

Tatiana

Iceland



My journey into the world of traditional upholstery started in 2010 as a hobby: exploring arts&crafts period practices with particular focus on seat furniture. Still working as b2b marketer I got excited by the magnificent world of traditional crafts, the world that was in many aspects polar to the high tech industries in which I had by then worked for over 20 years.

Today reconstruction of antique and vintage seating, both traditionally upholstered and woven, has become my full time occupation. If told just a few years ago, would I have believed that my professional life could make such a turn? Probably not. Am I happy with how it has developed? Definitely yes. Working full time in my chair studio I hardly notice how time flies. My hobby is now my profession.



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I started my search of a found The Traditional AMUSF website. The magic attention.

I wrote to Liz and her very was reassuring. The meeting my requirements as accommodation was literally

Having started studying the craft in Iceland, via education in college, apprenticeship and extensive reading, I had learned the basics of both traditional and modern upholstery and was looking for a deep-dive into the traditional method. My passion and focal point was reconstructing antique chairs exactly the way as they were originally made – using the same materials, tools and work practices. Making the seats true to the period, employing techniques that have proven to ensure

products that last generations, emphasizing the idea of organic materials.

training course in the UK and Upholstery Workshop via the word „traditional“ caught my

prompt and friendly response schedule was friendly, very well traveller from overseas. The next door which simplified the





logistics. Liz was not only professional in answering my questions and helping find solutions – she also showed a lot of patience to tackle some unexpected logistics issues that arose last moment and were about to prevent me from being able to attend.

I traveled to Wales for the training with Liz twice. First in 2014, straight after I had graduated from the technical college and completed my 2-years' apprenticeship here in Iceland. I had quite high expectation of the two-weeks training, however the reality far exceeded what my imagination had drawn. Staying at antique farm guest house literally next door to the training centre which itself is located in one of the antique



buildings of the same farm, enjoying the friendly environment and the beautiful views to the rural landscape, increased the impression of stepping into the shoes of an old times upholsterer. During this session I reupholstered this antique mahogany armchair which was kindly provided by my friend's friend. This helped me solve the logistics and motivation problems: carrying a chair from Iceland and back did not look realistic, and putting work and heart into upholstering it knowing I would have to leave it behind felt a waste – but knowing it was owned and valued by the family of my dear friend's friend gave a sense of purpose.

I so much enjoyed every single moment in the training that took the chair to my room for the weekend, to be able to continue making the hand stitches.

Having the chair ready just on time before the closure of my last day in at the Workshop gave a feeling of achievement. The beautiful local woollen fabric blended with the picturesque nature surrounding the workshop. If asked what could have been better during these two weeks I would not know what to say. I had learnt a lot and was sure I wanted to come back and continue.



Encouraged I returned to Iceland and while working in the furniture industry, kept looking for a new opportunity to get a further training at The Traditional Upholstery Workshop. The three techniques I was particularly looking to focus on during my next session were the antique

method of tufting (deep buttoning), upholstery of chairs with cast iron frames, and hand sewn squab cushion.



The new opportunity came in 2016: I was excited and after 2.5 years felt coming back home, as if my previous session had been just a few weeks earlier.

For the tufting project I designed and made a mahogany footstool with modular frame, which allowed me to take the seat to Wales in my check-in luggage and back– and attach the ready deep-buttoned seat to the base when back home to Iceland. I was extremely lucky with cast iron frames: two of this kind of rare chairs were there at the workshop so that I got the opportunity to compare the differences in the frames, and to try and upholster a section of one of them. And on the last day of my two-weeks' session Liz guided me through making a

squab cushion stuffed with animal hair – using a technique typical for old mattresses.

I had read the details of all the three techniques in professional literature before my travel, but of course having the hands-on experience under the guidance of professional tutors who know these antique techniques down to small details, made the difference.

Once back to Iceland, I finalized the footstool and took a photo of it in an Icelandic lava field.

Inspired by the two weeks in the UK, when back home I upholstered this Victorian nursing chair. This project was inspired by gentlemen costume, and therefore I used vintage „Made in England“ costume fabric, and added a bow-tie shaped pillow. The trimming, and the leather buttons on the cushion are also vintage.



I very much hope to be able to come to the Traditional Upholstery Workshop again. Craft is all about small knowhow and one can never have too much of a good training. And I would have no hesitation to recommend The Traditional Upholstery Workshop to anyone who is interested to explore the fascinating world of traditional upholstery.