

# ANTÓNIO DE OLIVEIRA CARDOSO

António de Oliveira Cardoso, known as “Master Cardoso”, is a discreet man. Gifted with an exceptional wisdom, skill and talent for the arts of Filigree, he has a mastery over the technique of beaten and twisted threads and is respected by other artisans, a line of expert goldsmiths with whom he has a relationship of deep commitment and loyalty to the art that they have in common.

Master Cardoso is a Filigree teacher and exercises his teaching practice, not needing academic degrees as evidence. “The hands are the ones who create,” as he likes to say, revealing his creative freedom in creating unique jewels that his partner in life, Rosa, whom he married 43 years ago, fills with infinite patience and very, very fine threads.

He turns the pages of his notebook as if it was a rare book, and so it is. It bears the sketches of all the jewels he has made so far, with scales showing thread sizes. “It's over 80 years old!”, he proudly says as he runs his fingers over the old worn pages. The soldering powder is sprinkled over the jewel in a melody resembling a lightly crackling stars shower. It could easily be stardust from the Filigree constellation...

He raises his eyes to recall that one day he received a knock at the door with an unexpected request. American actress Sharon Stone was coming to Portugal to baptise a Douro River cruise ship and they wanted her to be dazzled. As a perfect balance of tradition and innovation, history and modernity, which jewel could be more fascinating and revealing of something so authentically Portuguese? The Master recovered the traditional lines of Filigree and put them firmly in the limelight in the form of an eye-catching heart. From Portugal to Beverly Hills, the Heart outshone the stars and looked exceptional on the famous actress' neck as a masterpiece of Filigree and Portuguese emotional heritage.

The jewel that became known to the world from that moment on has a history. Queen Mary I of Portugal had a heart made in gratitude for the birth of her son. The heart represents female fertility, evidenced by the rounded shape that encloses a small circle connected to the central piece, symbolizing the child's connection its mother's womb. The cornucopias and details that go into this jewel in a careful work of patience and passion grant it a matchless elegance, making the Heart Portugal's most timeless jewel.

Master Cardoso unveiled to the world the charms of Portuguese Filigree in a Heart that still beats on Sharon Stone's chest. But international visibility has not inflated his ego. Quite the contrary. He is a Master because he dreams the dream of the apprentice. Master Cardoso is an example of dedication and humbleness, sitting on his small wooden stool — the seat he inherited from his father, also a goldsmith and an artisan. In his own view of himself, he remains an eternal beginner, because being a Master is the beginning and the middle, but never the end.

Texts by Sónia Felgueiras

Enchant yourself with the story  
of Mestre Cardoso in video

