

JORGE SILVA, LDA.

From sunrise to sunset.

Jorge travels back in time to when he was nine years old, and his father would pick him up from school to work on Filigree. Revisiting this memory, he pauses to smile. Nostalgia starts to take over. And he sighs. By the age of twelve, he was working full-time with his father: “We worked from sunrise to sunset. Every day.”

Jorge opened his own workshop at the age of 22. His wish was to honour the family legacy, journeying through the expertise of Filigree the rest of his life. Then he fell in love with Isabel. They exchanged vows of eternal love, and he brought her along to learn his art. She had never even dreamed of working with Filigree, but has now the magic in her hands. When she picks up microscopic gold threads, Isabel transforms them into cornucopias and nestles them against each other with breathtaking lightness, making this difficult task look easy. She doesn't know how to do anything else — and she doesn't want to. Isabel is passionate about her art.

On *Rua das Filigranas* (Filigree Street), where the workshop is located, a silent melody prevails. Only the birdsong can be heard outside. In the workshop, Jorge, Isabel and the five artisan goldsmiths working there, all young, are undistracted by the radio. It is just there as company, like an artisan of the entertainment. Working with Filigree requires concentration and patience, and each artisan is fully absorbed in the jewel he or she is working on, a delicate and lengthy process. “They have free rein to create.” Jorge is proud that he gives his artisans the room to bring in new ideas and models.

He knows the risks of not innovating. New trends in fashion made him waver in 2004. “The demand for Filigree dried up.” Social archetypes meant that jewellery became less structured, more minimalist, stripped of any detail or history. Ephemeral fashion, transient by its very nature, expressed the supremacy of appearances. But in the age of emptiness, ephemerality was fertile soil for tradition to take over. It was time to read between the lines and, between the temporary and the permanent, Filigree rose anew from four hands in Jorge and Isabel's workshop.

That troubled time taught them that they could not remain anchored to the past and that, while remaining faithful to the tradition, they could create something new. Jorge and Isabel are especially proud of the Filigree heart that is filled using the wheel technique. The effect is rich but complex and difficult to execute; it takes Isabel and the *enchedeiras* (fillers) working from home endless hours to complete. It was precisely such complexity that put them in the spotlight. They went from a single heart to a whole collection in just a ray of sunlight. A medallion, earrings, ring and bracelet none of these pieces has an inner skeleton as structure, and all are filled with wheels linked to each other, giving the jewels a unique beauty, firmness and stability.

Fortunately, the work is not done from sunrise to sunset anymore. When the sun dictated the day's work, there was no time to enjoy other beautiful things in life, like the birdsong on *Rua das Filigranas*, a smile, a quiet moment, or the pure art of Filigree.

Texts by Sónia Felgueiras

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of Jorge and Isabel in video

