

Urban Sketching Competition

Capturing Work

“THE LAST BOOKBINDER OF BEJA”

The handmade bookbinding is increasingly a profession difficult to find.

Binding is to organize the union of all booklets, with a solid seam intended to form a single compact volume. Binding is done so that the work is better protected and presented to the reader. Binding also makes it easier to handle the sheets. In addition to being used for commercial purposes, binding, when well crafted, also assists in document protection.

Modern handmade bookbinding comes from Renaissance, well-crafted and with pleasant aesthetic. Back then the bindings became lighter and more sophisticated and in small format. Books become more accessible.

Nowadays, it is essentially used for aesthetics and embellishment of the production of books and notebooks. The main influence on this, believe it or not, is the technology. Digital archiving methods make artisanal art more valued because of its beauty and the intrinsic value of the handcrafted work. It is obviously still used for notes and storing files, but in nowadays it has nostalgic purposes more than real need.

Handmade bookbinding is struggling for a new place in modern society. There is a new evaluation of this kind of work. Bookbinders are increasingly considered Artists. It's knowledge must be preserved and taught so as not to be lost.

Mrs. Isabel is the last bookbinder of Beja. A small town in the Alentejo region, southern interior of Portugal. In the last two decades this area has been losing its young population and its artisans to the main cities in the coast that have more work demand and job offer.