

## Case study Arttouching

### **A family business done by two creative and cultural entrepreneurs from Romania : Livia Mateias and Marius Jurca**

Based on Interviewing Livia Mateias

#### **A brief description of the business**

ArtTouching is an art and design studio. I founded it in 2014. It was my initiative and that of Marius Jurca, he is also an artist and my husband. It's a family business. It's a "small business, just the two of us for now, but with a lot of heart, with a big heart."

When we set it up one of the principles was to give experiences that touch people to the heart. ArtTouching experience, experiences that make sense to people and touch them somehow beyond the surface of things. We create artistic installations and painting, although, on one hand, we, as artists, have our own creation, and on the other hand, we have the design part that is more adapted to the market and needs of various clients.

We do graphic design, web design, identity, all branding. We both finished graphics and have design skills. At request of clients we can also make indoor installations,

We like challenges, experiences that are not repetitive, being creative, and we adapt to specific needs. We try to understand what would best suit each customer and come up with a specific proposal for it.

When I create a work of art, the personal creation of each of us comes into play. We are quite different as artists, we have common points, but I am more on painting, installation. More recently, I adapt very easily to what I want to convey, somehow adapt the environment and technique, even if it is necessary to learn something new for doing it.

Marius, my husband, works a lot in digital art, is much more oriented toward art and science.

Me too, I have this bent toward the cosmic side, toward astronomy. My creation is very much inspired by outer space, I also created a concept that I called "cosmotic", related to a certain inner universe that I materialize through creation. I do not relate to the cosmic objects of physical space, although it somehow originates there, but especially to what I find inside me. I work a lot on the area of introspection, according to the motto on the front of the Apollo temple at Delphi "know yourself!"

This motto fits me very well, I discover novelties in my inner world, I do not have a particular practice of meditation, I simply make time for myself and introspection. But meditation can also be walking down the street,

**Question: How is this happening ? Does the new appear as an illumination or do you gradually discover it?**

It is also gradual, but there are times when you simply know that this needs to be done.

**Question: How did you become a CC Entrepreneur? Was there some kind of impulse / magic moment where you decided to become a CCE**

**What reasons did you have to start the business? a magical moment?**

We started the company in 2014, right after we completed our PhD in Arts (in 2013), we both knew we wanted to do something about art and continue what we had already started.

I felt like we had possibilities, and talent, and the desire to start something, and I was lucky to meet some friends who knew the practical procedure of legally setting up a business, and I decided that we had to start. We wanted to keep doing art, just like that. I thought it was enough motivation to monetize.

We had no support, no support from anywhere else. It's up to us to continue. WE did not do any kind of market research, marketing, it was an intuitive process. We noticed that there are opportunities. We have had a lot of plans, very bold, and we haven't put them all in place yet.

We had very big dreams back then, but we are glad that we had the courage to take this step, and that now to continue to do it.

It was a tough time in the pandemic, we had, besides the digital part, something that I forgot to tell you, that we are a more social entrepreneurship, even though we are not legally framed as such.

We put a lot of heart into what we do, and we believe that what we do is right. WE have very much the call to work with people and with the social side. We do many creative workshops, and often, we do them voluntarily.

At Artouching we also created the “Digital Canvas platform”, dedicated to digital art, we have certain equipment that has gathered over time because we are both artists working with digital art, Marius more than me. It was hard enough to exhibit digital art, especially a few years ago, we always had to buy our own equipment to expose our own creation. The equipment is installed here in our own workshop, and we make it available to artists working with digital content to support creation in all ways, especially digital art creation.

I created certain projects, like Pixelart, which is my personal project, there were digital art courses for children through the Digital canvas platform.

**·What was your biggest challenge as CCE and how did you handle it?**

Marius and I had no information about what entrepreneurship means, how to build a project, and at one point I decided, feeling this lack, that a master in management would be useful, to structure what needs to be done. We both had very good qualities on the creative side but a great deficiency on the other side. Therefore, I enrolled in the Master of entrepreneurial Management at FEAA UVT, exactly what I felt I was missing.

It was a key point, I also did project management courses in the meantime, I started slowly to write projects myself, to think more structured, more methodological. It was the good part I learned during these courses and trainings..

### **What do you think: What is the secret to your success? In your opinion?**

The fact that we put our heart into what we do, and that we try to make an impact on the human soul, its essence. From here, the creative workshops remain imprinted in the beneficiaries

For example, last year in 2021 I carried out the project “the story Bridge”, which I also initiated. In which we crochet the bridge at the water plant in Timisoara, first of all because it was a very old bridge rusty and sad from all points of view. We cleaned the rust, painted it, and starting in the summer we did creative workshops that were fortunately free of charge, because we got a funding from the Timisoara Community Foundation. I worked with people living in the water plant area, both painting workshops and crochet workshops, ukulele, Chi gong trainings given by Ramona Venturini who is a chi gong instructor in Timisoara. We had discussions with these people, with the help of a friend who is a psychologist,

We met three generations in the project, we attracted from children, to mothers, to grandparents, parents. We had workshops where there was the 6-year-old girl, mother, father and grandmother, all beneficiaries (Livia laughs at happiness reliving those beautiful moments). 200 people learned to crochet during the project. The bridge can be visited now, it is still crochet, and very colorful. Coming right after the pandemic, we held the workshops outside, outdoors, people trusted to participate, there was enough space in the park. In that park usually nothing happened, and then people had the opportunity to get to know each other (the cohesion of the Community).

It was beneficial for the participants, they became convinced that yes, we can meet other people, we can sit after the pandemic in a circle where we can talk about the problems we had, to tell the stories.

They also had a meeting with Iunia Pasca, creator of the game “integration game”.

We have attracted very good people to the team who shared their experience with the beneficiaries.

### **Lessons to be learned from Artouching**

Orientation, dedication, team work, being close to their beneficiaries needs, to the soul of the people

“Dedication from soul to soul somehow differentiates us, it’s one of our strengths.”

Uniqueness, contact with the realities of the world around us

Moral satisfaction, but also reasonable material gain

They created several value creation activities, various lines of activity

Motivation + desire and find the opportunity

We believe that “Timisoara the European cultural capital in 2023” is an opportunity for us.

· **What is the most essential knowledge or know-how for CCE? What do you recommend other CCEs or ongoing CCEs to learn as soon as possible with regards to:**

o **1<sup>st</sup> Sprint – Opportunities & Idea Identification**

o **2<sup>nd</sup> Sprint – Start-up**

**A 3rd Sprint – scale and Exit**

o **4<sup>th</sup> Sprint – Case Studies**

Answer of Livia:

To be creative, to have the technical skills necessary to achieve the singing that you expose to the public, in addition to talent.

To possess knowledge of entrepreneurship, management to gain an overview of the company

**Question: Which is the most important of the 4?**

It’s important to have the vision of what you want, then depending on that, things align, even if you don’t have the information of a business plan, but you have the technical skills and talent, then comes the business plan if you know how to do it

How to get out of business? I don't care about it, because the origin of the business is in us and somehow we don't want to get out of it!

**Question: What examples of success/how not to do?**

Most art graduates do something other than art.

In 2014, I didn’t have a model of any kind, they weren’t.

What can we do after we have completed our Bachelor, Master and PhD in Arts

It is true that I took a job at West University of Timisoara, but it seemed to me that if I stayed in the job where I was designing, exactly what I had finished, I felt that creativity, the essence of what I wanted, somehow got lost. I wouldn't have had enough time for my personal creation, for projects, for my dreams, I wouldn't have had the freedom to travel enough, or to leave when I want to go to a residence that could last a month,

Then, for some time I was working in parallel at the West University, but I said to myself and Marius that we need to develop something so that we don't give up the creative part we wanted to do actually.

During the SEA Social Entrepreneurship course, organised in 2018 by West University of Timisoara together with Munchen Center for Social Entrepreneurship, I learned about examples of good practice the sea course, and especially because I realized that there is also social entrepreneurship, I did not know much until then, I identified very much with the social entrepreneurship area.

### Synthesising

"I wish to tell all those who have a dream not to give up on it, no matter how hard it is, no matter how many obstacles, no matter how high it may seem, because the universe will somehow bring them what they are allowed to do when they need to, even the right people show up at the right time, and the resources will come, too, if you have the joy of doing, the dream to be positive, to be optimistic.

I am optimistic of my kind, but I am aware that there is also the negative side in the world, unfortunately, suffering is everywhere. I have worked with refugees, I have seen, they have told me what traumas they have been through.

The main final message would be : **It is good to trust both your forces and the universe, in a force that brings the right thing at the right time !**