

## Handcrafts: A Creative Approach to Living

**C**REATIVITY IS FUN and a personal responsibility.

What if we were never allowed to be creative? Creative in thought? Creative in action? Without creativity, the world would come to a complete standstill! Nothing new tomorrow, no progress, only thoughts of the past.

What if everyone looked alike, thought alike, and acted alike? Would it be peaceful or boring? How long peaceful? And, how very long boring?

What if our whole exterior environment were all bright green? Green skies, green clouds, green soil? What if our whole near environment, our homes, were all bright green: green walls, green glass, green floors, green furnishings! No lights and darks or dulls, just bright green! How would you like it for a week, a year, a lifetime?

What if everything were smooth: smooth trees, soil, shrubs, clothing, upholstery—all as smooth as glass!

What if all lines were straight: Tree limbs, furnishings, clothing! What if all shapes were triangles: houses, trees, chairs! And, what if all forms were round: You, me, the dog, the house! How boring!

We were born to be creative in a world rich in design. Rich in natural resources. Rich with innovative people who consider creativity fun and a responsibility, not to be slighted in a world of rich endowments by God, nature, and man's creative urge.

The fantastic everchanging colors: brilliant oranges, reds, yellows, and

rusts of autumn. The subtle jewel-like quality of icicles glistening in the sun and drip-dripping, each minute changing that icicle's form and texture and finally nothing but a memory of beauty. Fabric designers and sculptors are constantly aware of nature's changing design.

A spider weaving his fantastic structural trap to feed himself and his young. Strong enough to catch a fly, weak enough to be destroyed by a thoughtless child. Weavers spin their own webs in new and fantastic arrays—delicate enough for a baby's baptismal robe or a brilliant, sturdy poncho.

Clay, nature's earthy vein, waiting for a creator to change it into beautiful pottery. Earth's substances—each has its special combination for our potters to create objects both functional and decorative.

Design requires creative thought, experimentation, decision making, and organization before it can be developed into a finished product. The hands of the creator must be guided by the eye to develop the craftsman's creative ideas.

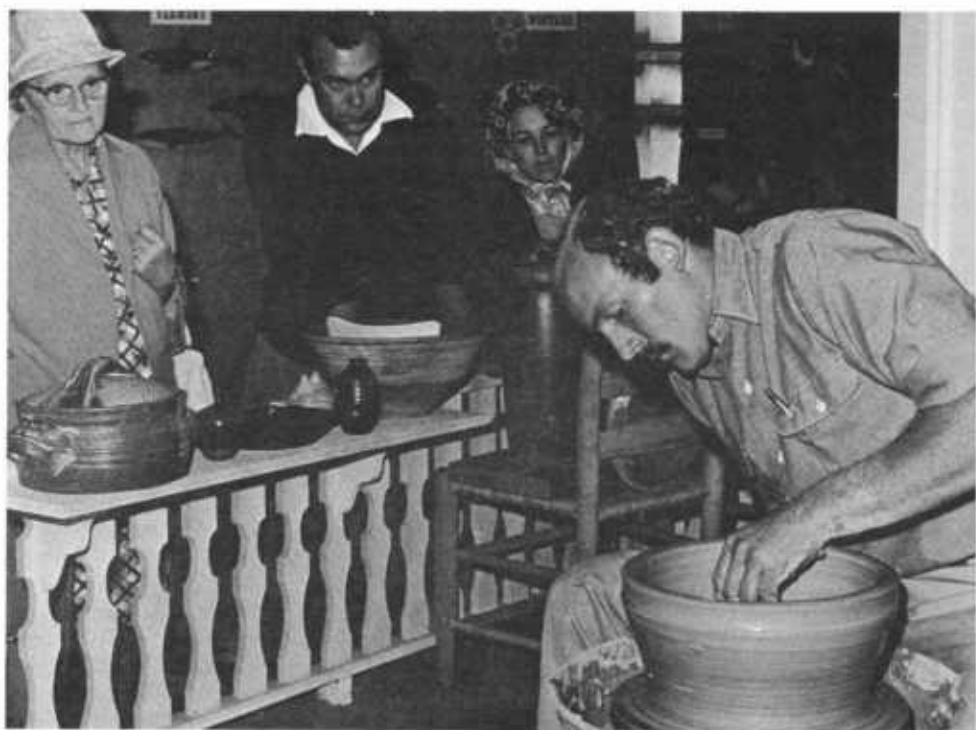
Stimulating? Frustrating? The wastebasket is the artist-craftsman's best friend—used extensively until he has disciplined his ability, thought, and action into a creative product which is now "a part of him." His own ideas, his own skill, his unique expression become a creative object worthy of the time it took him to create it.

Usually the only reason people say they are not creative is that they are afraid to try. Many fearful people resort to kits. The product result is not unique, not theirs. When they have weaned themselves from kits and begun to work with their own ideas and to develop their skills, then they become craftsmen. Crafts, like all other professions, take lots of time to learn.

For those who still feel they are unable to create unique, beautiful designs, the folk and traditional and ethnic crafts furnish a wide field of expression. Reproductions of our early culture require fascinating research in libraries. Au-

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*Craft demonstrations.*

thentic reproductions must be executed exactly as they were done in the past.

Crafts are one of the rich heritages of our nation. In pioneer days, the itinerant craftsman traveled from home to home, selling his wares and earning his bed and board by weaving fabric or a coverlet or handcarving wooden items for the kitchen or barn.

If people become involved in these early crafts and have done sufficient research in books and magazines and discussed early methods (many are not on record) with the eldest members of their family or community, they may become interested in "trying their hand." They may wish to make corn-husk or apple dolls, dressed and doing an early activity. If they live in a wooded area and like to collect the unusual from nature's wonders, they may begin to reproduce the pine and nut "Kissing balls" and Christmas wreaths. If the male member of their family loves to hunt, they may create with feathers.

Feather wreaths were made at an early date. These were possibly made with a circle of twined grapevine or willow whip with moss wedged between. Tin ware, weaving, stitchery, horn work, are only a few of the early crafts possible for a folk and traditional craftsman.

The 1976 Bicentennial celebration will furnish a ready market for folk and traditional crafts. Crafts of the highest quality which are authentic reproductions and give the historical background will be in demand by the Bicentennial consumer. Folk and traditional craftsmen who love to demonstrate their work will be in great demand during the Bicentennial.

What are folk crafts? "They are objects which are made in communities which have developed through the years with some influence by outside cultures, yet still maintain a tradition in technique and design in the production of crafts. The folk crafts also are produced by hand, but the tools with which the craftsman works are more sophisticated or advanced than the tools

used by indigenous craftsmen. These crafts could also be called 'country crafts.'"—David Van Dommelen.

The consumer often asks, "What is a craft?"

"Craft: A trade, occupation or profession requiring manual skill and training, combined with a knowledge of and creative use of the principles of art."—Legal definition.

"Craft: An article which is as unique and as individual as the hands and tools which created it."—*Village Crafts*.

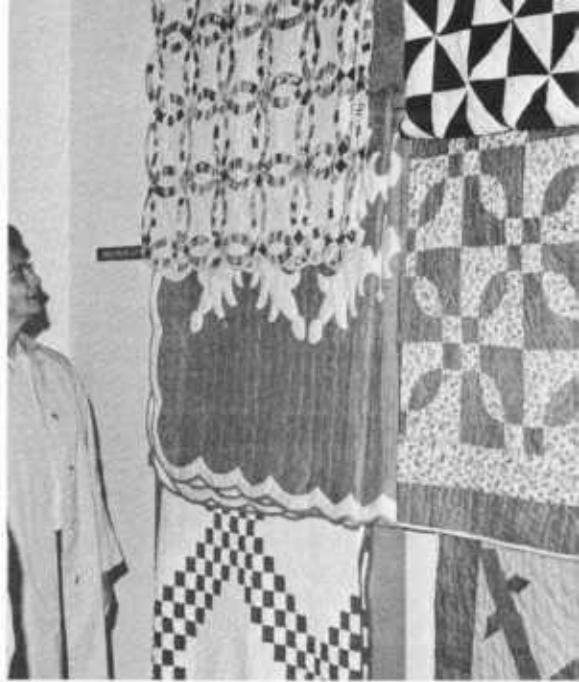
"A craftsman is one who creates out of basic materials from his own design or from established forms, by his own skill and the best technique of his craft, an object which fulfills its purpose to the satisfaction of the user and the beholder."—Pennsylvania Guild of Craftsmen.

"Neo-crafts (contemporary) are produced by craftsmen who are not tied to traditional techniques or designs. The work they produce is often advanced and has a sense of 'fine art' to it. Often the materials are new, or new combinations are used along with old and new techniques blended together. These craftsmen are constantly searching for new ways to express their craft and they are deeply involved and committed to a personal approach to designing."—David Van Dommelen.

How will a person know if he has created? When it happens, he will be thoroughly exhausted, yet he may not have moved from his chair. He will be pleasingly exhausted. The great feeling he has had when he has worked hard at any rewarding task: the kind of fatigue that allows him to sleep soundly and awake to a new day of creative effort. He will know!

Creative contemporary craftsmen not only have all the rich natural resources and related contemporary subject matter, but they also have manmade materials and efficient, fast equipment to aid them in their creativity. Their products are only limited to their imagination, skill, and knowledge of design.

Each State, in fact each region of each State, has thousands of creative



craftsmen spending endless hours developing quality crafts, both decorative and functional for today's consumer.

Today's consumer wants unique and beautiful handcrafted objects to wear and for his home environment. Each consumer is an individual different from all others. He prefers objects which are unique and he demands quality.

Craftsmen today are meeting this demand and people and homes are showing great change as a result of the unique handcrafted items available.

Crafts are big business. No longer does a good craftsman have to work in a job he dislikes all day and then try to create at night and on weekends. He has earned his professional status by hard work and is now a respected, contributing member of today's society.

Part of the fun of being a craftsman is meeting other craftsmen. They are interesting, exciting people, young or old. They love to share their ideas and resources, and to help others find markets for their work. They enjoy teaching others their special skills.

Craftsmen have helped educate consumers to make wise choices. They help



*Top photos, craft displays; one at top right shows Cumberland Mountain quilts. Above, home weaving for supplemental income.*

them become aware of the design and techniques involved. They inform the consumer of certain standards to require when purchasing a handcrafted item. They help them relate their choice to its intended use. They often involve the consumer in trying the craft himself and thus another craftsman begins a new and exciting field.

Some crafts are done in leisure time for pleasure or for supplementary income. More and more are done seriously for total income. Learning the marketing of crafts is important to all those who wish to earn a living by their talent and skill.

Craftsmen often form small groups and exchange ideas and resources. As this group expands to include more members with like interests and standards, a small craft organization is formed. Later these groups may become a chapter of a State guild if they have maintained standards required by the guild. Many new opportunities are then available: training workshops in special media, craft marketing techniques, craft fairs and sales, festivals, TV appearances, demonstrations, and teaching others.

State art councils help in partially subsidizing local arts and crafts festivals. Often they will help a new organization with some beginning workshops. Some State arts councils help with marketing training.

Both guilds and small craft groups working together bring special status to a region of their State. They draw crowds of tourist consumers to attend their festivals and fairs. This boosts the economy of the area considerably because the tourists not only buy crafts, but they also use the restaurants and motels and other services of the area.

Historical villages, country stores, privately owned craft shops, and galleries are a few of the outlets that have developed in abundance to sell the quality products of local craftsmen. Some buy outright, others consign from the craftsmen.

Some States are lucky and have craft centers and cooperatives which also are

local outlets for the best crafts of the State.

Craftsmen also sell at home. However, unless they are very well known, this limits their exposure and their income.

Regional craft fairs sponsored by the American Craft Council usually include about 500 craftsmen who sell both wholesale and retail. Dealers come from all over the country to get the best for their shops and their consumers.

Crafts are big business now. Consumers are more aware and appreciative of the handcrafted items. They will drive any distance to attend a craft fair or festival or to visit special craftsmen and buy their products.

American craftsmen have integrity. They create their own designs, their products have quality, and they are unique art objects. Some may become cherished antiques of the future!

In my home state, the Pennsylvania Cooperative Extension Service has worked closely with Area Resource Development agents, State and county agencies, local county craft organizations, the State Guild of Craftsmen, the American Crafts Council, Federal agencies, Pa. Council on the Art.

Pennsylvania Extension has played an active role in developing the full potential of the crafts industry. We have stressed creative use of our rich natural resources and urged craftsmen to relate their products to Pennsylvania history and environment.

Craft training workshops are taught by professional craftsmen who not only know their skill but also are experienced in marketing techniques. These workshops are held from 6 to 10 p.m., four nights a week. Over half of the participants are men. The workshops are open to anyone from high school to the still enthusiastic elderly.

Many Pennsylvania craftsmen live on farms and have developed their studios in barns or in a renovated granary. The privacy of an isolated farm is important to them.

Pennsylvania received a great deal of help from William Seymour, Craft Spe-

cialist with the Farmer Cooperative Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, in Washington, D.C. Mr. Seymour kept Pennsylvania constantly informed of what other States were doing to help craftsmen develop a quality industry and coordinated special resources and craft events.

Mr. Seymour also coordinates the Interagency Craft Committee which is made up of various Federal agencies involved in arts and crafts development. The combined vision and efforts of this committee, whose responsibility is to promote the development of American arts and crafts, will help States develop a sound, long-range plan.

Future American arts and crafts centers in each State would not only sell quality crafts of the respective State but would also have craft training workshop areas. They would make it possible for more people, young and old, to learn crafts from professional teachers, and also furnish an established outlet for their products.

Hopefully, if we continue to develop a quality craft development program, we may have a national center for American arts and handicrafts in Washington, D.C. An international sale of quality American arts and crafts in foreign countries is also a possible long-range goal.

Creativity is fun and a personal responsibility, not only for the creator, but for the individual consumer. Awareness of beauty is a special gift to man. It gives him a reason to live and express and to enjoy life.



*Ukrainian egg decorating demonstration.*

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### *Craft Organizations:*

*Pa. Guild of Craftsmen*, 13 chapters  
Contact: Mrs. Harriet Becch  
Rural Delivery 3  
Gettysburg, Pa. 17325  
Revised Constitution, Contemporary and  
Traditional Crafts.

#### *Village Crafts*

Contacts: Mrs. Pat Macneal  
R. D. Box 42  
Rebersburg, Pa. 16872

Mrs. Ruth Coleman, Director  
921 Tressler  
Boalsburg, Pa. 16827  
Craft Training for Elderly and their  
low income families.

#### *Peters Valley Craftsmen*

Peters Valley  
Layton, N.J. 07851  
Craft Village, Training and Sales  
Department of Interior, National Park  
Service.

#### *American Crafts Council*

44 West 53rd Street  
New York, N.Y. 10019  
Largest crafts organization in the U.S.

#### *World Crafts Council*

U.S. Section  
American Crafts Council  
29 West 53rd Street  
New York, N.Y. 10019  
International crafts organization—70  
countries

#### *State Council on the Arts*

Governor's office of each State

#### *National Art Endowment*

806 15th Street, Northwest  
Washington, D.C. 20506  
Nancy Hanks, Chairman  
National Council of the Arts  
Clark Mitze, Director  
State and Community Operations  
National Endowment of the Arts

#### *Appalachian Regional Commission*

Department of Agriculture  
Washington, D.C. 20250  
John Souder, Coordinator of Craft  
Programs

#### *Farmer Cooperative Service*

U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Washington, D.C. 20250  
William Seymour, Craft Specialist

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Wood carving studio in a converted Pennsylvania farm granary.

The American craft industry potential is unlimited. Consumer demand continues to increase rapidly. Success is imminent if all continue to work together toward a long-range goal and maintain creative skill, enthusiasm, and integrity.

**For further reading:**

American Crafts Council. *Craft Shops, Galleries, U.S.A.*, 44 West 53rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10019.

Bank of America. *The Handcraft Business*, Small Business Reporter, Department 3120, P.O. Box 3700, San Francisco, Calif. 94137.

*Crafts Horizon* Magazine, 44 West 53rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10019.

*Encouraging American Craftsmen*, Report of the Interagency Crafts Committee by Charles Counts, Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D.C. 20402, 45 cents.

Farmers Cooperative Service. *The Cooperative Approach to Crafts*, FCS Information 78, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250.

Lyons, Mary. *Crafts for Retirement*, American Crafts Council, 44 West 53rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10019.

Mosley, Johnson, and Koenig. *Crafts Design*, Wadsworth Publishing Co., Belmont, Calif. 94002.

Nelson, Norbert N. *Selling Your Crafts*, Reinhold Publishing Co., 430 Park Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10022.

Prerau, Sydney. *Taxes and the Craftsman*, American Crafts Council, 44 West 53rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10019.

Robinson, John W. *Gift and Art Shops*, Small Business Bibliography (revised) No. 26, Small Business Administration, Washington, D.C. 20416.

Seymour, William R. *American Crafts, a Rich Heritage and a Rich Future*, Farmer Cooperative Service Program Aid No. 1026, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250.

Small Business Administration, *Handicrafts and Home Business*, Small Business Bibliography (revised) No. 1, Washington, D.C. 20416.

———. *Specialized Help for Small Businesses*, Small Marketeers Aids No. 74, Washington, D.C. 20416.

*The Unicorn*. Books for Craftsmen—4, Box 645, Rockville, Md. 20851.

University of Wisconsin. *The Arts in the Small Community—A National Plan*, 216 Agricultural Hall, 1450 Linden Drive, Madison, Wis. 53706.

———. *The Arts and the Small Community*, Vol. I and II, 216 Agricultural Hall, 1450 Linden Drive, Madison, Wis. 53706.

Yager, Francis P. *Craft Cooperative Bookkeepers*, Farmer Cooperative Service, Washington, D.C. 20250.