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# Why We Make Things And Why It Matters: The Education Of A Craftsman

WHY WE MAKE THINGS  
AND WHY IT MATTERS

*The Education of a Craftsman*

PETER KORN

READ BY TRABER BURNS • UNABRIDGED



## Synopsis

In this moving account, Peter Korn explores the nature and rewards of creative practice. We follow his search for meaning as an Ivy-educated child of the middle class who finds employment as a novice carpenter on Nantucket, transitions to self-employment as a designer and maker of fine furniture, takes a turn at teaching and administration at Colorado's Anderson Ranch Arts Center, and then founds a school in Maine: the Center for Furniture Craftsmanship, an internationally respected nonprofit institution. Furniture making practiced as a craft in the 21st century is a decidedly marginal occupation. Yet the view from the periphery can be illuminating. For Korn the challenging work of bringing something new and meaningful into the world through one's own volition - whether in the arts, the kitchen, or the marketplace - is what generates the meaning and fulfillment that so many of us seek. This is not a how-to book in any sense. Korn wants to get at the why of craft in particular and the satisfactions of creative work in general to understand their essential nature. How does the making of objects shape our identities? How do the products of creative work inform society? In short, what does the process of making things reveal to us about ourselves? Korn draws on four decades of hands-on experience to answer these questions eloquently, and often poignantly, in this personal, introspective, and revealing book.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I enjoyed the memoir part of this book in which the author describes his improbable discovery of furniture making and his growth into competent craftsman and designer. I didn't appreciate the half

or more of the book in which Korn elucidates, or tries to, his theory about why we make things. I won't be a spoiler and tell you what the theory is but I will reveal that I was unpersuaded by it, though it may explain why Korn made things, also why he quit making and started teaching. I read the whole book but I never got why its author thinks it matters that we hand make elements of our world. Fortunately, there are many good reasons that are set forth tellingly, poignantly, in other books.

Just as Robert Pirsig became the voice of a generation, Peter Korn reminds us in his new and important book to slow down and get our hands dirty; he reminds us that bringing ourselves into relationship with the stuff of art, be it paint, words or wood, resonates at a deep level and satisfies in a way that nothing else in our fast lane modern lives can. As he does in his own wood-working school in Maine, he teaches that it isn't necessarily about talent, but it is necessarily about connecting to our deeper selves. He has fought to walk his talk in a life that hasn't always been easy, and his book deserves every star I can give it.

Not enough insight into "why we make things". I got more insight into Peter Korn as a liberal old hippie. Also not enough info, on why it matters that we make things. The good points, as to the history background of trials; as a woodworker. It proves that you just can't make a piece of furniture; and sell it; and make a comfortable living at woodworking.

Excellent perspective from an experienced craftsmen. This is not a "how-to" book, but rather a book on the philosophy of craft. If you love craft for the art and philosophy, then you'll enjoy this. It is obviously a biography, but has a lot of wisdom within it for people going into the woodworking trade/art.

It's a memoir about finding happiness in your work and also showing the struggles of following what you love. Korn writes very well, charting his growth from unskilled carpenter, to fine furniture creator, and finally to builder of his own woodworking school. The book is highly personal and very relatable to anyone who has questioned how they make their living and what kind of legacy they want to leave behind. Though explicitly about woodworking and the skills involved, it is more broadly applicable to any craft.

A thoughtful and interesting account of his personal journey as a craftsman and the humanistic

underpinnings of that process. He relates it to personal transformation which I think many makers experience. He is also honest about the pitfalls. If you are a maker, it is an insight into what perhaps drives you. I related to it because I am a maker and have often wondered why I went to such lengths to learn to do things in glass and fiber.

As an introspective and philosophical craftsman for over fifty years myself, I am greatly impressed with Korn's autobiographical combination of honesty, intellectual and emotional insights, and his accomplishment of the finished book. Reading it, I was often reminded of the etymological origin of the words poet (maker), poetry (making), and poem (the thing made). Mr. Korn is a very accomplished poet--as both a furniture maker and as a writer.

Wonderful and very well written autobiography about the life of an artist or maker of things. Korn is an amazing writer and you have to love him for his keen love of things and ideas and attempt to find meaning out of building things.

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