

ARPA ARTIGOS DE OURIVESARIA, LDA.

Just as the people used to say that in Nazaré all streets lead to the sea, in Gondomar the streets were named after the exponent of local art, Filigree. Workshops multiplied there, where silence reigned, typical of the concentration needed to carry out the work well. Every so often, the silence would be interrupted by the wheels of ox-driven carts or the calls of fish saleswomen, answered by women running to make their purchase and having to decide between the jack mackerel for lunch or the hake for supper.

But on *Rua dos Ourives* (Goldsmiths' Street), home to 12 Filigree workshops, things were different. School children would run down the road after school, laughing and shouting, carrying their leather satchels in a frenzy so characteristic of childhood. At the end of the 1960s, aged 8, António was among the small crowd of children. With an open smile, the race ended for António at number 58, *Rua dos Ourives*. Then, it was time to don a grown-up's demeanour and get busy with the arts of Filigree as an artisan, creating grains and rosettes.

He grew up in the workshop, writing the story of his early youth in thin gold threads. When he was 22, the Portuguese Navy called him up for service, participating in naval operations for Portugal's military defence, following the motto he would never forget: *Honour the homeland for the homeland watches over you*.

Three years later, António returned home to live out his passion and set up his own Filigree workshop. Still very young, he was certain that he would honour the homeland that watched him, but now through his art, drawing inspiration from the waves of the sea that the Navy allowed him to study so closely for creating unique pieces of jewellery.

There would be a setback, however: in the 1990s, a new concept in fashion appeared and spread into jewellery: minimalism. This new aesthetic pruned away details and created wider shapes, more discrete lines, and a simplistic view of life, in stark contrast to the excesses of the 1980s. Filigree, with its attention to rich detail, was exactly the opposite of this concept. For two years, António made silver jewellery using much simplified designs, fighting against his DNA and his obsession with the detail.

But his story is made up of new beginnings. During the storm, he made a firm decision: António hoisted his sails and navigated towards the timelessness of Filigree. He rose once more and worked for something greater than himself: his belief. "Filigree is my life," he says again and again.

Sixteen goldsmiths and five *enchedeiras* (fillers) now work at his workshop, a living epic that revisits his past. Alongside the earrings, bracelets, pendants, rings and other decorative jewellery, the cabinets exhibit complex Caravels and Rabelo boats richly adorned with twisted and beaten fine gold thread in structures filled with delicate cornucopias, swirls, grains and rosettes. His Navy days are still there. But in Filigree.

Texts by Sónia Felgueiras

Enchant yourself with the story
of António in video

