

Dutch school of framing

Janneke Alkema-Visser explains what she learned as one of the first students on a new, dedicated adult training course for framers in the Netherlands

IN THE past, a few training courses for framers were offered in the Netherlands, but the skills were usually passed on from an experienced framer to a student.

About 10 years ago, the Dutch Art Frame Trade Association noted the urgent need for training for framers and began developing a course recognised by the Ministry of Education. Two members of the association put their shoulders to the wheel to make the training a reality. As well as countless meetings, applying for permits and subsidies, they wrote a complete teaching programme, which is similar to the Guild's GCF Study Guide.

After five years of preparation, the courses gained Ministry of Education approval and started at Nimeto in the city of Utrecht.

Nimeto is an autonomous, small-scale vocational school at intermediate level (Dutch MBO level) for students aged 18-22, working with experienced craftspeople and offering specialised and practice-orientated courses.

Since 2018, students at Nimeto have been able to take a six-week framing module. In 2019, Nimeto added a framing course for adults. A classroom has been installed as a frame shop, with all the necessary equipment and materials.

ADULT TRAINING COURSE

The training for adults runs for 26 weeks at four hours a week. Students also do an internship with a framer at their business, one day a week for 20 weeks. The theory and practical lessons are given by Marieke Smit, one of the founders of the training. Marieke has been a well-known framer in Amsterdam for over 32 years. Specialist guest lecturers are



Top: Janneke Alkema-Visser works on a gilded moulding during her training. Above: The course teaches a variety of skills

invited to cover specific topics.

I was one of the first eight students on the course in 2019. Our group was very diverse. There were people who had never framed anything, but also framers who wanted to expand their skills. There were men and women, younger and older adults.

The theory lessons were about the history of frames, knowledge about printing techniques (such as etching, engraving, woodblock printing and lithography) and how to recognise these techniques.

We learned about materials, such as different types of paint, mountboards and adhesives. One lesson was in how to run a company, including setting up a business, health and safety laws, administration and how to calculate the right price for an order.

In addition to the theory, we followed practical lessons at the school. Framing at Level 2

(High Level) had to become the 'standard' of all our framework.

A lot of time was spent learning how to attach all kinds of items to an underboard and how to use different materials and techniques, such as hinges, adhesives and sewing.

We had to complete various assignments for the course. We learned about float-framing and box-framing, how to lace an embroidery correctly and how to stretch a painted canvas over wooden stretcher bars. We practised decorating mountboards, drawing lines and colouring and gilding of the inner edge of an aperture.

One of the most difficult things we learned was carving, colouring and gilding a moulding. It takes a lot of practice but eventually the results can be beautiful.

We also learned how to make minor restorations to frames. After examining an old frame and describing

the materials used, we were taught how to make moulds for missing parts of the ornamentation and then colour them.

During my internship at a frame shop, I practised different techniques and learned how to use the machines and tools. We also took a closer look at why a specific framing technique works better than others, and the do's and don'ts of frame making.

Back in school, we talked over our experiences at the internship. It became clear that framers in the Netherlands work in a very different kind of way and that 'conservation framing' is not interpreted the same way everywhere.

At the end of our course, we made a portfolio of the different frames we had made. During the exam, we showed our works and answered questions about them.

Due to the covid pandemic, our course was interrupted for several months and some planned visits to museums could not take place. In the end, seven candidates passed their exams and got their certificate in December 2020.

It was a very intensive and instructive year, in which I learned a lot of theoretical and practical things. As a professional framer, it is important to keep your knowledge up-to-date and that is only possible if you continue to develop yourself by reading, training, practising, studying and asking for advice from other framers.

Janneke Alkema-Visser, lives in Schijndel in the Netherlands. She is married to Geertjan Alkema GCF (APF) and they have run a framing business together since 2007
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