

Crafts - a language

I have hands to speak with and I have hands to see with. I wouldn't want to be without my eyes and my voice, it's not that. But I want to emphasize that craft is communication. Also. Working with my hands doesn't mean my brain is asleep, of course not! The term "tacit knowledge" is misleading, because crafting is a constant ongoing conversation. Okay, you can't hear much if you use your ear. But I read the wood, the materials, the tools. They show me, speak to me. The first time I went to study woodwork at a local farm, I saw nothing. I didn't know what to look for. But as I've learned to use tools, my literacy has increased, and I can now interpret ancient tools or building components in a whole new way. I can understand the choices someone made long ago. I can read what the forest looked like then, and how people lived in it. Faced with today's forestry and destructive resource management, I can of course be disheartened. But the realization that it has been different also means that everything can be different again. The logic of capitalism is not a law of nature.

An object is never just an object. It has been preceded by a process that is often many times more interesting. Someone has had an idea. Someone has chosen a material and a tool, and in symbiosis with these created a form. Maybe solved a problem; the jacket got something to hang on. Perhaps they made something useless, but not meaningless; carved a wooden horse or embroidered a bonad. Whatever the case, there's a story in the object that you can absorb, if you listen properly. Apart from the choice of materials and revelations about tool selection and whether there were nicks in the knife, a piece of the person lives on in the object. Even if they've been dead for 5 or 50 or 500 years. Great-grandfathers and great-grandmothers whisper little pieces of the puzzle that you can put together to understand their lives, their choices, their anguish, their passion. And of course, we need to connect with them to understand what to do now. We need to engage with history to find a direction into the future. We can't just float around in a pool formulated by the market. Because it has nothing to do with people and other life forms.

My craft tells you about me. When I craft, my time turns into something you can hold in your hand. All those stubborn hours also create more and more room for me to be intuitive and shoot from the hip. Ten ladles burn in the stove, but maybe if you hold the eleventh, you will feel that the experience of the failed ones is still there. Perhaps you can also feel that my walk in the woods is there; I saw examples of uniqueness but also of diversity. Perhaps you wonder why someone is carving wooden spoons in 2017 and understand that it is a statement. Slowness is not the weakness, it is the strength. There is so much going on too fast, and I want time to think. In the process of thinking, new ideas, stories and insights emerge. I draw them down with my knife. Can you read them?

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