

Fernando Mayer Garea

Santiago de Compostela, A Coruña, Spain, 25/07/1942
Madrid, 1957. Silversmith. Gold Medal, category B
Duisburg, 1961. Silversmith. Honoric Mention, category A

Childhood and family

He was born into a renowned family in the field of arts and crafts, which excelled in the fields of jet, gold and silver work and jewellery.

The saga of the Mayer in the city of Santiago began with his grandfather Enrique Mayer Castro, whom the city remembers with a recognition plaque for his work as an engraver, jet-setter and teacher of a prolific generation of professionals. In addition to working as a craftsman in the city, he taught History at the School of Arts and Crafts, work that his children and grandchildren continued to carry out.

But the Mayer family has an even more distant origin. Fernando tells us that the Mayers were German craftsmen from Utrecht who settled in Galicia in the 18th century, first in Ferrol and later in A Coruña. They were a family of engravers and watchmakers who exported and sold cuckoo clocks and watches and therefore knew the techniques and materials used in watchmaking, goldsmithing, engraving, embossing, etc. In the 19th century, the family was divided and part of it stayed in the city of A Coruña, working as watchmakers, and another part, the one related to his grandfather Enrique, settled in Santiago, working mainly as goldsmiths, painters, teachers...

Fernando lived a happy childhood, closely linked to the work of his family. Of the three brothers, one is a watchmaker, another an engraver and he is also a jeweller (jet).

Learning path

He attended classes at the Mestre Mateo School of Arts and Crafts where his father taught Art and his uncle taught Drawing. According to him, "he studied what he saw in his family". At school he chose the branch of metal embossing.

For him it was the most logical choice because of the family he came from.

VET competitions

When he was studying at the School of Arts and Crafts he was asked if he wanted to participate in the regional silversmithing VET competition and he accepted. The first provincial phases were held in Santiago de Compostela. There, he began his relationship with the competitions.

He competed in the provincial, sector and national phases in 1957, winning all of them. He arrived at the International which was held in Madrid. He remembers that the exercises he was told to do were simple for him, in Madrid he made a chalice, and he always solved them with a certain ease. In this competition he was the champion of the B category, of the under-17s, when he was 15 years old.

At the age of 19, he competed again in the regional, sector and national phases, and was once again champion. That year, 1961, the international competition was held in Duisburg (Fernando, however, tells us that he competed in the city of Bonn, it must be noted that his memory fails him on some occasions). They held a concentration of all the national champions in Madrid and from there they went by bus to Germany. On the way back he remembers how they made several stops, one of them in Paris. In Germany they made several

excursions in the area. He remembers meeting students from other countries and competing against them, he says "it's what we were going to do". From the tests he highlights that the materials failed, they broke easily when manipulated, so he found it difficult to handle, but he didn't give up and decided to carry on out of competition. He was recognized with a honorific mention because of his behaviour and all the competitors congratulated him. He says that the Germans were very good.

When he arrived from the international competition in Germany in 1961, he was honoured in his hometown. His wife remembers Fernando saying: "the newspapers take me out because they have no news to report". Competitions were a "natural" part of his history and his profession. What really marked Fernando was the family tradition, as we have highlighted.

Career

After graduating, he set up his jewellery shop in the mythical Plaza de las Platerías in Santiago de Compostela and worked there until he retired. He also taught at the Escuela de Artes y Oficios, just as his uncle and father had done.

Within his profession, his work with jet, which his grandfather Enrique had recovered in the area, stood out. Jet had been fundamental in Santiago until the end of the Middle Ages. From that moment on, in the 16th century, the jet makers' guild was disbanded, and the material fell into disuse. It was his grandfather, as we have said, who recovered it. The work of such a delicate and expensive material would mark his career, in fact, Fernando is credited with being the architect of the new jet jewellery, with new designs and ways of incorporating jet into jewellery. He says that it is a complicated job you have to have very sharp tools.

During the visit, he showed us several newspaper articles and in at least 10 of them, he stated the importance of his work as a jet maker and maintainer of the techniques, emphasizing that few people know how to handle this material.

The tradition continues: Mayer jewellery is still in operation today, it is run by one of his sons and his daughter-in-law, Fernando visits them every day and spends part of the morning with them.

He made significant and relevant commissions for the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, the silver hammers that every Holy Year¹ open the Holy Door of the Cathedral, the layer of the Saint made in gold with inlaid stones, a sculpture of Santiago pilgrim in jet and silver for the Pope John Paul II... among many other ecclesiastical pieces; and also for their SS.MM. the Kings of Spain, for them he makes some portraits in jet and some other pieces.

¹ July 25th is the day of Santiago. The year that it falls on a Sunday is the Holy Jubilee Year of Compostela or Jacobean Holy Year

Related assets




Photo	ID	Title
	WSI_2149	1957 WSC Trophy
	WSI_1487	Photo, Fernando Mayer Garea, 1957 Champion
	WSI_2100	WSC Duisburg 1961 Badge

Photo	ID	Title
	WSI_2101	WSC Duisburg 1961 Participant Certificate
	WSI_2273	Silversmith Champion Certificate, International VET Competition, Madrid 1957