

An Interview with Patrick Damiaens



Here we meet Belgian woodcarver Patrick Damiaens, a woodcarver specializing in ornate carving. Patrick Damiaens has been described as the only full-time ornamental woodcarver in Flanders, the last of a dying breed. He started his professional career in 1992. Patrick specializes in a style called Liège, which is a 17th-century furniture style that is richly decorated and intricately

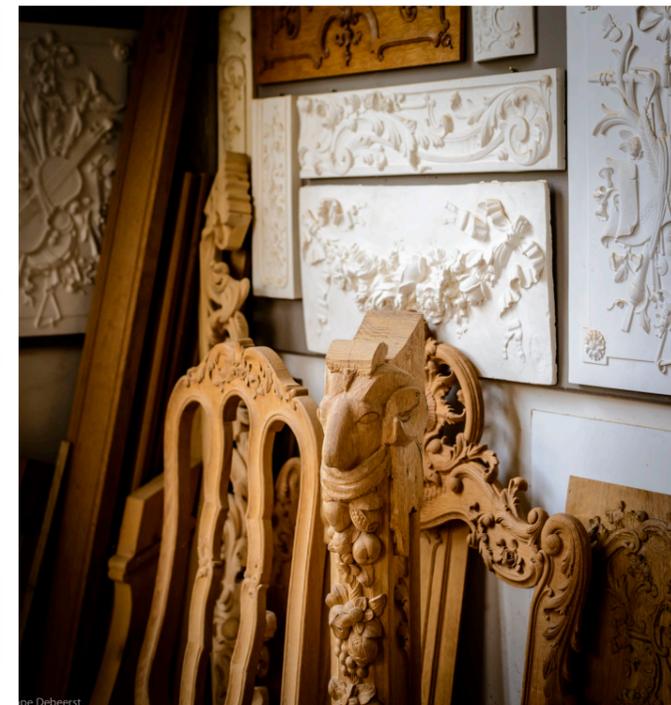
carved. It is named after the city of Liège and this city still remains an important center for woodcarving.

He has been interested in art and its history since childhood, visiting an exhibition or museum every couple of weeks. Initially, Patrick thought that he wanted to be an archaeologist or art historian. However, he ended up

choosing woodwork, first studying for seven years at the Sint-Jansberg College in Maaseik and then studying at the Don Bosco Institute in Liège (which has sadly stopped teaching after 117 years).

Patrick's workshop creates a wide variety of furniture and ornamentation for customers throughout Belgium, nearby countries and the wider world. Between commissions, Patrick spends time working on projects around his own home, such as his passion for the craft. Patrick draws a lot of inspiration from his frequent visits to the Palace of Versailles: 'I'm fascinated by the interior of the Palace of Versailles. That is still an enormous inspiration for me'.

'My carvings are made by the info we get on the Internet, from colleagues, castles, visits of museums and the interiors of stately houses. I take many photos and have a large library (500 books) on the applications of ornamentation. My whole life is situated around my work. Holidays are picked so that I can visit a number of castles, agreements with the management of museums and castles about taking



pictures is also arranged weeks before the visit. My photo collection is particularly large. With these pictures I also try to make interesting blog entries on (see below). Also a large collection of plaster models is important for the wood carver, they show the artist the look or design of a given period.'

With a lack of appropriate apprenticeships and teaching institutions, Patrick is worried about the art of woodcarving dying out in Belgium. He devotes one evening a week to teaching a class despite his hectic schedule.

Patrick has recently been awarded the Belgian Gold Honour Badge of Labour, awarded by Royal Decree from the Royal Institute of the Elites of Labour. It is a great recognition of his skill, quality of work and commitment. He says that it is 'recognition for 25 years of perseverance' and is very proud to receive the honour.

For more information on Patrick or to see more of his work, please visit his website www.patrickdamiaens.be or take a look at his blog ornamentsnijder.blogspot.co.uk

By The Editor

