The American Craftsman:
A Contemporary Revival

A thesis submitted to the School of Visual Communication Design
College of Communication and Information
of Kent State University in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts

by
Nathanael E. Mucha
December, 2012
Thesis written by

Nathanael E. Mucha

B.A., Grove City College, 2008

M.F.A., Kent State University, 2012

Approved by

___________________________
Jerry Kalback, M.S., Advisor

___________________________
AnnMarie LeBlanc, M.F.A., Director, School of Visual Communication Design

___________________________
Stanley T. Wearden, Ph.D., Dean, College of Communication and Information
# Table of Contents

TABLE OF CONTENTS........................................................................................................iii

LIST OF FIGURES..............................................................................................................iv

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .......................................................................................................v

CHAPTER

1. CRAFTING A DEFINITION ..........................................................................................1
   Building a Historical Perspective ..............................................................................1
   More than Martha ......................................................................................................3
   The 21st Century Craftsman ......................................................................................6

2. CHANNELING WILLIAM MORRIS .........................................................................11
   Case Studies .............................................................................................................11
   The Garden ................................................................................................................12
   The Shop ....................................................................................................................16
   The Cradle ................................................................................................................20

3. WHY CRAFT? ............................................................................................................25
   Drawing a Contemporary Portrait ..........................................................................25
   Creating Discourse ..................................................................................................28
   Why Craft? ...............................................................................................................30
   Future Growth .........................................................................................................39

4. CONCLUSIONS .........................................................................................................41
   Summary ....................................................................................................................41
   Moving Forward .......................................................................................................43

APPENDICES

A. Questionnaire ...........................................................................................................45
B. Beta Testing ................................................................................................................57
C. Annotated Interface Design ......................................................................................58
D. Interface Designs ......................................................................................................59

REFERENCES ................................................................................................................62
## List of Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The Garden</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The Shop</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The Cradle</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. <em>Why Craft?</em> initial page view</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. <em>Why Craft?</em> post form with error checking</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. <em>Why Craft?</em> slider (left) compared to a typical CAPTCHA (right)</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. <em>Why Craft?</em> code sample showing page queries</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. <em>Why Craft?</em> on various sized devices showing @media query usage</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. <em>Why Craft?</em> annotated interface design</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. <em>Why Craft?</em> initial page view</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. <em>Why Craft?</em> terms and conditions popup open</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. <em>Why Craft?</em> optional address form open</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. <em>Why Craft?</em> tweet API popup open</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Acknowledgments

There are many players who act out various roles regarding a project such as this, and more of those individuals deserve sincere thanks than this space permits. From direct assistance in research, writing and troubleshooting to criticism and thought development—not to mention help with household duties put aside and workshop tasks delegated—this has been the work of a team, not an individual. All share in any successes achieved here.

I have the utmost appreciation for my wife Amy, whose patience and support all while carrying our first child cannot be overstated. From late night work sessions to the presence of reading material, sketchbook and pencil at most gatherings of family and friends over the past year as well as her perpetual service as a sounding board for ideas, this would not have been possible without her companionship and understanding.

For his daily help with editing and composition, my good friend Darin Miller deserves a pedestal of his own on which to stand. A creative writer who is constantly pushing both my and his own limits in regard to productivity and critical thinking, he never tired of our conversations regarding my ideas no matter how oblique or unframed. Without him, they would still be in that state.

To my family, friends, colleagues, instructors and the craftsman who have inspired me in a multitude of ways, a special “thank you” for understanding that, while perhaps not given explicit attribution, my gratitude extends to you sincerely and specifically.
Chapter 1: Crafting a Definition

“You must either make a tool of the creature, or a man of him.

You cannot make both.”

— John Ruskin

Building a Historical Perspective

In order for one to understand what craft is and, subsequently, what makes and motivates the craftsman, it is essential to begin with a historical perspective. Today the word “craft” is given a variety of dissimilar definitions and, it seems, is used differently in nearly every field of practice. This ambiguity is a modern phenomenon. Analyzing the term in its historical context sheds light on its evolution from classic to modern connotation, and, in any case, it is prudent to look back before examining that which presently exists.

Prior to the Arts and Crafts Movement of the 19th century, craft was not imbued with a plethora of meanings as it is currently. Today the carpenter in his shop, the jeweler at the local craft fair or the design student meticulously trimming the excess margins from a book she has designed could all be considered craftsmen.\(^1\) Before the advent of the machine at the dawn of the Industrial Revolution however, a skilled craftsman produced nearly every good. It was not until the machine began to replace human interaction in production processes that men like John Ruskin and William Morris sought to advocate craft and the maker-thinker—a class which was beginning to dwindle.

\(^1\) The term “craftsman” will be used throughout this discussion in reference to both men and women engaged in craft activity. The craftsman does not depend on any attribute that is gender specific nor is any craft exclusive to male or female.
In *The Craftsman* Richard Sennet describes the effects of the machine saying, “Is it a friendly tool or an enemy replacing work of the human hand? In the economic history of skilled manual labor, machinery that began as a friend has often ended up as an enemy” (Sennet, 2008, p. 81). This dilemma inspired Ruskin to speak out against industrialism. In his opinion the segmentation of labor due to machine-incorporation prevented individual workers from exercising creativity in their task. “It is not, truly speaking,” says Ruskin, “the labour that is divided; but the men—Divided into mere segments of men…” (Gauntlett, 2011, p. 32).

Ruskin’s primary complaint against the machine was that it stole from men the ability to create an object in its entirety. Now the person who designed the object was, in all likelihood, not involved in the process of creating it. This dehumanized the built material world as it related to machined production as well as split in two men who, until the advent of the machine, were responsible for both conceiving and creating objects as part of a continuous process. In one of his most famous excerpts, Ruskin says:

> We are always in these days endeavouring to separate the two; we want one man to be always thinking, and another to be always working, and we call one a gentleman, and the other an operative; whereas the workman ought often to be thinking, and the thinker often to be working, and both should be gentlemen, in the best sense (Ruskin, 2010, p. 201).

It is this manner of thinking which inspired William Morris and other Arts and Crafts Movement visionaries to take craft under consideration and embrace it as a tool for personal and cultural reform.
While Ruskin, an art critic and amateur artist, celebrated the medieval laborer as one who exemplified the maker-thinker, Morris took Ruskin’s thoughts a step further. Ruskin had seen the value a worker received from personal creativity as well as the collective potential for social reform. Morris sought instead to understand the theories of his mentor through practice. In his book *Making is Connecting*, David Gauntlett wrote of Morris:

He mastered all kinds of creative techniques during the course of his lifetime, moving on from painting and drawing to embrace embroidery, woodcuts, calligraphy and book printing, tapestry weaving, and textile printing. He clearly felt that a hands-on engagement with a craft was the only way to truly understand it (Gauntlett, p. 35).

He became a craftsman to experience first-hand the application of his theories. By building his own furniture, designing wallpaper and printing books at the Kelmscott Press, he took ownership over the objects that inhabited his environment. Because of this he was better able to discern the sickly nature of a culture produced by machines—and recommend an appropriate antidote.

**More than Martha**

Any cause is prone to lose momentum as time passes, and the Arts and Crafts Movement was no exception. Plagued by over-politicization and technological paranoia, Arts and Crafts began fragmenting at the beginning of the 20th century. The pressures of the coming World Wars, however, soon reshaped the socio-political framework worldwide—including the role, popularity and perception of craft, especially in America.
During both World War I and II, craft for leisure and personal fulfillment essentially disappeared from everyday life. Entire populations geared up for wartime production, meaning anything distracting from the collective effort had to be discarded. Yet, craft persisted during this time of turmoil in the form of, as Paul Atkinson calls it, “Essential Do-It-Yourself” (or DIY as it is popularly abbreviated). Craft during the World Wars was essential in that individuals at home engaged in “activities carried out as an economic necessity or because of the unavailability of professional labor” (Atkinson, 2006, p. 3).

Craft during the great wars centered on frugality and self-sufficiency. The idea of the “victory garden,” for example, was based on the notion that if households each cultivated a portion of their land for fruits and vegetables, the national food distribution system would be relieved and soldiers could be fed more easily on the battlefield. Such a program is not necessarily the basis for personal expression, but the principles still apply today—the contrast between the supermarket and home garden will be examined later.

Following World War II, the popularity of craft in America continued to grow, and craft practices continued to evolve. Soldiers returned home to a housing boom and unprecedented national prosperity; homemakers returned to their homes after having worked in factories and assembly lines. Homeownership and increased disposable income spawned a craft of conspicuous consumption where neighbors attempted to stay ahead of one another by improving their homes. Atkinson refers to this sort of craft as “Lifestyle DIY” where the war had

---

2 DIY is a popular term for Arts and Crafts concepts that have been incorporated into mainstream culture. The term “craft” will be used for continuity rather than oscillating between terms.
“provided men and women with technical skills, confidence, and a predisposition toward using their resourcefulness to realize their dream of domestic living” (Atkinson, p. 4).

It was not long before manufacturers soon recognized the opportunity for monetary gain by creating “kits” for this new breed of craftsman. According to Atkinson:

Manufacturers and retail chains alike have worked to develop and promote easier methods of producing the results which once required so much dedicated input through new materials and kits of parts, which to some extent, can be regarded as removing a previously desired element of individuality (Atkinson, p. 5).

This, ironically, reintroduced the standardization and separation between maker and thinker that Arts and Crafts philosophers sought to remove just one generation prior. Called “Reactive” by Atkinson, such craft is “mediated through the agency of kits, templates or patterns...involving the assembly of predetermined components, where the motivation might range from the occupation of spare time to personal pleasure...” (Atkinson, p. 6).

A modern champion of craft, Martha Stewart has done much to propagate it. From Martha Stewart Magazine, her magazine which provides countless craft projects, to inspiring other publications such as Real Simple and Readymade, Stewart made craft a popular sensation for a broad, modern-day audience (Lupton, 2006, p. 20). Ellen Lupton, author of D.I.Y.: Design It Yourself, contrasts Martha Stewart to Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci who, like John Ruskin, saw craft as a maker’s activity as much as it was that of the thinker. Lupton argues
that, while Stewart made craft popular, the current generation “[does] not identify with the gracious perfectionism of Martha Stewart or with the tidy traditionalism of Pottery Barn.” Rather, Lupton suggests that the current generation tends toward development of “skills...both technical and theoretical” (Lupton, p. 21).

**The 21st Century Craftsman**

The craftsman of the 21st century is in a unique situation compared to the craftsman of the prior one hundred years. While similarities abound, her lot differs from that of Ruskin and Morris in key ways. One such departure is the current economic trend in contemporary America after which Richard Florida titles his book *The Rise of the Creative Class*. In 2002, Florida published *The Rise of the Creative Class* as a primarily socio-economic analysis of trends in America toward jobs that are more about thinking than about making. With this shift, production industry gives way to service industry whose role is to support the new creative class which no longer has time to do its own laundry or cooking.

In his book *Shop Class as Soulcraft: An Inquiry into the Value of Work*, Political Science Ph.D. Think Tank Consultant turned Motorcycle Mechanic Matthew Crawford laments the elevation of white collar jobs over blue saying, “While manufacturing jobs have certainly left our shores to a disturbing degree, the manual trades have not. If you need a deck built, or your car fixed, the Chinese are of no help. Because they are in China” (Crawford, 2009, p. 2). To summarize his argument, jobs that are “creative,” as Florida would call them, are oftentimes just intellectual manual labor. In contrast, work requiring

© 2012 Nate Mucha
craftsmanship is more engaging and stimulates greater thought in planning, adapting and troubleshooting than that required of the average cubicle worker.

Crawford echoes Ruskin as he perceives that “the degradation of work is ultimately a matter, rooted in the separation of thinking from doing” (Crawford, p. 38). In contemporary times, Crawford recognizes that many occupations once undertaken by craftsmen are no longer economically viable as professions, but this is where the tradesman fills the void. His vocation is inherently craft-oriented, and his services are needed locally. Still he recognizes that there are many benefits to being a craftsman outside of one’s vocation: self-reliance, increased personal agency, the satisfaction of mastering one’s environment, the tacit understanding of knowledge, the edifying use of spare time and the solidarity developed with other like-minded individuals are a few examples.

Like Ruskin’s and Morris’s, many of Crawford’s arguments for craft are ideological in nature. He quotes Richard Sennet who advocates that craftsmanship is, in its most basic form, the “desire to do something well, concretely, for its own sake” (Sennett, p. 144). Sennet’s view of craft is extremely inclusive in nature stretching far beyond typical definitions of what constitutes craft. While those taking a perspective such as Glenn Adamson in *Thinking Through Craft* may argue that a definition of craft—and consequently the craftsman—is not simple, Sennet’s generosity in inviting new members to the craftsman’s table appeals to contemporary culture that holds democracy as a high virtue and decries boundaries. Rather than relegate individuals based on
specific practices, it is more appropriate to look at motivations and the way in which the individual engages the activity in question.

For example, Sennet asserts, “People who participate in ‘open source’ computer software...are craftsmen who embody some of the elements first celebrated in the Hymn to Hesphaestus..." (Sennet, p. 24). While not even a physical activity—one criteria commonly required in many definitions of craft—Sennet recognizes that the manner in which the Linux programmer goes about his work corresponds to the more abstract concepts fundamental to the craftsman.

Craft is, in part, an idealist’s calling. Sennet notes that notions of sustainability, “rhythmic” problem-solving, the slow mastery of skills through repetition and practice, agency, tacit understanding, reflection, honesty in material and a spirit of Pragmatism are among the ideals integral to craft. Yet interviews with contemporary craft practitioners revealed that the activity itself is central to the craftsman’s motivation and essential goal. Of note, sustainability is an excellent motivation for craft. Sennet explains, “The word sustainability... carries a particular baggage. Sustainable suggests living more at one with nature, as Martin Heidegger imagined in his old age, establishing an equilibrium between ourselves and the resources of the earth—an image of balance and reconciliation (Sennet, p. 13).” The baggage to which Sennet refers is that added through marketing and corporate scheming to convey only environmental

---

3 The Hymn to Hesphaestus is an Ancient Greek tribute to the craftsman as both a maker and a member of the community, essential to its unity.
activism. Heidegger’s understanding centers on the balance between humanity and resources.

For the craftsman, sustainability is not far removed from Immanuel Kant’s Categorical Imperative. While intended as an ethical check, the philosopher asks his reader to consider his actions as a moral being. Kant asserts that one ought to “[a]ct only according to that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law” (Kant, 1993, p. 30). Put simply, only do what would be acceptable if everyone did the same. Here is the heart of sustainability: If what one is doing could be done by all for the indefinite future, then it is sustainable. If it could not, it should be avoided. For example, it is commonly accepted that current rates of gasoline consumption (particularly in America) will exhaust global supply in the relatively near future. Continuing to source food from distant locations with heavy reliance on petroleum-powered vehicles may not work in one hundred years. Thus the practice is not sustainable. On the other hand, growing a garden in one’s yard, saving seeds from year to year and canning excess produce is highly sustainable in that it unburdens the national industrial infrastructure just as it did during the World Wars. Yet, a cause as noble and important to the craftsman is ancillary to the definition of craft. Instead, it is an ideal surrounding and supporting it—but that is a thought more fully explored later.

How then might craft be defined? The term’s history reveals a common thread through the centuries—the thinker-maker has greater ownership over his environment (and thus cares more for it) than a person defined by mental or
manual labor alone, and he finds fulfillment in conceptually and physically creative work. In *Made by Hand: Searching for Meaning in a Throwaway World*, Mark Frauenfelder, Editor-in-Chief of *Make*, recounts his journey to achieve three goals with his family: “(1) To take more control of our lives; (2) To cut through the absurd chaos of modern life and find a path that was simple, direct, and clear; (3) To forge a deeper connection and a more rewarding sense of involvement with the world around us” (Frauenfelder, 2010, p. 3). By the end of his story, Mark observes that “when you do something yourself, the thing that changes most profoundly is you” (Frauenfelder, p. 223).

Through his experience becoming a craftsman, Frauenfelder not only reshaped his environment for the better, but transformed himself as well. His work was not without mistakes or imperfections, but it was something that he desired to do well because it was something about which he cared and in which he invested himself. He came across difficulties or insufficiencies in his life that asked him to develop and implement a solution. This idea is effective yet simple—two ingredients to good engineering. The craftsman is one who acts as both maker and thinker in seeking to do something well for its own sake.
Chapter 2: Channeling William Morris

“If thinking is bound up with action, then the task of getting an adequate grasp on the world, intellectually, depends on our doing stuff in it.”

— Matthew Crawford

Case Studies

In the same way that Henry David Thoreau became familiar with the white pine through felling several to build his shelter by Walden Pond, William Morris sought to determine the value of craft by developing mastery in various disciplines. From textiles to letterpress, Morris produced an impressive collection of work and gained invaluable tacit knowledge of what it means to be a craftsman. Matthew Crawford describes the importance of tacit knowledge as he says, “The basic idea of tacit knowledge is that we know more than we can say, and certainly more than we can specify in a formulaic way” (Crawford, p. 168). Richard Sennet adds to this discussion:

Craftwork establishes a realm of skill and knowledge perhaps beyond human verbal capacities to explain; it taxes the powers of the most professional writer to describe precisely how to tie a slipknot...The limits of language can be overcome through active involvement in practice. Diderot’s solution to the limits of language was to become himself a worker (Sennet, p. 95).

Casting a long shadow across time, Morris is described by Gauntlett as “a man who projected a vision—a vision of great fundamental hope and optimism—through a striking number of different channels” (Gauntlett, p. 38). Morris’s legacy as a prolific and venerable craftsman stands tall even now, but it is possible to
become a taller craftsman than one might otherwise be by standing upon his shoulders. In order to better present the following case studies which were conducted by the researcher, it is best to stray from the tone of academia and speak more personally. Three studies will be examined—The Garden, The Shop and The Cradle—each of which bring out nuances of craftsmanship that can only be understood through doing.

**The Garden**

I never imagined myself to be a gardener, yet that was my first true venture into craftsmanship as a serious, transformative pursuit. My father has always kept a garden, and it was something I only associated with hot summer afternoons of weeding—something to be dreaded. Of the baby-boomer generation, my father’s gardening was no doubt a product of his parents’ frugality having lived through both the Great Depression and World War II. The garden is a means to live with less grocery expense and the enjoyment of fresh produce. Aspects of Essential and Lifestyle craftsmanship can be inferred here.

The idea to start cultivating vegetables and fruits for substantial personal consumption was, I must admit, not mine—it was my wife Amy’s. Having never gardened before, a switch flipped in her brain one day and she decided that she would like to have a garden and that I should build it for her. Her motivation was a mix between a desire for fresher ingredients with which to cook and can as well as to reduce our dependency on grocery store produce. Hopefully we would end up eating out less too which would be a big money saver.
As anyone who lives in the region might expect, the average back yard in northeast Ohio boasts soil ill-suited to gardening. Regardless of yard size—a half acre in our case—the ground is generally a mixture of clay and sand since the topsoil was likely scraped off during development. To overcome the deficiency in soil quality, one must either till the earth and mix in good soil or build boxed gardens that are then filled with bought topsoil likely imported from another development under excavation.

Given the number of trees in our yard, the thought of tilling even with a motorized tiller seemed overwhelming. We consulted a friend of mine from school and proceeded to lay out our garden in a space in the back of our lot that would include an old wooden swing set for climbing plants to eventually cover. After a few trips to the lumber yard and hardware store, we constructed five boxes using untreated two-by-twelve inch boards and a boxful of deck screws. We brought in railroad ties to wall the entire perimeter and mulched the garden with wood chips from a tree we had cut down. Luckily, my wife’s family had owned a sand and gravel pit that still contained topsoil. We paid a driver a small fee per load to pick up eighteen tons of the free dirt, and spent a full day filling the boxes. We hemmed the plot in with metal posts and chicken wire to ward off unwanted pests, completing our garden.

Unfortunately, a rainy spring had forcibly delayed our construction. By completion we were well outside of the optimal timeframe for planting. Furthermore, this delay meant that Amy’s starter plants on the growing shelves we had put together under the basement steps were long and gangly as they
tried to grow taller and taller to reach more light. They would never survive outside with their tiny stems and spaced out leaves. We were forced to purchase starter plants from the local garden club.

By now we had invested just over one thousand dollars to set up a garden that had not yet produced any vegetables. The idea of saving money through gardening seemed less practical every day. Still we persisted. Eventually the garden began to look lush with buckets of hanging tomatoes, cucumber vines and bushy asparagus shoots.

![The Garden](image)

**FIGURE 1:** The Garden

As the plants grew so did our expectations, and we soon discovered that other neighborhood residents were looking forward to the fruits of our labor.

The deer attacked overnight it seemed. All the cabbage, lettuce, broccoli, cauliflower and beans were gone one morning. This immediately put us into
action. We knew that the garden would be safe if we put up an eight foot fence extension to the chicken wire, but this would be unsightly and make the garden less accessible to us as well. We also didn’t want to put any chemicals on the plants as we wanted to keep the garden as organic as possible. I knew my father had a tall fence, but I hoped he would have another solution to our deer problem. He did, and the remainder of our season was a success.

Matthew Crawford emphasizes this point in his writing, but it took this personal experience for me to learn it. Craft builds solidarity. My father and I did not have much in common (or much of a relationship for many years), but the garden changed that. Defending one’s garden against marauding deer has the potential to build relational bridges that might not have been constructed otherwise. Recounting a similar experience, Crawford says, “...[Solidarity] with others is a positive attraction, akin to love. It is not an abstract imperative, but an actual experience we have from time to time. Its scope is necessarily smaller, its grip on our affections tighter...” (Crawford, p. 200). Through gardening my father and I have built a stronger relationship moved along by sharing tips, struggles and vegetables.

The first year of our garden was delightful despite the fact that we lost nearly half of our plants to deer. We took the lessons we learned that season and applied them to the next year—which has been extremely bountiful if not free from new infiltrations by deer and, most recently, a particularly assertive groundhog. The final point to be drawn here from The Garden—although there are many more that could be mentioned—is that when you have an invested role
in creating something, that something matters much more than would a bought alternative. When I bring a basket of tomatoes and basil in from the garden to make a fresh tomato, basil and mozzarella salad, I enjoy it much more that if I had merely purchased the ingredients. It tastes better too. There is joy in the experience of discovering what one has made by watching it develop, protecting it and using it. Few things disappoint Amy and I more than seeing our harvest go to waste, so gardening has also driven us to try canning and pickling. It may take another year or two before we realize a full return on our investment, but we are already learning a certain measure of self-reliance from the garden. Perhaps more importantly, we slowed down and began to appreciate and care where our food comes from—and we cook together more which is good for our marriage as well as our health.

The Shop

I came to printmaking—and subsequently silk screen printing—through college art classes while earning my first undergraduate degree. Formerly a painter, I loved the fact that a single woodcut resulted in multiple prints. The initial setup was more difficult, but I fell in love with creating print series. I exhibited as a woodcut artist for a few years before leaving the art world to pursue a career in design and education.

A couple of years ago, my colleague Ian McCullough and I decided to pursue the craft of printmaking as a side business offering hand-pulled screen prints to the local community, adding letterpress to our repertoire soon after. Part
of our motivation was to have access to the process for our own personal work, but if we could turn a profit to support the shop, that would be a bonus. We created a list of necessities for our business. I already had basic equipment from printing hand-painted screens for art prints, but we wanted to process screens photographically which would require a few new items—most importantly, an exposure table, darkroom and printing table.

The first piece of equipment we decided to tackle was the exposure table. Working on a shoe-string budget comprised of our personal funds, we opted to build the table rather than purchase a commercial unit. Blueprints for such units are difficult to find, so we investigated the principles of exposing a screen and drew a rough plan before heading to the lumber yard. We had the table constructed within an afternoon. It was rough, but after a coat of semi-gloss paint, the simple table looked impressive. Measuring roughly four by six feet, the exposure table was big enough to handle a sizable screen.

The table now required two essential components, a light box for producing the ultraviolet light necessary to expose photo-sensitive emulsion and a sheet of glass that would be placed on top as the surface where the positive film and coated screen would be “burned.” Without getting too in-depth, my brother-in-law John and I spent an afternoon constructing the light box and wiring four four-foot fluorescent light fixtures to switches and a timer. One switch would activate yellow-gelled lights that would be “safe,” and the other would turn on the UV lights. The sheet of glass was a quarter inch thick, and dropping it on top of
the table (along with the exposure box installed underneath) gave the impression of a working piece of equipment.

When an individual builds for herself something such as our exposure unit, she has complete ownership over it. Troubleshooting becomes more personal as the creator is intimately aware of all components of the object and is able to discern the discrete components and better identify the error. Mark Frauenfelder echoes this sentiment saying, “In a culture where everything is built to be disposed of at the first sign of trouble, it’s harder to care about or even be aware of the objects in your life. But when you become personally invested in the care and maintenance of something, you appreciate it more” (Frauenfelder, p. 58). This was certainly true of our exposure table. We made many changes to it over the past few years, such as doubling the number of bulbs, adding a thicker piece of glass and, due to the increased weight, adding lateral supports on the top and bottom. What started as a passable unit that could only properly expose small screens is now a workhorse that has produced hundreds of screens of all sizes. More importantly, however, it is “our” exposure unit—one that has been perfectly incorporated into our process and is central to its proper functioning. The same is true for our vacuum table and drying cabinet, which we also custom built for incorporation into our process.
As McCullough says, “It’s ‘my’ shop because I feel so at home there, because I’ve come to know all of the equipment in there so well” (Ian McCullough, personal communication, August 8, 2012).

Fellow shop-worker Alexander Catanese expresses an interesting sentiment concerning the nature of the type of work printed in the shop. He says, “…I mostly enjoy pro bono work. Usually this involves much more creativity than simply printing a client design...[when] one controls the entire process, it is much more enjoyable and relaxing” (Alexander Catanese, personal communication, August 8, 2012). It is this sort of ownership inherent in craftsmanship where the individual is the conceptualizer and enactor of the project in which Catanese finds the greatest fulfillment. Between personal, client and pro bono there is a certain satisfaction to derive from working on a “good” project that is wholly
independent from financial gain. McCullough echoes Catanese’s thoughts saying, “...having the opportunity to offer a solution for the sake of ‘this can be beautiful if it ever gets produced’ is awesome and, sometimes, more rewarding to see that project live than a paycheck” (McCullough, personal communication, August 8, 2012).

While some craftsmen find great satisfaction from earning a living through their craft, money is not the craftsman’s goal. Matthew Crawford describes the effect of Henry Ford’s assembly line on his employees (nearly all former craftsmen) as so negative that he “was forced to double the daily wage of his workers to keep the line staffed.” He goes on to say that “...[assembly line work] inspires revulsion only if one is acquainted with more satisfying modes of work. Here the concept of wages as compensation achieves its fullest meaning...” (Crawford, p. 42). The craftsman worked, in part, because his vocation satisfied him for which he was rewarded in pay. The assembly line worker had to be “convinced” to labor with wage as his end for which work was merely a means. Craft, it seems, is an antidote to this work-place malady. While not a way in which to amass wealth, it is certainly a way in which the craftsman might build up stores of satisfaction through his toil as an end in itself.

The Cradle

I reserved the most personal of the case studies conducted for this study until last. The motivation for the garden was self-sustenance and a better, healthier product than that found in the grocery store. The drive to create the print shop
was to produce interesting personal work while turning a profit and sharing alternative printing with the community. Yet, the impetus for the cradle was deeper—it was an object originating and accomplished through love.

As mentioned in the section above, I have worked with wood and practiced as an amateur carpenter for many years. I am comfortable with tools and find little more enjoyable that shaping raw materials like lumber into something durable, beautiful and useful. To celebrate the coming birth of our first child, I had a strong desire to build him a cradle—a place where he could lay his head, and someday lay the head of his child or grandchild as he rocks him or her to sleep for the first time.

I sought the guidance of Mr. Catanese as he had recently built a desk out of walnut wood using many of the same techniques I would need. I began the process by drawing up plans. Being aware of my material and my tools, I created a modern design where a “V” shaped cradle is suspended above a rocking platform using steel bars. The cradle would seem to float over the base, with rockers hidden underneath. Now it was time to source materials.

I knew that I would need a hardwood, but I thought I would go to the lumber yard and see the selection before deciding on a particular tree. Something like cherry or walnut would have a beautiful color, but would also be extremely expensive and not well-stocked. Catanese and I drove to the yard together and investigated the aisle containing dimensional hardwoods. Poplar, as I had anticipated, had a greenish cast, and the oak was too porous and rough for a newborn. Pine felt too cheap, so we were delighted to find a small section of
maple, some of which had a beautiful dark figure. We purchased roughly one hundred feet of one-by-three inch boards that we could join into butcher-block style planks.

Catanese instructed me the next day on proper plank-making. I had previously ripped (cut) the boards to approximate length for the main components—two end caps, two sides, one base and one interior slat on which the baby would lie—and he began by helping me choose an interesting combination of boards that would make planks with good variety of figure. We alternated grain up and down so that the board would not be prone to warping, brushed on a liberal amount of glue and clamped the boards until dry before moving on to the next plank. They would be ready to sand after two days of curing time.

What followed were endless hours of sanding. We mostly worked at night sporting masks and eye protection, running two random orbital sanders while the room filled with dust. By the time we finished smoothing the planks, we had used over one hundred sanding discs of various grit and spent twelve hours working between the two of us—which officially earned Catanese “uncle” status.

With all the planks dry and sanded, each one was already a labor of love, so preparing to trim them to the correct size was nerve-wracking. We measured twice, cut once and then ended up altering plans based on the results of an improperly set miter cut. After five hours of clamping guides, ripping boards, adjusting and re-ripping, the design was better than the original plan and more effectively showcased the wood’s figure. All that was left to do before assembling
it was to roughly shape the rockers on the bandsaw and sand them until they were smooth and identical.

Assembly went without any trouble, and within a few days I had applied a beautiful Danish Oil, sanded the cradle again and reapplied the oil. All hardware (other than the steel posts) was hidden within the body of the cradle in the form of pocket screws. The shallow bed was kept upright via crushed stone concealed in the bottom of the “V” which would counter-weight the cradle as it rocked keeping the center of gravity low and safe. The cradle rocked smoothly for forty seconds with one tap of my foot—I was pleased. My wife, at the same time, had crocheted a stunningly simple blanket using soft-green, organic-cotton yarn. With the blanket adorning the cradle, the project was complete.

The baby is still a few months away, but through crafting the cradle, the anticipation of our future relationship was made more tangible. It would not be possible for me to find a cradle made anywhere by anyone else that could be more meaningful to my wife and I. The imperfections make the cradle personal, and as the only person aware of them, they only serve to unite me further to the object. While a cradle made by a more skilled carpenter might be finished with greater excellence, it would not be mine nor would it bear my mark—both physical and intentional.
FIGURE 3: The Cradle
Chapter 3: Why Craft?

“I craft for the pursuit of perfection which is unobtainable through something not created with one’s own hands. I also like really good beer.”

— Shaun Yasaki, Craft Brewer

Drawing a Contemporary Portrait

In *Making is Connection*, David Gauntlett examines the place of the 21st century craftsman as she stands in relation to the Internet—most importantly, Web 2.0. He scrutinizes the idea of social capital as it relates to various communities and asserts that the Internet presents an unprecedented opportunity to project creativity, build connections with likeminded individuals and share one’s craft. As it pertains to why individuals participate online, he says, “The motivation and the reward are basically the same thing: to be part of an active community, part of a conversation, and to feel somewhat more connected to people we know. Possibly also—but not necessarily—to come into contact with new people” (Gauntlett, p. 97).

Garth Johnson, in his essay “Down the Tubes: In Search of Internet Craft” which is featured in *Handmade Nation* by Faythe Levine and Cortney Heimerl, asserts that “…it’s the Internet that holds the craft world together” (Levine & Heimerl, 2008, p. 35). People of craft are very comfortable online participating in forums. In a questionnaire conducted with craft practitioners of all ages, disciplines and motivations, 76 percent of individuals who responded have an online craft presence. Of that 76 percent, 38 percent maintain a blog, 69 percent are on Facebook or Twitter, 55 percent have a custom-built website for their craft
and 79 percent utilize a website service such as Cargo or Etsy. Eighty-six percent of respondents who have an online presence profit from their craft online, and the majority of participants (66 percent) cite “sales” as their primary motivation for having an online presence. Interestingly, for more than half of craftsmen who have an online presence, online sales account for less than 50 percent of total revenue.

While craftsmen are online for the purpose of selling, the Internet is most important to them as an informational resource with 66 percent of respondents citing blogs as their primary source when it comes to craft education. Forums and online videos were their second and third most frequented information sources accompanied by books, which tied for third, and magazines which were fifth in their list of craft education resources. Whether online for education or sales, the 21st century craftsman is comfortable using the Internet.

What is lacking for the contemporary craftsman is a body of current research and a lack of dialog espousing the importance of craft. Paul Atkinson laments that there is virtually no “discourse” examining craft as a modern movement despite the fact that is a powerful “antithesis [to] the prescribed design of the mass marketplace” (Aktinson, p. 1). Contributing to a lack of dialog is the public perception of the craftsman as an exclusive (and sometimes silly) subculture. In Melena Ryzik’s article from The New York Times entitled “Where the Craft Babes and DIY Dudes Are,” the contemporary crafter at the largest national craft fair—Renegade Craft Fair (RCF)—is portrayed as eclectic and more than a little frivolous producing wooden mustaches on sticks, plush messenger owls and
Kevin Federline dolls. Ryzik quotes several visitors complaining that commercialization has stagnated creativity and there is not much for the RCF vendor to offer customers looking for meaningful crafted goods (Ryzik, 2007). Furthermore, RCF has proven to be less than forthcoming when given opportunities to contribute to serious discourse as it pertains to contemporary craftsmanship in America—which appears to be more than an isolated occurrence.

In contrast to the crafter who sells trendy goods in order to make a profit is “Farmer Greg” Wilson of Frederick, Maryland who pursues farming as a craft in an effort to “[provide] food to the local community” because “it makes sense to [him]” (Wilson, personal communication, July 27, 2012). While consideration for sustainability is present in Farmer Greg’s mind, he says, “Success for my endeavor would be seeing my kids, or grandkids, or other young families able to provide for their families with a small scale farm business operation.” His goals include providing education, jobs and professions for the community while improving the quality of food and the environment.

Contrast Farmer Greg to Lindsey Hobson who crafts for personal enjoyment while repurposing what most people would see as garbage—tea tags, for example. She says, “For me, craft is a way to create and interact with the environment around me...it comes from seeing what could be, beyond what is already there” (Hobson, personal communication, July 31, 2012). Hobson creates quaint necklaces and earrings from discarded Tazo® Tea bags as one of her pet projects, but is unable to market them due to copyright issues. Yet profit
is not her motivation. Rather, she is content “creating up-cycled products [to] encourage people to think differently about their environment.”

Thankfully, according to David Gauntlett, differences between craft people are not insurmountable obstacles as craftsmen such as RCF vendors, Farmer Greg and Lindsey Hobson share key commonalities. They are all comfortable using the Internet, they act as maker-thinkers and they endeavor to do something well for its own sake (which is this study’s working definition of craftsmanship). When looking to create substantive discourse concerning craftsmanship, Gauntlett says, “[We] do not have to choose between the individual or the collective: rather, a diverse community of individual voices offers a satisfying...solution” (Gauntlett, p. 44).

Creating Discourse

In response to research conducted and a need to create meaningful public discourse in support of the contemporary craftsman, the culmination of this thesis work is an opportunity for craftsmen of all types and motivations to contribute to Gauntlett’s “diverse community of individual voices.” Initially, the proposed project was an association for craftsmen who pursued craft in a serious manner that would have been called “The Guild of Artisans.” While terminology was carefully chosen to speak of craft in a historical and elevated sense, the word “guild” was bogged down in both historical and contemporary confusion. Historically, the guilds—despite being idealized by Ruskin and Morris—represented an oppressive system where tacit knowledge was carefully guarded by masters who
passed down their knowledge to shops full of young apprentices whose families paid for them to be mentored by the best masters they could afford. The shop was both a workplace and a home for apprentices who slept under their work benches after long days of learning from their masters. In contemporary culture, the word “guild” has been appropriated by video gaming groups adding to the potential connotative confusion.

As research progressed, The Guild of Artisans gave way to the “Society of Independent Craftsman,” a less pretentious-sounding professional association for craftsman drawing in individuals through a spirit of camaraderie opposed to one of exclusivity. The craftsman is not necessarily seeking others with whom to work, he is looking for the ability to share resources and have a collective voice speak on his behalf. But contemporary craftsmanship is spread and spawns organizations through democratic means; it is not dictated from above. Gauntlett, in support of organic, democratic development, quotes Austrian philosopher Ivan Illich who says, “The renewal of convivial tools would be as unpredictable, creative, and lively as the people who use them” (Gauntlett, p. 174). Craftsmen should organize because they want to, not because someone tells them to do so.

Before organizing craftsmen and attempting to increase the momentum of the contemporary revival of craftsmanship in America from the top down, craftsmen must speak out as individuals who comprise a great cloud of witnesses. That is what inspired the creation of Why Craft?—a web-based community tool, and the culmination of this thesis.
Why Craft?

Progressing through Jesse James Garrett’s five step process described in The Elements of User Experience, work started with determining (1) strategy and progressed through (2) scope, (3) structure, (4) skeleton and finally (5) surface.

A website designed to allow users unrestricted and uncensored voice, Why Craft? (http://www.whycraft.com) asks visitors to tell the world why they craft. In the spirit of craftsmanship (like that of the Linux programmers praised by Richard Sennett), the site was created without templates and was not based on development frameworks. It was, like the cradle, designed and then crafted by hand. Writing the vast majority of code from scratch, every detail, including the user functionality, has been tailored to the site’s needs and the needs of the user without having an excessively complicated front- or back-end.

The strategy of the site is to integrate seamlessly with the popular Twitter platform where users make posts of up to 140 characters. By leveraging the pre-existing infrastructure of Twitter, user interactions with Why Craft? can be injected into the Twitter broadcasting system as tweets which are then attributed to the poster (providing they are a Twitter user) and either link back to Why Craft? or post the individual’s quote (depending on quote length). By letting Twitter bear the responsibility for projecting user posts, Why Craft? is able to focus on what is most important, the user’s reasons for engaging in craftsmanship, which they are able to instantaneously post to the site and subsequently share on Twitter. All user posts are compiled on Why Craft? and can be referenced by the number of their post using the URL query string.
The scope of the site is simple; the functionality heavily tailored. Users post why they craft while providing their name, email address and their craft. Together, the group of individual posts comprises an unprecedented cataloging of individual thoughts concerning contemporary craftsmanship which may be browsed linearly or at random.

FIGURE 4: Why Craft? initial page view

If users would like, they may enter additional postal address information to receive supportive, hand-printed Why Craft? materials. This is a method of creating brand recognition for Why Craft?, sharing in the spirit of craftsmanship by delivering finely printed goods to those who participate as well as a way to gather participants’ geographic information. These were all key considerations when structuring the site and the site’s supporting MySQL database.
In terms of interaction design, the site centers around the post while providing users with the ability to navigate through posts, make a post and share any post they view. Error management is essential here as user input is immediately made visible on the site. This means that the user needs to be able to correctly fill out the form while errors are handled on the front-end giving him the ability to correct his information. User inputs must, accordingly, be present when necessary (first name, email address, last name, quote and terms acceptance), and checked for accuracy (email address must be entered twice for confirmation and posts cannot be over 200 characters). If the user fills out a form.
field incorrectly, the site politely notifies the user of the error as well as why his input was incorrect.

Perhaps the most challenging aspect of allowing users to post to the site instantaneously is preventing “bots” from filling out the form with SPAM information. In detecting whether or not the submitted form is from an actual user, there are two typical methods used—member login or CAPTCHA. Member login would present an encumbrance to the user where they would need to create a user name and password which would be used to verify their post as from an individual. As bots do not check the email addresses they enter, they would not confirm their accounts which would prevent them from posting. The CAPTCHA is a contextual solution to preventing SPAM posts, yet it is often unsightly as it requires the display of distorted alphanumeric characters which the user must accurately decipher and enter into an input field before the form will submit. This is also an effective means of preventing bot SPAM, yet it can be frustrating for users to decode the image of characters.

![FIGURE 6: Why Craft? slider (left) compared to a typical CAPTCHA (right)](image)
Rather than rely on the typical CAPTCHA, Why Craft? utilizes a jQuery-based slider CAPTCHA that requires user interaction through the GUI (graphic user interface). Upon completing the form, the user must click and drag on the slider pulling it to the far right of the slider bar. If the user does this successfully, the form’s submit button is unlocked. Called QAPTCHA, this slider works on both standard and touch-based interfaces. Controlled with PHP sessions, the form is relocked once successfully submitted thus requiring the user to unlock the form before each submission—a process that is graceful and unobtrusive.

Equally as important as the interaction design is that of the database. Following database normalization standards, the MySQL database tables must abide by the three following rules:

1. There should be no repeating columns containing the same kind of data, all columns should contain a single value; and there should be a primary key to uniquely identify each row.

2. Identify columns where data repeats in different places; move the repeated data to their own tables.

3. Identify data that is not directly dependent on the primary key, but on another value; move the identified data to its own table.

By creating a database that conforms to normalization rules, redundancies are eliminated from table to table and information is sure to be organized in a relational manner for quick queries.
Once the strategy, scope and structure are determined, it is possible to design the interface and navigation. Unlike Twitter which presents a stream of user content, *Why Craft?* presents each user’s content independently. Navigation occurs linearly in order to permit the sequenced digestion of information or at random which allows organic discovery. Should the user desire to bookmark or share a specific post, the URL query string references the post’s unique ID which the page uses to query information from the database. A problem arises if the user were to enter a non-valid number into the URL query string. Suppose for instance, the user wanted to see if there is a post “100.” He or she might manually alter the query string to say “http://www.whycraft.com/?post=100” which may or may not exist. If there is a post “100,” the page will query the information.
from the database and present it to the user. If “100” is not an existing post ID, rather than present the user with an empty page, the query code iterates back through post IDs starting with “100” until it finds one. When it does find the next available page number, it checks to see what post is actually being presented and adjusts the navigation accordingly. This effectively prevents navigational error on the part of the user.

FIGURE 8: Why Craft? code sample showing page queries

Moving onto the most concrete of Garrett’s five steps, the visual design is highly typographic in nature. Utilizing the services of TypeKit, font files are securely referenced via Javascript and made accessible to all users ensuring that, so long as Javascript is enabled, all view Why Craft? with the exact same
fonts. This permits careful typesetting—something not possible for web designers even just a few years ago.

The only image on Why Craft? is the logomark which suggests a printer’s marks. It rests in the first column of the page which alternates between three and four columns depending on the user’s browser window size via “@media” queries. Should the user resize her browser window beyond an established breakpoint, the website replaces certain CSS file references with those more appropriate for the current browser size. This ensures that the site is easily viewed—while carefully controlling layout—on screens large and small.

FIGURE 9: Why Craft? on various sized devices showing @media query usage
Brand is reinforced through the creation of various supportive print materials delivered as incentives for users to post and provide address information. Print is unified with digital through color and typography and is enhanced through the use of highly tactile materials such as stocks with high cotton and recycled content depending on the piece. Sketchbooks, the first in a series of supportive print materials, are letterpress printed by hand on a Chandler and Price Old-Style circa 1885 on 140 lb. French (a family-owned, American, hydro-electrically-powered paper mill) Kraft Speckletone cover stock. The interior pages are 70 lb. French Recycled White Construction text stock and are saddle-stitched to the cover by a hand-sewn contrasting red thread. Attention to detail and establishing a narrative for the object appeal to craftsmen who are concerned with process and materials.
Future Growth

Within its first thirty-six hours of launching, Why Craft? received twenty-five posts, one hundred unique visitors and over one thousand page views. Yet progress is sure to be slow and methodical. By asking users to share their personal motivations, some will certainly shy away. If, contrary to what Gauntlett says, users fail to see motivation and reward as the same thing, external motivations may be required for the long-term.

An example of such an external motivation would be asking posters who receive a sketchbook to tweet a photo of themselves with their sketchbook for which they will be entered to have their post made into a hand-screen printed poster. Posters may then be marketed as further promotional items which will be
offered for sale on a *Why Craft?* shop page for a nominal fee. Posters, sketchbooks and other printed collateral such as buttons, shirts, tote bags and coasters may be offered as incentives for users who post, akin to radio call-in prizes where certain callers receive giveaways. Eventually a published version of compiled posts may be bound into a letterpress printed booklet for limited distribution. Such physical manifestations of digital content creates solidity out of what is otherwise an intangible and variable content set. Printing user-submissions makes their voices have a permanent quality and a physical, tactile beauty.
Chapter 4: Conclusions

“I mean that they should not play life, or study it merely, while the community supports them at this expensive game, but earnestly live it from beginning to end.”

— Henry David Thoreau

Summary

Starting with the Arts and Crafts Movement, the craftsman has played a humble yet elevated role in society as one who is able to perform his proper function while being both creative and productive. This makes the craftsman good in a very moral sense based on a rich, historically philosophical understanding of what makes something “good.” While there are external goods associated with craftsmanship such as environmental responsibility and monetary gain, the greatest good is intrinsic and based on personal creative fulfillment, promotion of individual agency as well as enhanced ownership and understanding of the objects that surround the craftsman.

Craftsman is not an exclusive or gender-specific title. It can be applied to any individual who acts as thinker and maker while seeking to do something well for its own sake. By approaching craft with an attitude of welcoming, this mindset permits the building of relational bridges between otherwise dissimilar individuals. It also promotes self-reliance, solidarity and the pursuit of excellence as an ideal rather than a means to obtain capital compensation.

The contemporary American craftsman inhabits a unique time in history where access to education and raw material allows the individual to escape
mainstream consumer culture and craft his own environment to whatever extent he wishes. The Internet permits faster and more extensive sharing, learning and discourse than ever before throughout history. Leveraging technology, the 21st century craftsman is able to invest herself in new endeavors without fear of failure. After all, failure is merely an opportunity for learning as she understands that building tacit knowledge can only be accomplished, as William Morris has demonstrated, through doing.

In order to encourage craftsmanship in the new millennia, there needs to be an increase in public discourse concerning craft. Barriers need to be taken down both conceptual as well as physical. By seeking to create a richer public dialog on craft, a body of contemporary research might be compiled. Trades and other craft disciplines that are disappearing from America might be preserved as well. As Louis Uchitelle of The New York Times says in his article “A Nation That’s Losing Its Toolbox,” “This isn’t a lament—or not merely a lament—for bygone times. It’s a social and cultural issue, as well as an economic one” (Uchitelle, 2012). Promoting, preserving and practicing craft is a struggle for whole human beings, not an obsolete way of life.

*Why Craft?* is an effort to practice craftsmanship both digital and physical while actively engaging the public in a dialog concerning that which makes craft meaningful to them. Through aggregation of user-submitted content, personal reflections on contemporary craft are at the same time cataloged as valuable contributions and shared as inspirational testimonials. Through its continued
development, Why Craft? will seek multiple avenues for promoting craft as a grassroots initiative and a social collaboration.

Moving Forward

Although it is not the proper time for the creation of a professional society for independent craftsmen, it is still a goal that should be pursued over a long period of time with the help of like-minded individuals. Such an organization will find its greatest longevity and success though leveraging the technologies currently available. This includes offering means for sharing information and storing project data all while lobbying for the craftsman and promoting his interests both online and in the physical community. Why Craft? is a step toward this community in that such a society cannot exist unless individuals first engage each other in dialog and find a shared interest in its creation.

Personally, craftsmanship will remain a lifestyle goal and a professional philosophy. The incorporation of craftsmanship into future design curriculum as a means to promote understanding and encourage holistic practice is a definite application of this research as it progresses over the coming years (in addition to the pursuits mentioned above). Thoreau aptly describes the plight of an education devoid of craftsmanship in comparison to one which is experiential as well as thoughtful:

Which would have advanced the most at the end of a month—the boy who had made his own jackknife from the ore which he had dug and smelted, reading as much as would be necessary for this, or the boy who had attended the lectures on metallurgy at the Institute in the meanwhile, and
had received a Rodgers pen-knife from his father? Which would be most likely to cut his fingers? (Thoreau, p. 76).

To follow in the footsteps of men such as Ruskin, Morris, Sennett, Thoreau and Crawford as well as all craftsmen past and present is an honor and a privilege—something one might spend a lifetime pursuing and a great deal of effort instilling within the hearts and minds of this generation and the next. Such a life would be a satisfying one spent richly. It is a path down which I gladly plan to tread.
Appendix A

Questionnaire

The following questionnaire was delivered electronically via SurveyMonkey.com to members of the regional craft community. Forty respondents accessed the form and their answers were analyzed in order to understand craft practice and motivation.

Craft Questionnaire with Results

Study Title: American Craftsmanship: A Contemporary Revival

Principal Investigator: Nate Mucha

1. Consent to Participate

The study is being conducted by Nate Mucha of Kent State University, and it has been approved by the Kent State University Institutional Review Board. No deception is involved, and the study involves no more than minimal risk to participants (i.e., the level of risk encountered in daily life).

Participation in the study typically takes 15 minutes and is strictly anonymous. Participants begin by answering a series of questions about basic demographics, professional practices and habits concerning craft.
All responses are treated as confidential, and in no case will responses from individual participants be identified. Rather, all data will be pooled and published in aggregate form only.

Participation is voluntary, refusal to take part in the study involves no penalty or loss of benefits to which participants are otherwise entitled, and participants may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which they are otherwise entitled.

If participants have further questions about this study or their rights, or if they wish to lodge a complaint or concern, they may contact me at (440) 941-5682 or nmucha@kent.edu, Professor Jerry Kalback at jkalback@kent.edu or the Kent State IRB at (330) 672-2704.

If you are 18 years of age or older, understand the statements above, and freely consent to participate in the study, click on the “I Agree” button to begin the questionnaire.

☐ I Agree ..............................................................................................................100.0%

☐ I Do Not Agree ..................................................................................................0.0%
2. Which category below includes your age?

- 17 or younger................................................................. 0.0%
- 18-20 ........................................................................... 0.0%
- 21-29 ............................................................................ 12.0%
- 30-39 ............................................................................ 42.5%
- 40-49 ............................................................................ 17.5%
- 50-59 ............................................................................ 10.0%
- 60 or older ..................................................................... 0.0%

3. Are you male or female?

- Male ............................................................................. 12.5%
- Female .......................................................................... 87.5%

4. What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?

- Less than high school degree ........................................... 0.0%
- High school degree or equivalent (e.g., GED) ....................... 0.0%
- Some college but no degree ............................................. 17.5%
- Associate degree .......................................................... 7.5%
- Bachelor degree ............................................................ 62.5%
- Graduate degree ........................................................... 12.5%
5. Do you practice a craft of any kind? (A broad definition of craft may be used including trade, art and agricultural activities.)

☐ Yes ...........................................................................................................100.0%

☐ No ...........................................................................................................0.0%

6. What is the craft that you primarily practice?

(Various Responses)

7. How long have you been practicing your craft?

☐ 10+ years.................................................................................................42.1%

☐ 7-9 years ................................................................................................15.8%

☐ 4-6 years ................................................................................................26.3%

☐ 1-3 years ................................................................................................15.8%

☐ less than 1 year ....................................................................................0.0%

8. Is craft your primary source of income?

☐ Yes ...........................................................................................................34.2%

☐ No ...........................................................................................................65.8%
9. How would you describe your engagement in craft? (Check all that apply)

- Hobby ........................................................................................................36.8%
- Profession ....................................................................................................47.4%
- Leisure Activity ........................................................................................26.3%
- Personal Projects ......................................................................................39.5%
- Side Business ............................................................................................57.9%
- Other (please specify) ................................................................................5.3%

10. What is your primary motivation for being involved in craft?

(Various Responses)

11. Do you have any secondary crafts which you practice?

- Yes ..............................................................................................................83.3%
- No ..............................................................................................................16.7%

If yes, please explain

12. Do you have an online craft presence?

- Yes ..............................................................................................................76.3%
- No ..............................................................................................................23.7%
13. What best describes your online presence? (chose all that apply)

- Blog (Wordpress, Tumblr, etc.) ............................................................. 37.9%
- Social Networking (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) ........................................ 69.0%
- Custom Website .................................................................................. 55.2%
- Website Service (Cargo, Etsy, etc.) ......................................................... 79.3%
- Other (please specify) ........................................................................ 6.9%

14. Do you profit from your craft online?

- Yes ....................................................................................................... 86.2%
- No ....................................................................................................... 13.8%

15. What is your main reason for having an online presence?

- Sales .................................................................................................... 65.5%
- Portfolio ................................................................................................ 20.7%
- Networking .......................................................................................... 6.9%
- Informational ....................................................................................... 6.9%

16. What percent of your average annual sales revenue is generated online?

- less than 25% ..................................................................................... 51.7%
- 25% to 50% ......................................................................................... 31.0%
- 51% to 75% ........................................................................................ 10.3%
- greater than 75% ............................................................................... 6.9%
17. Do you participate as a vendor in physical shows such as craft shows or farmer markets?

☒ Yes ........................................................................................................86.2%
☒ No ...........................................................................................................10.3%
☒ Sometimes ........................................................................................3.4%

18. How often do you participate as a vendor in craft shows?

☒ 0 times a year .....................................................................................23.5%
☒ 1-2 times a year ................................................................................11.8%
☒ 3-4 times a year ...................................................................................5.9%
☒ 5+ times a year ..................................................................................58.8%
☒ Other (please specify) ........................................................................2.9%

19. How far do you travel to participate as a vendor in craft shows?

☒ 1000+ miles .......................................................................................10.3%
☒ 500-999 miles ....................................................................................0.0%
☒ 100-499 miles ....................................................................................31.0%
☒ 20-99 miles .........................................................................................27.6%
☒ < 20 miles ..........................................................................................31.0%
20. What percent of your average annual sales revenue is generated at craft shows?

- less than 25% ................................................................. 16.7%
- 25% to 50% ................................................................. 36.7%
- 51% to 75% ................................................................. 33.3%
- greater than 75% ......................................................... 13.3%

21. Do you patronize physical shows such as craft shows or farmer markets?

- Yes ............................................................................. 80.0%
- No ............................................................................... 2.9%
- Sometimes .................................................................... 17.1%

22. How often do you participate as a customer in craft shows?

- 5+ times a year ......................................................... 52.9%
- 3-4 times a year ......................................................... 20.6%
- 1-2 times a year ......................................................... 26.5%
- 0 times a year .......................................................... 0.0%
- Other (please specify) .................................................. 0.0%
23. How far do you travel as a customer to craft shows?

- 1000+ miles: 0.0%
- 500-999 miles: 2.9%
- 100-499 miles: 8.8%
- 20-99 miles: 44.1%
- < 20 miles: 44.1%
- I do not participate as a customer: 0.0%

24. How likely are you to purchase at least one item at any given craft show?

- Not Likely: 2.9%
- Somewhat Likely: 26.5%
- Likely: 38.2%
- Very Likely: 32.4%

25. How often do you purchase from online craft marketplaces such as Etsy.com or Fab.com?

- 10+ times a year: 23.5%
- 7-9 times a year: 14.7%
- 4-6 times a year: 11.8%
- 1-3 times a year: 38.2%
- 0 times a year: 11.8%
26. How often do you purchase online from specific craft people or companies?

- 10+ times a year .............................................................. 20.6%
- 7-9 times a year ............................................................... 5.9%
- 4-6 times a year .............................................................. 23.5%
- 1-3 times a year .............................................................. 41.2%
- 0 times a year ................................................................. 8.8%

27. Where do you seek craft education? (Check all that apply)

- Online forums ............................................................ 57.9%
- Magazines ................................................................. 52.6%
- Online videos ............................................................ 55.3%
- Community classes ..................................................... 28.9%
- Books ................................................................. 55.3%
- Online blogs .......................................................... 65.8%
- Workshops ............................................................ 36.8%
- Individual instruction .................................................. 21.1%
- Television .............................................................. 7.9%
- College classes ......................................................... 28.9%
- Other (please specify) .................................................. 10.5%
28. Do you network with craft people?

☐ Yes ..................................................................................................................................................84.2%

☐ No..................................................................................................................................................15.8%

*If yes, please explain*

29. Are you a member of any craft organizations?

☐ Yes ..................................................................................................................................................28.9%

☐ No..................................................................................................................................................71.1%

*If yes, please explain*

30. Do you consider membership to a craft organization to be valuable?

☐ Yes ..................................................................................................................................................67.6%

☐ No..................................................................................................................................................32.4%

*If yes, please explain*

31. Do you collaborate with other craft people?

☐ Yes ..................................................................................................................................................63.2%

☐ No..................................................................................................................................................36.8%

*If yes, please explain*
32. Are you a member of any professional societies or associations?
   
   ☐ Yes .............................................................................................................21.1%
   
   ☐ No.............................................................................................................78.9%

   If yes, please explain

33. Thank you for your participation. If you would like to enter your email address to stay informed or involved in my thesis research, please do so below. You may also enter any questions or comments regarding this questionnaire.

   (Various Responses)
Appendix B

Beta Testing

Initial testing commenced with a targeted user group of ten individuals. Users were asked to complete a series of tasks, respond when confronted with perceived ambiguities and note any confusion encountered. Hierarchy issues were encountered with the post navigation links as they were too light in value and therefore not noticed on some displays. No browser compatibility issues were encountered with Safari, Chrome, Firefox or Opera, and users running Internet Explorer are prompted to use a more modern browser in order to display the site properly which capitalizes on CSS3 and HTML5 features. No further revision to the design was required at that time other than addressing the navigation hierarchy issue.

Users were able to make posts, submit accurate information and navigate the site with ease. One user encountered an error submitting his Twitter user name to the database which was due to a variable name error in the user function program. This error was addressed and no further server-side processing errors were encountered.
Appendix C

Annotated Interface Design

FIGURE 11: *Why Craft?* annotated interface design

1. Post navigation (previous, next and random)
2. Button to slide out posting form
3. Button to reveal “about” information
4. Button to share on Twitter (utilizing tweet API)
5. Link to poster’s Twitter page (if applicable)
Appendix D

Interface Designs

FIGURE 12: *Why Craft?* initial page view

FIGURE 13: *Why Craft?* posting form open
FIGURE 14: Why Craft? terms and conditions popup open

FIGURE 15: Why Craft? optional address form open
FIGURE 16: Why Craft? about popup open

6. FIGURE 17: Why Craft? tweet API popup open
References


