



## Jon interviewing Kate Pickin

Jon:

Hello Kate. You are a gilder?

Kate:

Yeah I am.

Jon:

What exactly does that work involve?

Kate:

Well its essence is you're working with gold leaf. There is a lot more to it than that, there are a lot more levels, mediums and techniques.

Jon:

Is it just gold exclusively or silver, precious metals?

Kate:

Well pretty much any metal you can think of can be beaten into a leaf, so in the workshop in the minute I've got a fair selection and I've got some slightly obscure ones like tin, beaten tin. You can get pewter, I got copper, you get faux gold which actually brass beaten into a leaf, you get silver leaf, you get white gold, any kind of I say metal that you can beat, you can beat into a leaf.

Jon:

Can anyone beat your gilding? Or are you the best?

Kate:

Ooh.

Jon:

No, OK we'll cut that bit out, don't worry. What kind of objects will people bring?

Kate:

Well I do do a lot of work for dealers, that's the main part of my work. And also I do sight work, so that's sort of historic houses and big interiors. The private clients are probably only about 20 per cent of the clients that I work for, and it's very word of mouth so I don't do a lot of advertising, um, because people get to hear about me.

Jon:

Would these be chateau owners or large companies or churches?

Kate:

Well I've done church work, I've done country houses, so Chatsworth House, Woburn Abbey and places like that.

Jon:

So when you're in England to become a gilder did you do a City and Guilds?

Kate:

No. Um, I think it's one of those things that you can't really learn it at college. You could, you could say get a 6 week element of it, like a module on say a 3 or 4 year restoration conservation course, but it's absolutely minimal and you'll probably as a student you'll probably just touch on it, do a few little bits you know, fiddle round the edges of gilding and then maybe not even do it any more. So it's still I think one of those crafts where you have to be with somebody who really knows what they're doing and just watch them and be with them and work alongside them, see how they are, they keep checking on you and then gradually you pick it up. Yeah.

Jon:

What attracted you to gilding in particular?

Kate:

Well, what I did was I did train as a fine artist, so I'm a painter. At the time when I came across gilding I went on it as a week-long course and but it's a course anyone can go on and it's a craft course and it's interesting and it's bit of fun. But I think because I'm a fine art background, um, I took to it very quickly because the brushes were the same, a lot of the mediums were the same, the oil and the water and the colouring-in techniques to age it down. They were so similar that I'd already gone quite a long way up that road so I was at quite a good point to go straight on with the gilding and take it further and I just loved it from day 1. You know sometimes you come across something and you just know that's for me. That's how it was.

Jon:

Is it a problem working with materials which are obviously so expensive?

Kate:

No, as long as you're kind of are aware of what not to do. Like for instance, the gold leaf I mean yeah, you get a tiny little package and there might be 400 pounds worth of gold in there, so you get it out to do a job, you must never ever ever go near it with greasy fingers or even one drop of water, that will ruin the whole lot. So if you know that you know not to do that. So you work with the material. In fact a lot of the cost is more the labour because it's so labour intensive. So equal to the cosy of the gold is often the cost of the labour to put on the gold.

Jon:

So how do you actually apply the gold leaf? Do you have to use heat?

Kate:

No, there's 2 basic ways really. One's oil and one's water. Putting on with oil is, um, it's like a sticky varnish it's very, very specific varnish, it's very pure, it's very fine, specially made called gold size and you paint that on and then when it gets to a certain tackiness which I always say is a bit like the back of sellotape, it's a sort of a dry tackiness, then you put the leaf on. The other one is water gilding and that's much more difficult, far less people do it, it's much much more difficult and that, it still amazes me, you glue the gold on with water, nothing else, water.