

Aid to Artisans

Spring 2018 Newsletter



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Tunisian Crafts Blossom with New Designs and Training

Inspired by the landscape and cultural, and richly influenced by its age-old heritage, Tunisian crafts have had limited exposure in local Medinas and few places overseas. However given the tremendous potential and demand for handmade craft, ATA is offering new opportunities for Tunisians crafts to expand to the US market.

This March, ATA launched its maiden venture in Tunisia by organizing the largest-ever local Market Readiness Program (MRP) in Tunis, enhancing the crafts and business skills of 50 artisan entrepreneurs. ATA conducted the MRP in collaboration with the [International Organization for Human Development \(IDH\)](#) at the headquarters of the [National Office of Handicraft \(ONAT\)](#). Our project is funded by the US State Department.

The program provided valuable information in an interactive environment. The MRP offered one-on-one time with US experts, engaging in topics as product design, merchandising, US market trends, costing and pricing, and US buyer expectations.

Led by ATA trainers Lauren Barkume, Alex Bates, Stacy Spivak and Annie Waterman, the three day MRP covered design and product development, including design and business mentoring to develop a deeper understanding of market trends, production planning, and product pricing.

“We had a lot of fun with the participants, and everyone was excited to dig into the practical sessions.” observes Lauren Barkume. The MRP training included product reviews that provided artisans feedback on product design, brand, color, trend, packaging, quality and export potential. “





“It was an interactive and lively process and the group developed camaraderie with each other. The common thread woven through all was a strong, independent and inspiring entrepreneurial spirit with pride in Tunisian craftsmanship” says Alex Bates.

The ATA team trained on how to create and use mood boards as a visual tool; either to help inspire new collections with current design trends, or to shape their brand.



“The group was quite engaged in the mood board activity. It was a lot of fun and a positive competitive spirit was evident as they demonstrated strong ownership when presenting their concepts and ideas back to the group. In all, it was an inspiring few days” Alex Bates.

“This experience allowed us to work in groups with other craftspeople, to exchange our history, and even to collaborate and use other materials.” says artisan Khalil Slama.





“The MRP workshop was a great opportunity to understand the American consumer’s mentality, his reasoning, and his thoughts... I learned the means and tools that can attract the attention of the American buyer.” says fellow participant Khenissi Med Ali.

Under the guidance of Alex Bates, who is currently curating and developing a collection for NY NOW, two young designers and artisans are working together with a mix of traditional and modern

design ideas in different mediums. The NY NOW collection will include a range of materials and categories including ceramics, handwoven pillows, throws and rugs, classic foutas, olive wood, natural weaves in baskets and pendants, and hand-blown glass, and mosaic.

The look is handmade simplicity, the simple forms letting the material take center stage. “We will see elements of Tunisia’s rich heritage and artisanal





traditions in the techniques, forms, and materials. It is a collection of products that have a shared point of view and play nicely together but come from a range of regions, traditions and different artisan groups. A simple monochromatic palette and material mix will be the unifying thread” says Alex Bates.



This first time opportunity is exciting for artisans testing the marketability of their crafts in the US and they are busy creating new product lines for the forthcoming show. With the upcoming NY NOW in August, followed by the winter LAS Vegas Market, we wish Tunisian artisans the best in taking their crafts international.



ATA Revives Djiboutian Heritage



This spring, Aid to Artisans continued its Artisans Women Initiative in Djibouti by conducting 2 product development workshops in Ali Sabieh and Tadjourah. This initiative is the second phase of our Job Promotion for Youth in Crafts project (PROPEJA) project. Funded by the World Bank and

the Japanese Government, through the Agence Djiboutienne de Développement Social, the project has provided practical skills training and access to finance for over 3000 youth and women living in poor communities in Djibouti-ville, Arta, Tadjourah, and Ali Sabieh.



A workshop training artisans in beading and basketry was conducted by ATA consultants Caroline Winckel and Binky Newman. The workshop successfully engaged artisans from remote areas to create new designs and products using local raw materials. The workshop's goal was to develop new product lines for the U.S., French, and Japanese military communities in Djibouti. The two eight-day workshops at Ali Sabieh and Tadjourah, trained 130 artisans. Seventy specialized in beading, sixty focused on basketry.

Caroline Winckel's workshop was inspired by the colors of Djibouti. "Walking through the city, and the regions, you will find a palette of colors of local inspiration. I took inspiration from the colors of women, painted wall, facades of homes and local resources such as stones and pearls. For forms, I first looked at what existed and tried to adapt them to the most contemporary". For example, Caroline was successful in repurposing traditional wooden combs of Sabieh and transforming them into pendants.





Caroline also expanded the artisans' product line to embroidered evening gowns, incorporating new value by adding details to enhance the hand made products. "The idea is to create a story or one that will pull the customer toward the product that tells its own story".

"It was an honor and privilege for me to work with such talented weavers. I thoroughly enjoyed the interaction with them and greatly appreciated their commitment and readiness to adapt to new ideas. The women in both areas exhibited excellent technical skills. My focus was very much on refining the skills, i.e. the stitches and weaves that already existed. We also made some baskets with the embroidery technique. This is an area that could be further developed" commented ATA consultant Binky Newman.

Caroline observed that the Ali Sabieh artisans took to new design easily and were quick to learn. These women artisans needed to appreciate themselves in a new role-- It was a challenge. "While it was more difficult to develop an idea, after several days they gained confidence and began to understand that it may be better to try incorporate new designs and forms that are faster to make and easier to sell".





The biggest achievement of the workshops was a fair held in Camp Lemonier, the base of operations for U.S. Africa Command. This was the first time ATA focused on military personnel and their spouses as customers. The Ali Sabieh were particularly successful with their baskets, with sixty-nine sold. New designs and colors in beadwork attracted customers and resulted ninety-nine pieces being sold.

Building on our success at Camp Lemonier, ATA is organizing local exhibits and forming market linkages. We are helping women artisans establish relations with the Japanese embassy, Sheraton

hotel and French institutions for future events. Moreover, tourist offices in Djibouti are adding authentic handmade Djiboutian crafts in their gift shops.

“There is an intangible heritage, a wealth of craft skills and culture and the greatest strength of artisans is the talent and their openness to adapt that persists” said Caroline Winkler. With support and encouragement from the government, design training as well as sales at local exhibitions, fairs for expatriates and tourists, Djiboutian artisans are set to thrive and preserve their craft heritage.





CASE: A Success in Sustainability and Human Impact

Coaching and Assistance for Sustainable Entrepreneurship (CASE), an artisan development project in Chiapas, Mexico (2016-18) led by CL-ATA and funded by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, was completed on April 30, 2018. It assisted 350 Mayan women artisans and their families. Building on a previous project, CASE aimed to strengthen family economic security, human development and quality of life for the Mayans. CASE's approach was grassroots and person-to-person and drew artisans from the poor communities of rural Pantelhó, Aldama, Tenejapa, Chenalhó, Mitontic, Sitalá, San Juan Cancuc. The aim of the project was to provide livelihoods to artisans and help them become financially independent and sustainable.





ATA led workshops in design and color training to develop new products. "Training makes a difference in design and commercialization. The chance to experiment and make ideas a reality makes a good artisan, a different one." says Guillermo Macias, a former ATA project manager, who is now a local business leader.

Gender based training enhanced the human impact of CASE. Adela Bonilla Vidal, local Gender Specialist, organized gender focus groups. Men were encouraged to attend to improve their understanding of the new roles their wives were taking on. "We designed this initiative in a holistic manner, by making gender based awareness and examination of cultural restraints an integral part of artisan development, said Monika Steinberger, ATA's Director of Projects and New Business Development.





As a result of CASE, women have greater say in family finances. Some are the family's primary provider thanks to the income they receive from their crafts. Says an artisan from Pantelhó, "... before, my husband would not let me leave [meaning attend markets] but now he does, because he sees that I earn money and that is why he lets me come to the workshops" [taught by ATA]. "Yes, my financial contribution to the home has made a difference and I am included in family decisions" (artisan from

Aldama).

Successful workshops and training led to the birth of an independent enterprise "[Kip Tik](#)" (meaning "our strength" in Mayan dialect). As ATA Mexico partner, Kip Tik serves as key marketing link for the artisans of Chiapas and US buyers providing continued support for income generation to the artisans. In 2017, they were able to generate US \$200,000 in sales.



“As an independent organization, we are keeping our original mission: increase artisan income and improve the lives of the people we are working with; we continue to develop as a sustainable commercial platform, making possible a better life for the artisans and the people that work in Kip Tik”, says Guillermo Macias founder of Kip Tik.

“Having continuous work has helped us to be more secure and invest in the family, especially my children. It gives me peace of mind that we can continue selling our products to more people. Pedro, my husband is now more aware of the work needed at home and helps me with the children when I have to work on my orders, because this is helping us all”, says Delfina Aguilar Hernandez, Aguacatenando, Venustiano Carranza



“In my opinion, the greatest achievements of CASE - in addition to those mentioned by the artisans – are the consolidation of ATA’s work in Mexico’s poorest municipalities and recognition by civil society and international organizations. Artisans consider craftsmanship a viable source of income and an excellent career for young people. The artisans see a future with more possibilities, says María Eugenia Pineda Meléndez, CL-ATA Mexico Country Director.





Bold Bright Beautiful

#HandmadelModern

We are excited to launch the 2018 Market Readiness Program™ at [NY NOW](#) this summer. Join us this **August 12-16** with craft-based organization leaders, social entrepreneurs, non-profit founders and designers. Receive mentorship from the industry's best and brightest. Come network, engage and expand your work within the artisan sector with this unique program.

Thank You!

Aid to Artisans

Artisans around the world need your support! Please make a donation by clicking [here](#).

