



Myrhorod Ceramics Centre Artisan Coworking Space: Taking Local Traditional Crafts to a New Level of Business

The Myrhorod Ceramics Centre Artisan Coworking Space opened in December 2020 on the premises of [Mykola Gogol College of Arts and Industry](#). Its aim is to bring together amateur craftspeople and experienced ceramic artists to collaborate, share experiences, and sell their merchandise. The coworking space was created at the initiative of the Myrhorod Ceramics Centre NGO under the auspices of the International Technical Assistance Project Partnership for Local Economic Development and Democratic Governance (PLEDDG) and Myrhorod City Hall. In addition to providing high-quality production facilities for Myrhorod-based craftspeople, the coworking space will serve as a key driving force behind a revival of traditional folk pottery and ceramics crafts in the city.

“As history would have it, production of ceramics has been an integral part of Myrhorod for over a century now. Well-known in Ukraine and beyond, the College of Arts and Industry has close to 60 ceramics specialists among its alumni every year. The city is home to numerous experienced craftspeople and instructors willing to share their valuable knowledge and skills with the younger generation. In creating the Artisan Coworking Space, we made sure to provide a comfortable environment in which local craftspeople can work, study, and cooperate. We hope that this place will also become a hub of active collaboration among artists from various branches of the creative industry. We also plan to stage exhibitions, master classes, and other creative events here,” says **Olena Buloichyk, Project Leader**.

High-quality modern equipment was purchased for the coworking space with the financial backing of PLEDDG, such as special-purpose furnaces, a painting cabinet, a clay kneading machine, and compressors. Students of the College of Arts and Industry can now complete their hands-on training here while using the new equipment free of charge. One of the key tasks of the coworking space project has been to deliver all-in-one crafts and business training to those contemplating a professional career in ceramics production. The project team assembled a group of 15 people, most of whom are students and graduates of the local college. Their instructor is Yevhen Yevtushenko, an artisan who has devoted his life to ceramics and has more than 10 years of experience as a private entrepreneur in this industry.

“The quarantine due to the COVID-19 pandemic forced us to adapt our original curriculum to the new conditions, so we recorded some of the lectures and practical classes on video and published them on the [YouTube channel](#) of the Myrhorod Ceramics Centre. Luckily, we managed to hold the majority of the meetings in the workshop, which is of crucial importance when it comes to acquiring practical skills. Although the basic training course was completed successfully, we still run into the group members in the coworking space. I always gladly answer their questions and help them create new products. Students have different priorities and preferences. Some of them focus on kitchenware, others specialize in decorative items, while others take a greater interest in architectural ceramics. They approach me for advice individually. We often use a collaborative approach during group classes: some students make pottery articles, others mold the parts for the future artwork, while still others decorate it. This approach to training teaches students how to work effectively as part of a team. As a result, they gain an understanding of the sequence of production processes and in the future will be able to assign duties effectively among employees of their own workshops. Most of the group members are already technically prepared to continue unsupervised work,” says **Yevhen Yevtushenko, production process supervisor at the Myrhorod Ceramics Centre Artisan Coworking Space**.

Students will subsequently be involved in delivering pottery master classes to tourists and other city visitors, which will help them perfect their ceramics artwork skills. Some of the students are contemplating continued full-time employment with the coworking space. Even though the first study group consisted mostly of 2nd and 3rd year students at the College of Arts and Industry, there were also novice artisans who either needed to refresh their skills after a long interruption or learned the trade on their own and needed professional development. Among them was Vladyslav Zhuk, who relocated from his native Chyhyryn to Myrhorod specifically to study and work at the newly created Artisan Coworking Space.

“I joined the classes somewhat belatedly, but the online lectures enabled me to catch up on the theory and keep up with the rest of the group. A few years ago I learned the art of pottery from one artisan and later tried to make a living off it. As fate would have it, I was forced to give up ceramics for a few years. When I read about the coworking space on social media, I decided to brush up on my skills and try to turn this into a profitable business again. I keep learning, mastering new technologies, and building my skills here in the workshop. I mostly make kitchenware, as I really like custom-made articles for the household. I will continue working in this coworking space, since it offers wonderful employment and growth opportunities now that the artisans have been brought together. The workshop is dominated by an atmosphere of unity and mutual assistance, which is really inspiring and encouraging. It also makes sense from an economic perspective: if you don't have orders of your own, you can join a collaborative effort on a big order and make a living,” says **Vladyslav Zhuk, a ceramics artisan and employee of the Myrhorod Ceramics Centre Artisan Coworking Space.**

An effective business model has been put in place for the coworking space. Ceramic artisans who cannot afford to open a full-fledged workshop of their own will rent equipment from the coworking space or work on their projects here and pay a per-hour fee. The workshop will also serve as a venue for art therapy sessions with a psychologist, pottery master classes for children, and extracurricular training activities for young people in exchange for a participation fee. The Centre is also putting in place a system for centralized product sales.

“We are now beginning to sell our products on the largest Ukrainian online platforms selling handmade goods: [Skrynia](#) and [Zoloti Ruky](#). We are also launching our sales on the Etsy international platform. On behalf of the Myrhorod Ceramics Centre, we are selling individual and collaborative works created by both students and seasoned artisans. We will soon begin selling our products through gift shops. We also receive regular special orders for ceramics goods: we recently made sets of tableware for a number of food service establishments, along with interior decor items such as light fixtures and bathroom sets,” says **Yevhen Yevtushenko.**

Ceramic artworks remain as relevant as ever all over the world and adorn both public spaces and private residences. For example, ceramic tableware helps thematic coffee shops and restaurants to highlight their individuality, while other ceramic elements become the cherry on top of the best designs. The Myrhorod Ceramics Centre Artisan Coworking Space will help gifted artisans to effectively channel their creative and entrepreneurial potential, as well as foster a genuine pottery synergy in the city.

“In the long run, the coworking space will definitely help the community prosper. The Myrhorod Ceramics Centre will become a new calling card of the city and a kind of magnet for city visitors. We will gladly teach tourists a thing or two about ceramics and the city's history. Since Myrhorod is a resort destination and welcomes vacationers all year round, they will appreciate the unconventional activity and the opportunity to bring home a unique handmade plate or cup. We will add to the entertainment offerings for tourists, and eventually more and more people will put Myrhorod on their itinerary when they visit Ukraine. We also hope to enhance the reputation of the College of Arts and Industry in the minds of potential students from all over Ukraine so that they choose to come here to study,” **Olena Buloichyk** adds.

The activities of the Artisan Coworking Space created with PLEDDG support will have a multi-pronged effect on the development of Myrhorod. In addition to creating conditions favouring the revival of the ceramics industry, the workshop will create opportunities for successful self-employment and foster the city's tourist industry, which is aligned with the goals of the [Myrhorod Sub-region Sustainable Development Strategy](#) from now until 2028.



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