilled craftsmanship, which is recognized and celebrated worldwide, has its roots in centuries old traditions from all across the Italian peninsula.

In our modern era, when everything is made just to be sold, knowledge and know-how can become the new currency of exchange, and perhaps even a way out of the economic crisis. A virtual platform has been recently designed by Italian architects Eleonora Odorizzi and Andrea Maserocchi to map some of the oldest and most fascinating artisan workshops in Italy. Through a series of descriptions and images, featuring also the craftsmen with their tools and their creations, Italian Stories aims at promoting the excellence of Made in Italy without selling anything. In fact, as the authors explain, the project has nothing to share with usual e-commerce portals. What they offer to the users is an experience, an opportunity to learn about the secrets of Italian artisans directly from their voices and their competent gestures.

From gold working to hat making, from baking to woodturning, these ancient practices are now endangered unless supported and passed down to younger generations. For the first time, the focus isn't on the object, that is the final product and its commercial value, but rather on the unique relationship between the master and his or her apprentice.

Thanks to funding from the European Community, the platform will soon go online and become accessible to both the artisans and all interested visitors, who will be able to arrange not only virtual but real tours to the workshops. Most of them are closely linked to the original territory where the raw materials and the manufacturing tradition come from, and therefore they're still located in small villages or remote areas of the country.

From the headquarters at Centrale Fies center for contemporary arts near Trento, the growing team recruited by Eleonora Odorizzi and Andrea Maserocchi is constantly searching Italy to discover those hidden gems and to persuade often-bashful craftsmen to join the network and to share their expertise.

About 30 historical workshops are taking part in the first test, but the goal is to involve over a hundred throughout Italy by the end of the year 2015.



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In order to create a wider community, not only the website but also Facebook and Instagram pages have been developed, combining modern technologies and means of communication with a priceless cultural heritage that has contributed to make the fortune of Made in Italy as we know it today.

Powerful social media resources can be used by craftsmanship enthusiasts to exchange information, opinions, and contacts, as well as by craftsmen to connect to each other and to reach out to the public. For the former, this opens a window onto an almost-forgotten world and knowledge; for the latter, this represents an incentive to keep moving with the times.

The innovative initiative has already drawn the attention of potential partners in Europe and may become also a TV production, narrating stories of Italian artisans and their art. Learn more at www.italianstories.it.