

Transcription of Enterprising Australians video Olivia O'Connor Rocking Horse

The video for this transcript can be found on the Questacon YouTube channel at:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=44&v=jK1K-I5Ujfy

Transcription from video:

[music]

Isla: Olivia, you make rocking horses, how did you get into wood carving?

Olivia: Well I was lucky enough I grew up on a farm, and my dad was a horse trainer so I was always around horses, and in high school I loved wood work, so after high school I went and studied furniture design and construction at RMIT but then I left there and I went to NIDA in Sydney where I studied prop making and scenic art, and there I actually made my first rocking horse.

A lot of my carving woodwork skills I learned actually from YouTube videos.

Isla: Really?

Olivia: Yeah, I learnt a lot off YouTube videos.

Isla: Do you have a favourite person on YouTube that you follow, or?

Olivia: No, it's usually old men and their grandson has been like, "Oi, Grandad! Let me film you doing this!"

Both: [laughter]

Olivia: I thought it would be a fun business so that was the first step I guess. I saved for a year and a half so I would have enough money to buy all of the tools and machineries I needed.

I left Sydney and moved to South Gippsland and set up a workshop, and I went on a small business course.

Isla: What's it like working in a setting where you don't really fit the traditional mould?

Olivia: Ah, well I work by myself and for myself so I don't encounter it much on a day to day. It's more when I do fairs like this, people expect me to be an old man, and they're quite shocked, basically that I'm not.

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Isla: It works quite well in my favour in a lot of ways because then people remember me and I stick out in their memories.

Olivia: And you're a part of this community, like the Lost Trades fair.

Isla: Yeah.

Olivia: What's it like working in a community like this?

Isla: Because a lot of us make work by ourselves, you just feel like you're a crazy person stuck in a shed alone and it's great to realise that there's all these other people like it. And even though we all have different trades and skills, a lot of the practical skill side crosses over, but also running your own business and promoting yourself and everything, we can share a lot of information like that.

Olivia: We live in quite a digital world where entertainment, and just, things, are really cheaply and readily accessible. How do you compete in a world like that with your rocking horses?

I think the best thing is I try not to compete with a disposable society and that in itself establishes my difference. You can buy a rocking horse for \$80 off the internet, but it's made of plastic and will last six months. Or, you can buy one of mine, that's hand-carved timber. If you look after it, it will basically last you for five, six generations easily.

Isla: I've just started doing classes so I'm really excited about that, so it will be teaching people how to make their own rocking horse. So really, I'm trying to, because I self-taught myself a lot of the skills and I'm just trying to pass that on so that more and more people know how to do it basically!

Olivia: If you had to give your younger self some advice, what would that be?

I hesitated starting a business because I was scared it would fail and I think it would be great to be like "Don't be so nervous." Because if you're passionate about something, other people will follow through on that.

[Enterprising Australians Logo]