



# NEWS RELEASE

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## **Natalie Thakur wins inaugural Heritage Crafts Leatherworker of the Year Award supported by the British Leather Industry Development Trust**

**Bedfordshire leatherworker Natalie Thakur has won the inaugural *Leatherworker of the Year Award*, supported by the British Leather Industry Development Trust, including a £2,000 prize and trophy awarded at a special presentation at Eltham Palace on Tuesday 26 November 2024.**

**Heritage Crafts** was set up 14 years ago as a national charity to support and safeguard heritage crafts skills, and has become well known for its *Red List of Endangered Crafts*, the first research of its kind to rank traditional crafts in the UK by the likelihood they will survive the next generation.

The award, supported by **British Leather Industry Development Trust**, celebrates a heritage craftsman who has made an outstanding contribution to leatherworking over the past year. It recognises a contribution that is far beyond the ordinary, based on a proven dedication to a particular leatherworking skill.



After studying Contemporary Applied Arts at Middlesex University in London, **Natalie Thakur** went on to study leatherwork at the London College of Fashion. She initially started out working in bespoke leather interiors, before starting up her own brand Natthakur and pioneering techniques such as hand-painted leather marquetry, specialist leather moulding, and hand-crafted sculptural relief. She has been stocked in some of the most prestigious shops in the world, including Selfridges, Le

Bon Marche in Paris, Takashimaya and The V&A, and was selected for 'The Best of British' at Liberty's London.

The *Leatherworker of the Year* trophy was made by **Katy Warriner**, featuring oak bark tanned leather from J&FJ Bakers tannery – one of the UK's last remaining oak bark tanneries. The base and belt show the basic skills needed as a leatherworker, and the engraved half round knife, donated by George Barnsley & Sons, is one of the main tools of any leatherworkers' bench.



The judging panel for the award was made up of **Kerry Senior** (Director at Leather UK), **Yusuf Osman** (leatherworker) and **Anu Bankole** (accessories and product designer).

The two other finalists for the award were **Andrew Hastilow**, a saddler who has trained five apprentices and teaches saddlery at the North American Saddlery School each year, and **Brad Smith**, a leatherworker at Geoffrey Parker who has hand-crafted products for brands including Cartier, Dunhill, Aspinall of London and Tiffany.



The **British Leather Industry Development Trust** supports ongoing training and development activities for the benefit of the UK leather producing industry, and its partnership with Heritage Crafts also sees a new training bursary for an early-career leatherworker to be launched in January, and a symposium on endangered leatherworking skills to be held next year.

Heritage Crafts also ran a new **Young Leatherworker of the Year Award** for practitioners up to an including the age of 25, supported by the **Leathersellers' Foundation**, which was won by Preethi Kosanam. Preethi is a graduate of the National Institute of Fashion Technology, Chennai, where she specialised in leather garments and accessories, and now studies at

the London College of Fashion. Most recently, she won the prestigious Dents Prize for the most commercial and innovative glove design.

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**Photo captions:**

- **Natalie Thakur**, winner of the 2024 *Leatherworker of the Year Award*, and **Kerry Senior**, Director at Leather UK.
- *Leatherworker of the Year Award* trophy, made by Katy Warriner.
- **Natalie Thakur**, winner of the 2024 *Leatherworker of the Year Award*.

**About Heritage Crafts**

Founded in 2009, the Heritage Crafts is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) registered as the 'Heritage Crafts Association', the advocacy body for traditional heritage crafts. Working in partnership with government and key agencies, it provides a focus for craftspeople, groups, societies and guilds, as well as individuals who care about the loss of traditional crafts skills, and works towards a healthy and sustainable framework for the future. Its aim is to support and promote heritage crafts as a fundamental part of our living heritage.

[www.heritagecrafts.org.uk](http://www.heritagecrafts.org.uk)

**About the Red List of Endangered Crafts**

The Red List of Endangered Crafts, created by Heritage Crafts, was the first to rank traditional crafts in the UK by the likelihood they would survive the next generation. The 2023 edition of the Red List, funded by the Pilgrim Trust, assessed 259 crafts to identify those which are at greatest risk of disappearing, of which 62 have been classified as critically endangered, 84 as endangered and 112 as currently viable.

The Red List shows that the craft knowledge, skills and practices that form an important part of our shared cultural heritage are – for a number of reasons – at risk of being lost. Heritage Crafts believes that these cultural assets are as important as unique heritage buildings and ancient beautiful landscapes and could provide future generations with fantastic opportunities to enrich their lives and the lives of others.

<http://redlist.heritagecrafts.org.uk>