

— **Giulio Vignacca**

— "The meeting of cultures can happen thanks to a design project"

*Milan, Italy*

**Editorial design :**  
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En **Giulio Vinaccia**

Giulio Vinaccia has worked for twenty years as a product designer in developing electronics, sports equipment and lighting. He has realised projects for the most important Italian brands such as Brembo, Ferrari Spa, Piaggio Spa, Momo Design, Ducati, Aprilia, Gilera, Moschino and Borsalino.

Since 1994, he has been a consultant for development projects through the use of design as a development tool, collaborating with different organizations and international institutions.

Today, after working in more than 22 countries, he is one of the most considerate expert in 'social design oriented' projects, with expertise ranging from the identification of the cultural heritage, to the design of new lines of products, from the creation of commercial brands, graphic systems and visual identification to the concept of the communicative strategies.

In 2015, he was awarded with the World Green Design Contribution Award and in 2016, he received the 'Compasso d'Oro', the most important international design prize, for his work in Social Design.

He coordinate the Master in Design for Local Development managed in Madagascar by UNIDO and the Norwegian Government.

He has realized lectures and design seminaries in more than 26 countries, like Italy, Egypt, France Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Poland, Germany, Brazil, Colombia, Chile, Argentina, Iceland etc.

He is now full time engaged with Social Design Projects as a Senior Consultant for UNIDO and other UN agencies and National Governments.



# — Introduction

## — Methodology

The merge of different cultures such as a French designer and a Colombian Indian trying to obtain something in common, has always been fascinating to me.

Since the beginning of the history, the purpose of the Greeks and Egyptian, Arabs and Byzantines, Spanish conquerors and English noblemen... was the spread of their cultures. During this process they contacted other cultures and at the same time were influenced by them. Today we may not speak of Roman art, without mentioning Greek art, or Spanish baroque without Colonial baroque, or North American rationalist architecture without mentioning Bauhaus.

The purpose to gather the projects of our last 15 years in this book is practically describe as the meeting of cultures can happen thanks to a design project.

Our teams travelled more than 100.000 km using all possible means of transportation, from

airplane to a canoe, spreading this dream with thousand of artisans from all the continents.

Creole, Negro, Indigenous, Chinese, Arab, Sami, Euskera traditions were merged with the proposal from our team of designers.

In some occasions our work was limited only to document some magnificent handicrafts expressions; in others we valued ancient forms and textures. Occasionally the results obtained were indeed revolutionary and in others our participation went almost unnoticed.

An assessment of economic results from this experience will be much easier to determine than the human impact: how may one price the smile of an Egyptian embroideress?

For each one of us, this may be one of the most valuable rewards.

Giulio Vinaccia

## Methodology

Artisanal tradition expressively represents regional and local creativity. Its richness and uniqueness are expressed in the difference of techniques, materials and formal systems. It is the interpreter of history and culture and reflects the positive characteristics of the local reality.

It also contributes to the achievement of the sustainable and responsible of a new kind of consume that generates opportunities and wealth among local populations and assists in the preservation of cultural heritage.

Nevertheless, artisanal products encounter obstacles of different nature for their proper receptivity in the new commercialization channels offered by global markets. It even occurs that many are forced to reduce the quality of their products and to compete in low-price markets with products that come from other continents.

In order for the process of interchange between handicrafts and consume to develop and flourish, it should be understood that the dynamic and intersection between the two sectors constitute a fundamentally inter-cultural encounter that is often antagonistic: one is manual and traditional, while the other is virtual and contemporary, which tends to homogenize all diversity.

This collision between globalization and localization or between identity and modernity generates certain tensions, but also offers enormous possibilities for the actors to produce and bring to market products that possess a strong charge of local culture, as well as great opportunities for countries in terms of image, promotion and uniqueness.

It is only through knowing the mechanisms, motivations and particularities of cultural differences can we be able to avoid the process of translation or simplification that tends to reduce different symbolic universes to fit within a single framework of universal knowledge that must conform with the currently dominant culture.

### Process

When we work with a community of artisans with the intention of creating a line of products aimed at the local tourism market, high expectations normally arise regarding what will happen with the objects.

In reality we discover that, as the project advances, and leaving aside the material part of the work, it is in the interactions that occur in the working groups and in the technical and linguistic "contaminations" that the most interesting evolutions develop. It is essential that outside consultants to the community become agents in the dynamics, creating at the same time new product typologies and new professional relationships among artisans.

The artisan is often a solitary artist, who works independently within permanent structures with defined techniques and materials. The artisan stays in his place of origin and depends on it to sustain his production. He is not in a position nor has the time to relate with others, to get to know different techniques or alternative procedures.

A development project for artisan groups should therefore be understood not just as the development of innovative product lines; it must also create new interactions among artisans from different areas and using different techniques.

The project understood as an agent of change of the productive reality in a total way and as a catalyst of syncretistic reactions; and, the outside consultant as an acting element inside the collective system of creation and not as an external protagonist of a process.

The interaction between the artisan and the project occurs in practice: it basically happens in the gesture; in that gesture that combines the transformation of the function and that of the form. It is necessary that the project work with the artisans on this basis, respecting their knowledge, their tradition and their history.

### Objectives

In outline form, the main points to be followed in the development of and Integrated Handcrafts Project are:

- To transform artisanal activity into a viable and self-sustaining economic sector, capable of contributing to the improvement of the living conditions of the artisans, without the deterioration of culture and the environment.
- To recover and encourage local knowledge on local production techniques and raw materials.
- To create the necessary infrastructure in order to enable the handicrafts sector to be included in national and international lines of credit.
- To encourage flexibility in production and innovation through design.
- To train the handicrafts sector in complementary disciplines such as administrative and technical skills so that they can perform satisfactorily under the small-business operating model.
- To create an efficient system for the commercialization of artisanal products through



the tourism market.

### **Methodology of Intervention**

(Diagnosis - Analysis of Support Entities):

- Field of action and scope (branches, delegates, etc. ).
- Nature and organizational structure of institutions.
  - Short, medium and long-term programmes established, which are related to the handicrafts sector.
  - Physical resources: available spaces, means of transport and technology.
  - Financial resources available to carry out the project: agreements and/or contracts with other institutions, possible sponsors, own resources.
  - Human resources: profile of the collaborators.
  - Knowledge of the corporate image, mission and policies.
  - Experiences from the handicrafts sector: documentation, publications, reports, videos.
- Field Study Delimitation of the geographical and production zone.
- Determination of production cycles: local or religious festivals, internal consumption, traditional fairs or markets, environment, etc...
  - Determination of the communities of artisans, representative materials and techniques.
- Identification of the notable technical qualities of the area.
- Identification of the tourism structure present in the area.
  - Identification of medium and long-term development plans.
  - Reconnaissance of existing distribution channels, road infrastructure and connections with other production centres, type of sales carried out and buyer profile.

### **Evaluation**

Evaluation of the production and the potential of the enterprises and local artisans in terms of:

- Raw materials
- Technology
- Quality of production
- Sales price
- Packaging
- Production and market prospects
- Real and projected productive capacity

### **Analysis of the current scenario :**

- Historical and economic context of the region
- Links with other sectors at the regional and national levels.
- Future projections

### **Tourism :**

- Motivations of the region, historical importance, number of visitors, frequency and level

of expenditure.

### **Commercial :**

- Existing infrastructure, quantity and quality of points of sale, connotation of artisanal products.

### **Productive :**

- Share of GDP during the past 5 years.

### **Financial :**

- Knowledge of governmental policies and of other private investment and credit entities.

Definition of an Operational Plan Once the data has been processed, it will be possible to know is the four basic points needed to continue the project are met Willingness: Is the artisan community interested in the change? Are the management entities ready to get involved in the project? Do we have access to financial resources? Are there other projects with which we can carry out common action strategies?

Necessity: Is this project really necessary? If the response is affirmative in each and every one of these aspects, it would then be possible to define an operational plan in successive stages to be carried out in four major thematic areas:

- Product Adaptation Area Creating new product lines that utilize local materials, techniques and production
  - Capacity Offering technical assistance for quality production.
  - Training master craftsmen to work jointly with designers so that they can reproduce the experience in their community.
  - Creating didactic and expository materials for the Project.
  - Creating a resident professional core.
- Training Area Consolidating artisan workshops into Productive Units that adapt to new forms of economic organization without losing the cultural characteristics inherent to the activity.
  - Preserving the technical/artistic wisdom of the region and encouraging its transmission from generation to generation. Instructing the different groups of artisans in disciplines complementary to the productive activity: Sales techniques and management of tourism flows.
  - Administration, determination of costs of production, setting of sales prices, etc.
  - Technical updating, new tools, organization of production, storage of raw materials etc.

- Dissemination Area Creating an active system that communicates the potential of artisanal producers and their production.

Utilizing leading-edge technology means to:

- Structure handcraft routes or itineraries.
  - Make known the imaginative potential of handcraft markets.
  - Create data and image banks on the handcraft sector.
  - Create documentary videos on local techniques.
  - Create catalogues of products for multimedia or print dissemination.
  - Establish a system of travelling exhibits on the development and progress of the project.
  - Define the possibility of carrying out local and national advertising campaigns.
- Market Area It is necessary to:
- Highlight the cultural value that is present in each artisanal product.
  - Test the new products developed in order to measure the acceptance of the materials and techniques used, as well as of the prices proposed. Participate in market niches that are not traditionally considered.
  - Create an Integrated Image System that reaffirms and highlights the cultural characteristics of the product, with the following components : Creation of a System of Travelling Exhibitions allowing the direct sale of products.
  - Creation of a Packaging System that facilitates commercialization.
  - Creation of Trademarks of origin and Certificates for the products.
  - Creation of Franchise Systems that facilitate the distribution of the products.
  - Creation of the Corporate Image for the Franchise System.
  - Generate resources in a non-conventional manner through: Consulting services to local tourism systems.
  - Consultation and sales rights on the commercialization carried out through websites or online shops.
  - Commissions on sales through fairs and markets.
  - Sale of multimedia products (CD-ROM, interactive exhibition, catalogue).
  - Fees for the use of trademarks and franchises created.
  - Co-financing with other entities.

Evaluation and Monitoring Through the constant assistance of the Institutional Interlocutors and of the resident professional Core, the impact over time is measured of the development of the programme on the creative evolution of the artisans, on their level of income, the response of the market and its dissemination, with the aim of orienting new consulting exercises and keeping the Project up to date. For this purpose, Permanent Control Points are created during the Programme: periodic examinations in which the necessary information is

compiled in order to:

- Measure the acceptance of the products in the different markets.
- Detect changes in demand.
- Compare the prices set.
- Measure the level of knowledge of the public regarding traditions.

Conclusions and Recommendations we need to preserve the differences and individualities of each culture, without isolating them from the realities of the planet. The professional who provides advice in this process does not have to act directly, but rather has to propose himself as a visionary "translator" who interprets and preserves the living cultural biodiversity. The thesis on which we should work is that in the enhancement of local cultural heritage in all its extension and of handicrafts in particular lies one of the keys for the success of the economic and touristic proposals of the future, as well as for the creation of competitive advantages of destinations. Making a commitment to revitalizing, stimulating and innovating in local culture is at the same time a positive social investment and an excellent business opportunity. In a global tourism market that has reached an unprecedented level of oversupply and ultra-competition and will continue to go in this direction, offerings with high local cultural content is widely favoured due to its value of uniqueness and specificity. It is necessary to create simple mechanisms of interaction, articulation and cooperation between the private sector, traditional artisan communities and the pertinent public entities so that this universe of forms, techniques, colours and signs of local handicrafts can be transmitted in silent but precise manner, broadening the meaning of the message, transmitting to the tourist - without the intermediation of words - sensations, memories and experiences that refer to a concrete, material experience. Sensations and experiences that we often find forgotten in museums, galleries or handcraft workshops. Sensations that take on new life upon becoming a new source of inspiration for the development of a characterized tourism offering and of a new market option for artisan communities. Without a real valorization of original creativity and vigilant respect of its characteristics, there will be a tendency towards translation and transcoding that will reduce different symbolic universes into a uniform knowledge parameter, coincident with that of the dominant culture, and its price will be the simplification, the levelling, the elimination of the most evident aspects and of the most radical diversities. This process of valorization is undoubtedly more uncomfortable and uncer-



tain, less predictable and determinant, but can be very fertile for developing, carrying out, and deepening the difficult processes of transcultural knowledge that in recent years have been affirmed as an effort of recovery and preservation of the originality of traditional cultures. (. . .) We, fable inventors, believers in anything, feel we still have the right to believe it is no too late to start creating an opposite utopia.

*« A new and devastating life utopia where no one may decide for the other, not even how to die, where love is really true and happiness possible, where ancestors condemned to one hundred years of solitude may finally and forever have a second chance on earth. »*

Gabriel Garcia Marquez

*« Design can be used as an active tool to fight poverty and generate income and resilience in countries of the Global South through new types of creative economies. »*

*« Designers have a social responsibility! For too long, design was something like fashion: only for the happy few. This all changed: now designers are engaged as consultants specialized in finding solutions for every day life. We are problem-solvers, and well placed to do so since we have a foot in production, in marketing and in developing things of beauty. Today, designers increasingly design for the real world. »*

*« The project must be understood as an agent of change of the productive reality in a total way and as a catalyst of syncretistic reactions; the designer as an acting element inside the collective system of creation and not as an external protagonist of a process. »*

*« We are talking about a global methodology, who can be applied also to help the producers of the western countries like Italy, which are trouble because of the crisis, "In the past I could see what I did had been a success because the owner of the company got a new car, but the workers were stuck in the same situation. Of course what I do is just a drop in the sea of problems, but I believe in small revolutions. »*

Giulio Vinaccia



# — Madagascar

## — The TSARA PROJECT

### The TSARA PROJECT

The TSARA PROJECT organized and run by giulio vinaccia — an italian creative who has been an advisor for a range of international development projects initiated by such global institutions as UNWTO (World Tourism Organization), UNDP (United Nations Development Agency) and ITC (International Trade Centre) since 1994 — TSARA's objective is to engage local craftsman and see them involved in a socially and economically sustainable venture that improves their quality of life; while simultaneously strengthening the image of madagascar on the global stage.

#### Intention

Vinaccia's intention with TSARA ('beautiful' in malagasy) was to realize a collection of hand produced objects that employed the traditional craft techniques of the island, while expressing a quality in design that would be commercially viable on the contemporary market. To set TSARA in motion, he engaged three diverse artisan communities across madagascar: Farafangana — located in south-east madagascar and named after the place in which its members live, this area is economically supported by the craft work of the surrounding villages. The production structure there is composed exclusively of women who specialize in weaving natural fibres into bags, hats and mats; Atelier Dieudonné et Violette — positioned just outside of the capital of Antananarivo, the self-sustained community specializing in metal consists of more than 350 people who live, work and eat on site, while their children attend school, also within the workshop complex; and 67 Ha — inside the poorest neighborhood in Antananarivo where men produce tubular metal frames for chairs and tables, while women weave recycled plastic into table tops, seats and backrests. The community has also been collaborating with the women of Farafangana who are making natural fibre upholstery options for the furniture pieces, along with other products.

Observing well-established craft trends in the local market that are lacking a network for a more global distribution, Vinaccia worked with malagasy rural artisans to develop the furniture, home decorations and bags with the thought of appealing to hotels and resorts cited in the area

of the indian ocean, as well as within the european markets. In order to establish a business model that first and foremost financially improves the lives of the individuals involved, Vinaccia and UNIDO asked the craftsman what stipend they would ideally like to receive for their work. Based on their consensus, costs for the TSARA products were established. This simple survey and implementation has brought forth competitive pricing for the handcrafted pieces compared to other initiatives with similar intentions, whose long-term strategies focus more on 'making money', rather than providing increased quality of hygiene, workplace and living conditions for the individuals involved.

300 artisans participated in the initial phase of TSARA, 120 (75 women and 45 men) of which underwent intensive practical training with Vinaccia to learn about production techniques. As a conclusion to this first stage, more than 120 prototypes were showcased in a grand exhibition on december 5th, 2014 which brought forth the social and economic efforts of the project to the broader malagasy community. Hosted at the queen's royal palace of antananarivo, the event was attended by the prime minister of madagascar. the show was a culmination of the almost year-long journey and those involved in it, with large images — captured by Gabriele Balcewicz Lemanski — depicting the various crafts people working on TSARA acting as a backdrop to the pieces presented.

While the physical outcome of the ambitious enterprise was displayed, the unseen benefits of TSARA are significant. More than 43 women have received leadership and financial education from the ministry of craft, culture and heritage; women from the community of farafangana have received eye examinations, with 34 of them being equipped with eyeglasses to enhance their daily activities; while six villages have been given access to tools to upgrade the hygiene conditions in their respective workplaces. An additional asset of the collaboration has seen a contract with air madagascar, who will purchase pieces especially designed by vinaccia and produced by the participating artisans for the business lounge and business class travels of the airline, further benefiting and circulating their work to a greater market.

Madagascar

#### Organizer:

Giulio Vinaccia

#### The main artisans communities involved:

Farafangana, Atelier de Violette et de Dieudonné, 67 Ha

#### Partner:

UNIDO (United Nations Industrial Development Organisation),

UNDP (United Nations Development Programme)





Images par Gabriele Balcewicz Lemanski



# — **Lankaboo**

## — *Sri Lanka Bamboo Collection*

### *Sri Lanka Bamboo Collection*

Bamboo can serve as a substitute for trees (for industrial wood applications) and as an energy crop (for wood pellets). It is advantageous to use for these purposes because bamboo is much faster growing than most trees, they help with soil quality and prevent erosion, and there are many different species which can adapt to numerous environmental circumstances. Newly planted tropical bamboos generally take about 3-4 years to develop into full sized clumps and a total of 6-7 years before being fully harvestable. The vertical growth of the each aerial stem (or culm) of the bamboo plant bamboo is completed in a period of three to four months. Unlike trees, bamboo culms do not undergo secondary growth, i. e. the diameter of each culm remains unchanged over the years. Culms undergo a process of lignification and harden over time, and are usually fully mature and ready for harvesting as timber after three years.

The idea of the LANKABOO collection is to develop a bamboo lines who can be used in the Hotels-resorts -Touristic sector in the Island. The project was developed in a series of workshops who has intended to share conscious knowledge of the utilization of bamboo as a substitute for wood while tackling deforestation and creating innovative and sustainable products. At the same time, to provide in-depth preparation in design for international projects in creative industries, where design is considered as a critical driver of economic and social development.

The workshops were guided by URAVU India (Indigenous Science and Technology Study Centre-India in collaboration with UNIDO, the Ministry of Industry of Srilanka and the founding of GEF.

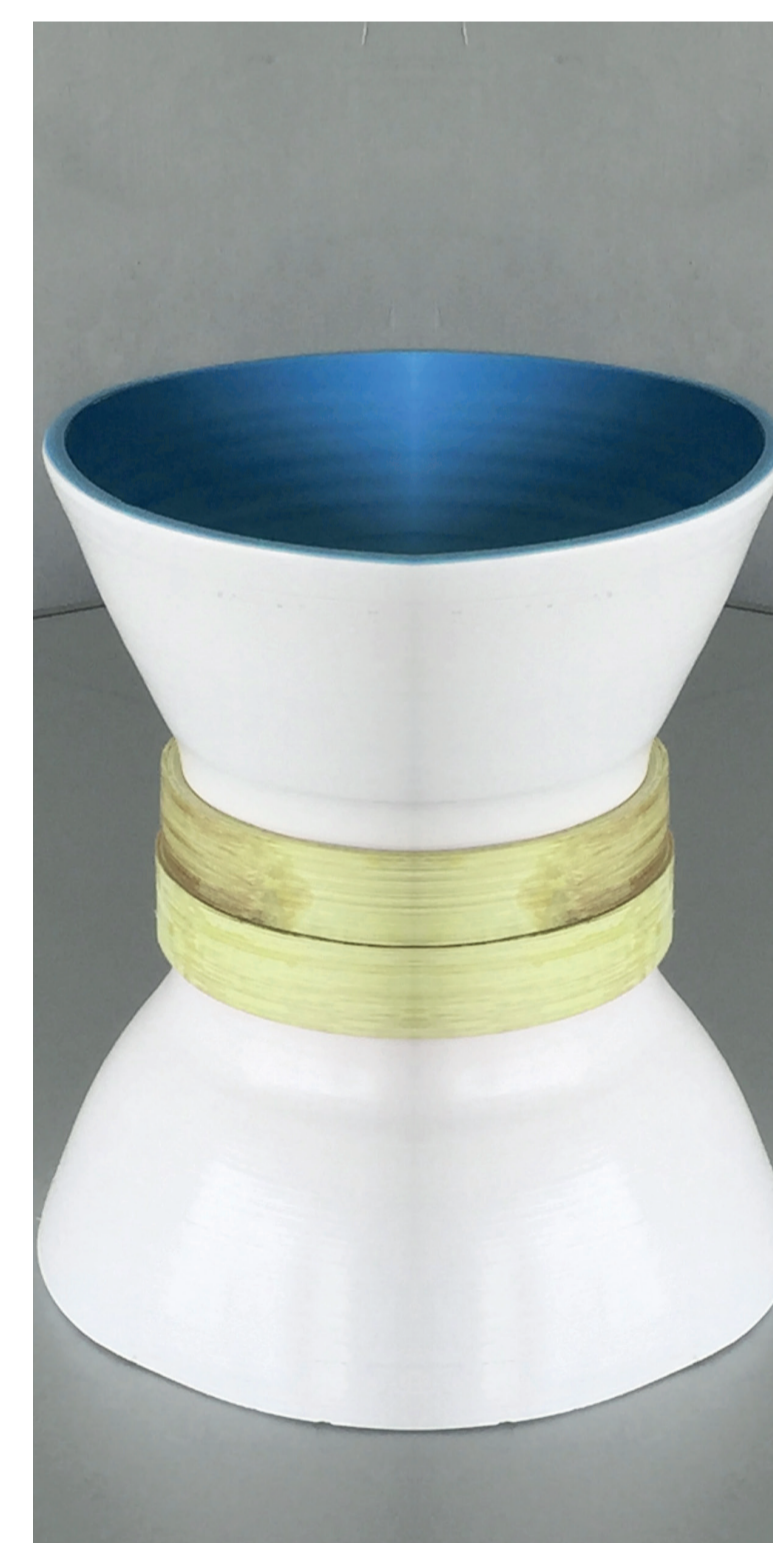
*Lankaboo - Sri Lanka*

**Organizer :**  
*Giulio Vinaccia*

**Partner :**  
*Uravu Indigenous Science & Technology Study Centre ,  
UNIDO (United Nations Industrial Development Organisation),  
Ministry of Industry of Srilanka, The founding of GEF*









# — IRTH Collective

## — Jordan collection

### Jordan collection

As a result of the on-going conflict in Syria, thousands of Syrians have fled their homeland seeking refuge outside of the borders of their country; this has in consequence created an unprecedented global refugee crisis, which has commenced at the borders of Syria's neighboring countries such as Iraq, Lebanon and Jordan, affecting their already-fragile economies tremendously. According to UNHCR Statistics dating from December 2015, countries such as Jordan have hosted about 937,830 refugees from Syria alone, amounting to about 10% of Jordan's population. Jordan has shown commitment in attempting to offer a safe and dignified refuge to the Syrian refugees.

The IRTH Collective cover different lines of products realized by different refugees associations:

- The Soap Collection realized by the women of Zarqa Life Centre, the collections include Jordan Herbs, Citruses, and specialty soaps for various skin types.
  - Delicately handcrafted by Syrian and Jordanian women in Zarqa. Your support strengthens women and changes lives.
  - Lulu Bags Capsule Collection a contemporary, hand embroidered bags created to be transformative, reflecting the latest trends and designs, inspired by the world of pop art and classic icons with a touch of Jordan.
- Lulu bags explore a combination of new textures, durable light and fun material, making it the one bag you need to carry you through the day. This collection is handmade by the motivated and creative team at LULU Women's Association in the small mountain village in Sakhra, Jordan.

– AlRayan Home-ware pieces combining modern ceramics with decorative cattail bases, offering style and functionality to your table.

These products are expertly hand woven by the women of Bab Al Rayyan association, located in Wadi El Rayyan, a beautiful valley descending 20 Km from the forested uplands to the warmth of the Jordan Valley and local ceramic craftsmen in Jordan. The union of all these talents contributes to the quality and uniqueness of each piece.

– The Azraq Luxury Spa Collection was designed to provide you with a relaxing and detoxifying experience.

The artisanal face and body soaps, body scrubs, bath salts, fizzy bath cubes and massage oil candles are made by the skilled women of Azraq Women's Association. Using highest quality raw materials of dead sea salts, body butters, pure essential oils and locally grown herbs of sage, chamomile and wild thyme.

In collaboration with the Women's Association of Umm Al-Jimal for Heritage Preservation the hand carved basalt accessories provide style, ambiance and the grounding energy of the northern desert region of Jordan. These products supports the community of Azraq and Umm Al-Jimal who welcome Syrian refugees despite their own economic challenges.

The project «Employment creation and promotion of in-come generating activities for the host communities» funded by the Austrian government and implemented by the United Nations Organization for Industrial Development (UNIDO) in Jordan.

Jordan

**Organizer :**

Giulio Vinaccia

**Refugees associations :**

The Soap Collection, Lulu Bags Capsule Collection, AlRayan Home-ware

**Partner :**

UNIDO (United Nations Industrial Development Organisation)









# — The Creative Mediterranean project

## — Resilience through creativity

### Resilience through creativity

Despite the harshness of the surrounding environment it is able to create solutions, strength, hope and work opportunities. Creativity is the perfect response of those who choose courageously to remain in dangerous, degraded situations, relying on their roots and being able to perceive what is still beautiful in the present, in spite of economic downturns. It is a quality that has united all cultures of the Mediterranean, from the Maghreb to Mesopotamia, since the dawn of civilization.

The Creative Mediterranean project supports the development of clusters in cultural and creative industries in the Southern Mediterranean (Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia, and Palestine). The aim is to harness the creativity of craftsmen and SMEs, and encourage them to create new brands and modern collections using traditional designs and techniques of production that are distinctive to the region.

By stimulating workers' creativity to develop these techniques and assist them to adapt them to the contemporary world, the project contributes to preserve the thousand-year old cultural heritage of the region and transforms it into a tool to develop its economic activity, improve workers' living conditions and finally their resilience to crisis.

The use of this heritage is also the most powerful answer to unemployment; by creating new products and cultural services using this heritage, the feeling of belonging, identification with the region and pride is reinforced not only among the craftsmen and artists, but also among the inhabitants of the region.

Creativity becomes a tool to give a better life to workers, improve resilience and give them means to stay and work in their country, besides the actual situation. Resilience is built through creativity.

This project was implemented by UNIDO with the support of the EU and the Italian Government from the 2014-2019.

Southern Mediterranean

**Organizer:**  
Giulio Vinaccia

**Support:**  
UNIDO (United Nations Industrial Development Organisation),  
EU (The European Union), Italian Government (2014-2019)





