

Champion of creativity

Giovanna Ticciati's virtual marketplace gives artisans a shop window, directly benefiting skilled makers

A background in gilding and plastering has given furniture and interior designer Giovanna Ticciati a solid understanding of crafts, as well as a first-hand appreciation of how craftspeople's specialist skills are honed over years. At one point, she assisted on an interior design project and found herself commissioning pieces for it – and these combined skills later informed the ethos of her eponymous shop in Petworth, West Sussex, opened in 2007, which sells art, antiques and contemporary design, including her furniture.

However, she has recently launched a venture that opens up a whole new audience. The Artisan Collab is an online marketplace touting work by designers, makers and artists, which she describes as “an extension of the shop with the walls down.” The business model is designed to benefit the makers (in contrast to some sites that fleece them by charging hefty commissions). “The artisans pay a membership fee calculated on the average price of the pieces they list on the site. We promote them and introduce them to new clients. We don't charge a commission fee,” she says. “Some sites try to hide makers' names to stop them cultivating independent relationships with clients. But clients can commission pieces directly from our makers.”

Ticciati curates the site herself and showcases her own furniture on it, but how does she find other makers? “Some artisans recommend others. I also trawl, go to fairs, look for people whose work resonates with me. I like things that are well made and subtle, pulling you in the more you examine them. I admire how craftspeople study a discipline, getting deeper

Words
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into it.” The site currently features work by ten makers, including Roxane Lahidji, who makes tables from salt culled from salt flats in France, mixed with tree resin and natural pigments; furniture and lighting by established brand Ochre; the organic furniture of Imperfettolab; Jeremy Pitts' wooden tree houses; Sia Taylor's delicate jewellery; and artist Kate Boxer's human and animal portraits. Ticciati believes that each maker's personality and passions determine the character of their pieces, and fittingly, the website features lyrical descriptions of each artist's work rather than soulless CVs trumpeting past achievements.

The Artisan Collab also recently inaugurated a Young Creator Fellowship, an annual award

launching next year that will support emerging product designers, makers and artists under 35. To enter, they must submit 500 words outlining their inspiration, process and manufacturing footprint and images of their work; there will be three finalists and one winner.

“Each year, a member of The Artisan Collab will design an award given to the winner,” says Ticciati. The fellowship offers one year's free membership of the site, plus PR and mentoring by other members. While the fellowship promises to see The Artisan Collab expand, Ticciati says she doesn't want it to grow for the sake of it: “It will be led by how many amazingly gifted people we find. I'd rather it was beautiful than sprawling and not so beautiful.”

Above
Giovanna Ticciati
alongside some
of her furniture
designs, including
a cast brass and
Jesmonite table

Facing page
Top to bottom:
Italian studio
Imperfettolab's
Nido chair, in
copper-coloured
fibreglass; *Blue
Wolf*, a print by
Kate Boxer