

Podcast Transcript for Stories of Making and Migration with Zohra

Translation from Kurdish Sorani to English by Chra Azad at Brushstrokes

Zohra (translated by Chra):

She was trying to explain to me what, where the caps come from and why the caps. She said that this is a part of our culture.

Obviously the colours, you know, whenever you see it you see a vibrant of the whole, you know, our Kurdish clothes is very colourful and the cap is representing that. We wear it with the Kurdish clothes.

And back in the day, long, long time ago Kurdish ladies were wearing this because that was part of our culture to cover our head. And they used to wear the cap instead of scarf. And this is kind of like renewing the whole thing again. And especially for the women who are wearing hijab, sometimes they may think if they wear a hijab it's not that nice with the Kurdish clothes but when they wear this that will make the whole thing even more beautiful.

So, and obviously she used a different colour making it very colourful because our Kurdish clothes is very colourful and they can, they can you know, match it together.

And she said if you can see I have used a lot of bits and lot of sequins, but that's not just for the cap. We have it on the dress as well on our Kurdish clothes. As I said it's very colourful and it's very, whenever you look at our dress you can see the handmade things there.

Hayley:

Craftspace have been collecting stories of making and migration alongside our current exhibition Made in the Middle.

I sat down today with Zohra For over 20 years she's been sewing and crafting, having it as her livelihood and business. Now in the UK she's continued her work but without access to a sewing machine or the materials she would normally have. She's instead been repurposing clothes and jewellery which she finds in charity shops or which are gifted to her.

Alongside this podcast, I'd recommend heading to the Craftspace website where you can see photos including beautiful ornate caps which are traditional and which she's crafted out of second hand jewellery and materials. We're so grateful to Zohra for

sharing her story with us. A big thank you also to Chra from Brushstrokes who translated the interview for us today.

Zohra (translated by Chra):

That was since 2004, when I start. I was designing clothes and sewing, like a dress and things like that. The embroidery wasn't part of my work but the more I got, I was advanced in sewing so I thought about something else and people's demand obviously.

And just lately things, the old things come back to our culture again that things that many, many years ago has been used. People were more interested in it. So I started doing these things as well.

I was very young and I used to make a clothes for my dollies. I had dollies and with my sisters we used to do that. And then, she said, I lost my parents in a very young age. But before my mom died, she bought me a sewing machine to me and my sister. And we started because we were so in pain when we lost my mom. So we had to do something, to make us busy. So they started to go to the charity, small charity shops, when they were selling things. For instance, if they got like a skirt they couldn't sell, they give it to us and we created like a, kid's clothes from it and we give it, and take it back to the charity and they could sell it. So we started from there getting the unused things and creating a new thing with it and sell it. And we got like, you know, we started from there, and I loved it since then.

She said thank you very much for this opportunity. For me, I see it as an opportunity to shed a light on my work.

She's saying, obviously I can't find the material that I used to use back home and things are different here. As you can see, I use different materials and it's not easy to use one material. I am relying on, so many different things and I wanted my work to be colourful and using different things and be more creative by using the things that is being used.

She just mentioned that unfortunately I am so limited with getting the material. So I rely on my friends and the charities, people who doesn't want unwanted things. When they want to throw it, I will get it and I get idea from what I want to do with it.

Sometimes somebody wearing a necklace and if they said that I don't want it, I will reuse it again with other things. So she's enjoying that kind of like combining things together, different material, different colour. She think that that's part of her kind of,

it's coming from her imagination sometimes for the idea.

Sometimes I look at the carpets, I look at the, I don't know, any picture or anything that is there, I will get inspired by that.

But as she, she's saying, I am very limited but because my eyes is really, really open for the things that, that I can't because I am, whenever I see a, like a jumper or something, I get it from a charity. When there is things like bit and sequences, I will take it out and reuse it. It's true that it's not the same thing, but I still can create something close to what I have.

She was talking about how she's, whenever she looks at something and she has a piece of fabric, she instantly have an idea for it. And that was this kid's dress, that baby dress, is from the used dress for the mom. The mom had a dress and she wanted to get rid of it. So I recreated these from it.

And unfortunately as she said, now she's in a hotel, she's asylum seeker, she's not having access to the sewing machine. So she's using her hands to, to like that dress, the white one is hand stitched because she doesn't have a sewing machine and she's not allowed to have one there. So she's using her hand. It takes time. She has a passion and a love for what she's doing. She finished it and her daughter now is wearing it.

That dress, took me half a day.

Chra:

Isn't it? It's amazing.

Zohra (translated by Chra):

Because if obviously if you have a house and you have like a chores needs to be done, you need, it takes time. But because at the moment I'm not having anything, I don't have anything to do and I have a lot of time in my hands. So it takes me, she said that she'd done that one last night, took her two hours to do.

Yeah, she said that because obviously the whole thing's become kind of like her career back home. And sometimes she had a client, they came to her and said I need that suit for tomorrow. The whole, you know, because obviously Kurdish clothes involve so many layers and so many pieces. So she's, they ask her that that needs to be done by tomorrow. So I've done it. I'm very quick in doing it, yeah.

She is saying that obviously migration is not easy for me. It wasn't the easy decision. Everybody, I don't think anyone wants to go to another country and live in a completely different country. I loved my country. I loved everything about it. But I had a big reason to come here.

And I have been doing that for 20 years back home. But I've never been appreciated. I've never been, no one knows about it, only few people around me. But when I came here, there are other obstacles again, like a language barrier. Like as she mentioned, like probably the fact that she's asylum seeker, being in a hotel. She said I'm very limited. But, but on the other hand, the support that you get from this country is a lot and I do appreciate it as she said.

She is saying yes, sometimes I am in the hotel and I have lots of time in my hand and I've been, I've been depressed because being in the hotel makes you easily depressed. But I started doing that, I'm starting doing that and I feel much, much better. It's a kind of therapy for her.

And she is saying that obviously being here is changed the way I am working now because I am reusing the things which I've never thought that I'm gonna do, because back home everything was available, like the beads and these things that she's using. She can easily get it. But she said that she feels she's more creative now because, because she's reusing things. Well, recycling, let's say so, yeah.

And even if I, sometimes I tell myself, even if I don't speak English, but I still do my hand work and probably one day I can sell it. I can like stand on my feet again and do my work. The things that I love to do, yeah.

[Music]

Hayley:

This podcast was produced by Craftspace, for Stories of Making and Migration, a project sitting alongside our current touring exhibition Made in the Middle, funded by Arts Council England.

We met with makers across the Midlands. They are everyday makers who craft for themselves. This could be making at home in a local studio with a community group as a form of activism for their well being or much more.

You can view more stories from this project on the Craftspace website with podcasts, photos and short films. Visit <https://craftspace.co.uk/mitm-making-stories/>.

We're also on social media so let us know your own making stories and journeys through craft. We'd love to hear from you.