

Brief

Project Background and Overview

Naples is a city rich in culture, tradition, and craftsmanship, with the Presepe or nativity scene as one of its most iconic symbols. The creation of the Presepe, especially along the historic street of San Gregorio Armeno, represents a unique example of art and design, where local artisans have handed down ancient skills and techniques for generations.

However, this tradition is at risk.

Over time, and with the rise of digitization and globalization, fewer young people are interested in inheriting these crafts.

This threatens the continuity of artisanal skills and the survival of one of Naples' most important cultural assets.



Research

Various sources emphasize the importance of the nativity tradition in Naples. The art of the nativity scene is rooted not only as a religious symbol but also as a defining element of local culture, which has led to its spread around the world, from New York to Latin America. In Naples, Via San Gregorio Armeno represents the beating heart of this tradition, where artisans from families like Gambardella, Ferrigno, Capuano, and Sciuscià pass down their craft through generations, preserving a strong link with the past while continually innovating.



Today, thanks to technology, the traditional nativity scene has been enhanced with new features (such as lights, flowing water streams, and moving figurines) and especially with new materials. While many nativity scenes are still made from traditional materials like terracotta, wood, plaster, and papier-mâché, a significant number of those available in stores are now crafted from plastic, which is cheaper and more durable.

Regardless of the material used, each figurine is unique in its intended representation. Figurines can be made from a variety of materials, including wood, paper, plastic, ceramic, plaster, metal, wax, paste, fabric, glass, straw, and stone.

In recent years, various initiatives have emerged to benefit young recruits to whom this culture and the art of crib-making must be passed down. For instance, during the Gala event celebrating the 48th Anniversary of the NIAF, held in Washington in the presence of President Joe Biden and First Lady Jill Biden, an international fundraising campaign was launched by the National Italian-American Foundation. This campaign aims to raise 300,000 euros for the establishment of the 'Accademia del Presepe Napoletano.



Research

The primary goal, in addition to creating more jobs, is to ensure the continuity of the craft of master crib makers, which is at risk of disappearing due to the challenges in training new recruits. The establishment of this new academy underscores the urgent need to intervene in the craft sector, which, in Naples, is primarily represented by the art and tradition of the nativity scene.

Starting in the 1980s, with the growing interest in entertainment and socio-cultural changes, the masters of the Neapolitan nativity scene began to incorporate famous figures from the worlds of sports and entertainment, such as Diego Maradona, reflecting significant events that resonated with the public. For instance, alongside the classic shepherds, you can now find figurines representing characters like actors, famous singers, and even figures from cartoons and TV series. These 'modern' nativity scenes serve not only as a form of homage or celebration but also as a means of social commentary.



The inclusion of pop or political figures, such as international leaders, can serve as a critique or reflect the ironic perspective of Neapolitans on current issues, resulting in a 'topical nativity scene.'

The sacredness of the Nativity is never compromised; instead, the pop characters are typically placed around the central scene, creating a respectful yet exuberant fusion of tradition and modernity.

This type of renewal keeps the tradition of the Neapolitan nativity scene vibrant and relevant, allowing it to adapt to contemporary times without losing its authenticity. The creativity and irony inherent in Neapolitan nativity scenes embody the essence of Neapolitan culture: a blend of the sacred and the profane, a respect for tradition, and an openness to present-day innovations.



Discover the art of Neapolitan nativity scenes through these links:

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c_YzmzT2uOU
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LjHXq3oTD3s>
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-6leK_Xj-KU
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dZhk27icX5U>

The issue of preserving nativity scene craftsmanship

The identified problem pertains to the difficulty of intergenerational transmission of craft skills related to the creation of nativity scenes. As older artisans age, there is a noticeable lack of structured initiatives to engage young people and spark their interest in this tradition, despite some emerging developments. The absence of a system that makes craft culture appealing and relevant risks the disappearance of a fundamental aspect of Neapolitan identity.

Nativity art in Naples reached its peak around 1700 during the reign of Charles III of Bourbon. From this historical period, nativity scenes emerged from churches and filled the characteristic streets of Naples. For centuries, the art of nativity-making has been passed down from father to son, with the primary workshop owners being the children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren of families that have preserved this craft for generations. Consequently, the number of individuals who understand the craftsmanship and the stories behind each figurine is limited to those immersed in this context.

Goal of the brief

Our team invites you to develop a design solution that can facilitate the passing of craft skills between generations and re-actualize the Neapolitan nativity tradition.

The challenge is to create a design that can:

- Connect older artisans with young people
- Enhance the cultural and artistic aspect of the nativity scene
- Make nativity craft accessible and attractive to new generations

Personas



Sara
the Art Student

Age: 22

Background: She has always had a deep passion for art and wants to specialize in a traditional art form. However, she's uncertain about how to blend her modern design sensibilities with the timeless appeal of tradition.

Passions: Art, Design, Sustainability.



Paolo
the Indifferent Observer

Age: 17

Background: He grew up in Naples but has little interest in the cultural traditions of his city, including the nativity scene. He often sees nativity displays in homes and shops but considers them outdated and irrelevant to her life. His focus is primarily on contemporary trends, social media, and sport.

Passions: Photography, Music, Fashion.



Gennaro
the Traditional Artisan

Age: 61

Background: He comes from a long line of artisans who have been creating nativity scenes for generations. He has spent his entire life perfecting his craft and believes deeply in the cultural significance of the presepe. However, he is concerned that the tradition is fading, with fewer young people interested in learning the skills necessary to continue this art form.

Passions: Art, Family, Tradition, Neapolitan culture.

Proposal

Our team thought of an advertising campaign on a workshop on nativity scene art, which aims to enhance an artisanal tradition of great cultural value, making it accessible to two distinct audiences: the students of the Academies of Fine Arts and the public not specialized but interested in cultural and creative experiences. The main objective of the campaign is to encourage the participation of young artists, offering them the opportunity to delve into traditional craft techniques and acquire specific skills to contribute to the preservation of this craft. At the same time, the campaign aims to involve a wider audience, not necessarily experts but potentially attracted to the activity as a cultural leisure experience, particularly in line with the atmosphere of the Christmas holidays. Communication will be divided into two levels: towards the target of Fine Arts students, the workshop will be promoted as an opportunity for training and professional growth, highlighting the historical and artistic value of nativity scene techniques. For the general public, the focus will be on the experiential dimension and the pleasure of taking part in a creative and traditional activity, presenting the workshop as an opportunity for cultural and personal enrichment.

Other reference strategy ideas: ASMR videos, Sonny Angels, ceramic workshops, Pumpking Patch

Scenario

Ex-Ante



A Neapolitan artisan, devoted to the ancient craft of nativity scenes, realizes his art will die with him as younger generations turn away from tradition. With no successor, his life's work risks disappearing, leaving a void in the cultural heritage of the city.

Ex-Post



The artisan now has the opportunity to pass down his knowledge and skills to young people interested in reimagining the nativity tradition and bringing his art to life again.

Budget

The estimated budget is around 5.000€. It aims to support a comprehensive workshop campaign with a focus on impactful reach across targeted audiences. This allocation covers essential materials for crafting sessions, providing tools for students and attendees who might lack access otherwise. Additionally, funds will go towards digital and print advertising, including social media geotargeting and promotional materials at relevant locations. A portion is also set aside for logistics, covering venue setup, refreshments, and any incidental costs, allowing flexibility to adapt based on audience engagement and ensure the workshop's success in revitalizing nativity scene craftsmanship.

Design requirements

The design should foster meaningful interactions between artisans and youth, blending physical and digital spaces to make craft knowledge accessible and engaging. It must honor traditional nativity scene craftsmanship while incorporating innovations that attract younger generations. By encouraging participation and co-creation, the design bridges tradition and innovation, ensuring the craft's lasting relevance and appreciation.

Facilities

To support the project creation, we have access to digital platforms, such as Canva Pro, to create graphic and visual designs. Additionally, we can create physical prototypes using sustainable materials like cardboard, paper, and other eco-friendly resources.

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