

No. 2	Victor Clopotar, master coppersmith	Romania	Transylvania	Brateiu
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Categories of cultural heritage

Professional craftspeople	Knowledge transfer	Presentation of crafts	Network for preservation of crafts	Local community building	Crafts within tourism
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Description

Victor Clopotar is a master coppersmith from the Roma community in Brateiu, Transylvania, Romania. He belongs to the Căldărari, a subgroup of the Roma people known for their expertise in metalworking. His work focuses on creating traditional copper objects like trays, pitchers, and distillation stills, continuing a family tradition that dates back generations. Victor began practicing coppersmithing as a child, inheriting the trade as part of his cultural identity, now also continuing to transfer the knowledge to future generations. Additionally to the preservation purpose to his work, there is also the economic factor of providing economic livelihood to his family and community.

Types of handicrafts

Pottery Knitting Weaving Woodworking	Embroidery Leatherworking Herbalism Culinary craft	Candle making Glassblowing Coppersmithing Quilting Jewellery making	Basket weaving Stonemasonry Blacksmithing Traditional agriculture practice
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Craft touchpoints - where to find?

Workshop of an artisan (directly from the craftsman)

Handicraft Centre of more than one local artisan
Regular local market
Local festival

Shop selling local artisans' products
Local tourism agency / souvenir shop
Web-shops
Social media accounts

What can we learn?

<p>Heritage preservation / valorisation practice</p>	<p>What do they expose with their practice?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The artisan's work is a good example of preserving and valorising traditional knowledge and skills. His practice involves forging and shaping copper into functional and decorative objects. He showcases the intricate techniques of the Roma Căldărari coppersmithing tradition. His work celebrates the rich cultural heritage of the Roma people, a historically marginalized group and he's also passing down skills and knowledge through generations, since he learned his craft from his ancestors and aspires to teach it to his son, ensuring the preservation of the craft.
<p>Success factors</p>	<p>Achievements and strengths that make this case inspiring for other attempts in the DR</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victor's commitment to the craft, despite the decline in traditional coppersmithing, the preservation of endangered cultural traditions. • Ability to adapt traditional practices for modern contexts. For example, The Inner Side of the Shape (working with contemporary designer Radu Abraham) project reimagined Roma copper crafts as high-end design pieces, bridging the gap between heritage and modern aesthetics. Another example is Victor Clopotar's latest collection being shown at Design Miami Basel 'Golden Age' edition in June 2022. • Advocacy and international recognition of Roma crafts through his work, for example Homo Faber Guide recognition of his work, inclusion in the Homo Faber 2024 E-Catalogue (an exhibition focusing on the value of inherited knowledge), inclusion in the Y-Support - Development of a Supportive Framework for Young Roma Entrepreneurs project, inclusion in the <i>co/rizom</i> organization's list of artisans.
<p>Local community involvement</p>	<p>Fundamental values that help to connect the target groups for the social prosperity of the area</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victor Clopotar's work as a coppersmith is fundamental for the local community. His respect for tradition makes preserving it an important source of communal pride and identity. • As already mentioned above, an important factor to his work is the knowledge transfer from his ancestors to the future generations, which keeps this important community cornerstone from dying out. • By creating a market for his products, Victor generates income not only for himself but also

		<p>for the area, as his work attracts interest in the region’s cultural heritage. This way he also provides recognition for the local community as well as help with breaking up the stereotypes about the said community (for example, Victor will now start his own label VCR (co/rizom) of exclusive silver items, pushing Roma products into a contemporary universe).</p>
<p>Link to professional network</p>	<p>Reflecting on its strategic position in the region; making the most of networks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As for the artisan’s strategic position in the region, he benefits from the craft tourism potential of the region, intertwining Transylvania’s craft legacy and Roma heritage recognition. • Victor’s professional network includes collaborations with artists, such as designer Radu Abraham, with whom he collaborated on the Inner Side of the Shape project, merging traditional copper-smithing with contemporary design. The artisan also collaborates with cultural organizations and NGO’s, such as co/rizom and NESsT, which focus on preserving and promoting heritage crafts. These partnerships provide platforms for showcasing his work, attract funding, and create awareness about his craft.
<p>Communication</p>	<p>The use of social networks to disseminate and promote their mission</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More than using social media himself, Victor is represented via his collaborations and networks. • Partnering with Homo Faber and co/rizom, for example, has been fruitful for the artisan’s media presence. Since the mentioned platforms showcase his work in the form of articles, descriptions photographs and videos, as well as showing his products and his story on the organizations’ social media accounts. The same goes for most of his other collaborations and projects he’s involved in.
<p>Sustainability factor</p>	<p>Operations and maintenance that drive the practice forward; opportunities for financial sustainability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The artisan’s core operation is heritage craftsmanship, producing high quality, handcrafted copper items for sale. Victor’s workshop and heritage craft also align with the growing interest in cultural tourism in Transylvania, which can lead up to a boost in his sales. • Collaborations like Inner Side of the Shape provide Victor with opportunities to showcase his work in new contexts and present financial opportunities. Similar with cultural preservation organizations and NGOs that occasionally highlight his work, where he could benefit from grants focused on preserving intangible cultural heritage and seeking sponsorships from companies or foundations interested in supporting traditional crafts and Roma empowerment.

What makes it a best practice?

Victor Clopotar is a master of the craft of coppersmithing and committed to preserving the heritage of it. He is dedicated to preserving the traditional coppersmithing techniques passed down through generations in his family. His expertise and craftsmanship make him a cultural ambassador for this endangered skill, being active in offering apprenticeships and representing the culture of caldarari (local coppersmiths). Victor has successfully adapted his traditional craft to contemporary markets and audiences. He's partnering with modern artists and diversifying his products to fit the contemporary frameworks more. With his work, he's been an advocate for the local community and their crafts. His route to success stems from fruitful and strategic collaborations with artists and designers, organizations and other actors. By being a most important factor in the knowledge and skill transmission, as well as being able to combine tradition with modernity, this artisan's practice is a model for other heritage preservation and valorisation attempts.

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