

HANOI, A CAPITAL OF TRADITIONAL CRAFTS

Hanoi has long been home to hundreds of craft villages. Over the years, many of the crafts have developed, while some have disappeared altogether.

The heart and soul of Hanoi's vibrant old crafts are its craftsmen and women. One such coupleare Nguyen Van Hoa and his wife Dang HuongLan of Ba Dinh District's Hang Than Street. They are among the few artisans still making elaborate cardboard masks in order to preserve the traditional culture.

Although the work itself requires many steps, the materials required are simple: newspapers,glue, paint and paintbrushes. The first step entails tearing the newspapers to pieces and then using glue to combine them into a mold. The masks are painted one color at a time and then laid out to dry. Cardboard mask making is therefore dependent on dry weather and the couple can only make about 2,000 masks per festival. These are priced from VND25.000 to VND35,000 a piece, bringing in VND50-60 million - a sum is not commensurate with the efforts that go into making these elaborate crafts.

Making swans out of cotton is also a traditional craft. Only artisan Vu ThiThanh Tam of 79Hang Luoc Street in the capital makes these swans. The swan frames are made of notebook paper and are stuffed with cotton, then a skillful artisan puts each layer of cotton on the swan frames and uses rice water to smooth them. The swan neck is made of steel wire and is covered by cotton. The finished product is placed in a rattan basket with cotton around and glass-beads and silk flowers are added for color.

The continuity of traditional crafts adds to the capital's attractiveness in the eyes of citizens and international visitors.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

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1. Who plays role as the heart and soul of Hanoi's crafts?

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2. Which traditional craft do Mr. Hoa and his wife preserve?

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3. How many materials are there to make that craft? What are they?

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4. Which kind of weather does the craft making process depend on?

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5. What are the swan frames made of?

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6. What does the artisan use to smooth the frames?

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7. What is added to color the finished product?

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