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## Validity Is in the Eye of the Beholder

### MAPPING CRAFT COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

**T**he term *craft* may be difficult to define, but online and public dialogues are revealing that many of the field's twentieth-century-based assumptions about disciplinary practice are currently being challenged. Gradually, it is becoming apparent that the domain of craft is at a generational crossroads and is presently expanding to embrace aspects of cultural hybridization that have not previously been recognized or articulated within the status-quo craft community. It appears that the craft field is simultaneously adhering to the disciplinary boundaries of the twentieth century while also expanding into areas not previously considered. The validation of a maker's work has become merely a matter of where one chooses to look and what one considers to be his or her field of practice, since many communities can coexist simultaneously as their existence is derived primarily from mutual understanding, a common set of practices and a shared sense of legitimacy. This essay considers the impact of the Internet on craft practice and examines various contemporary and historical philosophical theories as they relate to the study of aesthetics, identity, culture, politics, epistemologies, and the sociology of knowledge, as well as the development and dissemination of ideologies within craft communities of practice.

Similar to forms of blue-collar labor, craft work requires tacit knowledge—often called “personal know-how”<sup>1</sup>—as originally defined by the scientist and philosopher Michael Polanyi and is motivated by an ethic of working with one's hands.<sup>2</sup> However, when this ethic is juxtaposed with the concept of capitalism, one

can see that there is a disconnect between the ideology of craft work and that of the economic system that supports it; namely, that capitalism seeks efficiency in all matters, while craft, though it possesses many positive attributes, will always be a highly inefficient way of getting the job done. In terms of sociological status, the blue-collar work of craft is sequestered in the lower strata of the social spectrum of contemporary society.

The disparity in occupational status between manual and intellectual work can be attributed to the innate sociocultural reality that some forms of intelligence and knowledge are more highly valued over others. For example, as the metalsmith and craft writer/theorist Bruce Metcalf has noted, the cognitive psychologist Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences defines the core capabilities of logical-mathematical intelligence as reasoning, the recognition of abstract patterns, scientific thought and investigation, and performing complex calculations.<sup>3</sup> Correspondingly, a suitable career choice for persons with expertise in this particular domain might be that of scientist, mathematician, lawyer, doctor, or philosopher. However, when we speak in terms of the bodily-kinesthetic knowledge upon which the crafts are built, it seems that sweating is politely reserved for the gym and recreational or hobby activities—except in the cases of extreme athletic talent, which is then suitable for public display as entertainment. Therefore, a commitment to creative expression via craft materials and processes is often saddled with certain baggage, and thus certain sacrifices.

This is not to say that one does not face sacrifices within other creative pursuits or that one cannot earn a living, even a good living, as an artist working in craft materials. But this statement is intended to impart that reality suggests, first, that one can only do so much work oneself without needing help to produce more "product," and second, as with other forms of creative expression, in order to be recognized as a professional within the field of craft, one must produce within a certain framework of expectations that are limited by and often at the mercy of recognized sources of validation, among them the museum, the media, and the marketplace. Quite simply, if a maker wants to be validated, a specific and sometimes limiting range of expectations pertains—first among them, the shared standards of legitimacy within his or her own community of makers who tend to be limited to a particular medium of craft. The few craft artists who manage to earn what would be considered a blue-chip income without compromising their artistic principles

have often done so through hard work, tenacity, and the successful capitalization of the sociocultural tendency toward the collection and fetishization of handmade art objects by wealthy patrons.

Realistically, however, the number of collectors is limited; for the average person, it is certainly easier to resolve needs and desires related to art, design, and functional or decorative objects via ubiquitous retail outlets such as Walmart, Kmart, Ikea, Target, Pottery Barn, and Williams-Sonoma. The choice of where to spend money usually depends on one's budget, aesthetic sensibility, and ease of access. It takes extra effort to seek out handmade art objects; functional, one-of-a-kind objects made by "studio craft" artists do not always stack well in cabinets; works of sculpture are often too big for homes; a family only needs so many quilts. And indeed sometimes people just simply run out of room for functional handcrafted furnishings. After a time even the most dedicated collectors of handmade art objects need to ask themselves the question: can I continue to express my appreciation for objects made by hand and not necessarily own them all?

Culturally speaking, it seems that the importance of valuing the handmade becomes increasing relevant the further technology takes us away from the tangible experience. As the handmade art object continues to be replaced by mechanized processes or cheap imitations, creative handwork galvanizes the craft community through its shared values: dexterity, care, skill, and tradition are ideals that are embedded in the social environment within the multiple domains of craft practice. Presumably, in well-made and considered functional craft objects, one can find physical and psychological comfort through an honest and utilitarian aesthetic. Further, the ineffability of the tacit experience with a handmade art object draws upon values such as nuance, gesture, and integrity, but these are not concepts that are easily understood or appreciated by popular audiences. Rather, these are values which are socially constructed and they are often held by people who have somehow been indoctrinated into the practice of craft in its traditional form. At times it seems that the craft community's commitment to these particular shared ideals enables people to gather together and feel comforted about the changes that are occurring around them by seeking solace in the tacit. Objects of traditional craft connect people metaphorically and metaphysically to tangible, sensory experience; for many, these works of craft become the last remnants of the real.

This collective commitment to a shared a set of ideals is how crafts-

people form community. Community, in this sense, is perhaps best characterized by the German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies's term *Gemeinschaft*, which refers to a holistic bonding that occurs organically among groups of people through association, connection, or alliance and is marked by shared beliefs as well as collective kinship.<sup>4</sup>

In the larger civil society (which Tönnies describes as *Gesellschaft*<sup>5</sup>), it could be argued that a society's attitudes, beliefs, and values are often reflected in the construction of space as a social by-product as well as in the range of consumptive practices in which the society collectively engages.<sup>6</sup> Examples of these consumptive choices include where to shop, what to buy, what to wear, what to use in their kitchen, what to place in the home and where to place it, and the like. All of these choices reflect what people consider to be important, and the sum of these choices is manifest in the construction of individual and societal identities. As the British sociologist Anthony Giddens suggests, "All social choices (as well as larger and more consequential ones) are decisions not only about how to act but who to be."<sup>7</sup> As such, it seems that valuing craft and choosing to be a maker of craft in contemporary society is inherently a decision about identity and lifestyle as much as it is about values.

According to John Storey, lifestyle is a condition of modernity occasioned by the rise of mass-consumption and consumer culture.<sup>8</sup> Lifestyle and the commodity culture that is often associated with it are ironically, as I will address later in this essay, often the very set of social conditions that craft strives to act against.<sup>9</sup> However, in striving to distinguish itself as a community which is distinct from consumer culture, particularly in its shared belief that handmade art objects are nobler than those that are mass-produced, the craft community nonetheless distinguishes itself as a lifestyle via its own ideology.

To this end, communities of practice are formed when social units are united by common areas of concerns or interests, interact regularly, share a common vocabulary, and, even without acknowledging it, learn with and from one another in the process.<sup>10</sup> These are often self-organizing social systems in which members of a community are informally bound by what they do and what they have to learn from each other through their engagement in shared activities.<sup>11</sup> Communities of practice define themselves along three dimensions. First, they are joint enterprises that are continually renegotiated by their members. Second, they function through mutual engagement in an activity that binds the members together as a social unit. And third, they produce a shared

repertoire of communal resources, routine sensibilities, artifacts, vocabularies, and styles that have been developed over time.<sup>12</sup> Using these distinctions as our guide, it becomes clear that the field of craft consists of multiple communities of practice, as each group organizes itself according to the materials and associated processes of the domain.

Accordingly, such fields as ceramics, glass, textiles, jewelry, blacksmithing, and woodworking are separate communities of practice, for each of these communities shares a common sensibility. They learn from one another through their gatherings at conferences and exhibitions as well as by way of collective perusal of the publications associated with their fields. In effect, it is through the social nature of their practice that they create their own realities.<sup>13</sup> Each closely connected, craft-based community of practice has an internal system for indoctrinating and validating its members. In particular, each community has its own internal vocabulary, organizational structures, celebrities, and value systems with which individuals must become conversant in order to participate. Within each community of craft practice, the indoctrination process is transmitted socially via dialogue at shared group activities associated with the various organizations, their conferences, and the ancillary events where people gather such as workshops, parties, and exhibition openings. Through the commonality of working by hand and with traditional materials, these fields of practice remain united within the larger domain of craft. However, each community distinguishes itself from another through a shared language and communal dialogue. To a large extent, this niche making is what sets craft apart; generally speaking, contemporary art practices remain fragmented, represented as they are by professional organizations such as the College Art Association and periodicals such as *Art in America*, *Artforum*, and *ArtNews*.

Yet within many of these craft communities today, although tradition is acknowledged, the makers are not adhering to conventional expectations. A new variable has entered the domains of practice: the rise of citizen journalism and what the media has coined the "Netroots" movement. Many Generation-X and Generation-Y object makers are using the democracy of the Internet and its nonhierarchical and decentralized format not only to market their work but also to express their views and to debate and exchange ideas beyond the tightly knit, medium-based enclaves with which their work might conventionally be associated. The advent of blogging and the relatively low cost and accessibility of Web-based e-commerce systems and Web-publishing

platforms have enabled craft artists with little technological savvy (or with friends who are adequately equipped) to begin promoting themselves and their ideas through the Internet. This has, in effect, created new communities of practice which are quite different from the more traditional forms of craft practice described above. It seems that youthful artists working in craft media are focused on carrying out their own version of truth relative to their own epistemological perspectives and generational experiences.

At the core of this movement is the belief that the old structural systems are not working anymore. This is a normal evolution, as younger generations are often ready to defy the work of older generations as soon as the opportunity presents itself. Arguably, it is the job of any young artist to reject the assumptions of the previous generation; this is how new territory is discovered. As the cultural critic Dave Hickey asserts with regard to contemporary art in general: "I feel perfectly able to judge the technical competence of any visual endeavor. I do not, however, see how anyone can pass an informed and sensitive judgment on the work of someone ten to twenty-five years younger than they are. The work of these young people must, almost of necessity, repudiate everything you believe in. And if it doesn't, it's probably not their work, just stuff they thought you'd like."<sup>14</sup>

Before further elaborating what could be quickly discredited as a simplistic series of generalization about generations and social movements and the experience of two largely diverse groups of people, I want to clarify the intention and meaning behind my use of broad labels such as baby boomer and Gen X. With such references, I am thinking in terms of "political generations." The feminist writer Nancy Whittier describes a political generation as "a group of people (not necessarily of the same age) that experiences shared formative social conditions at approximately the same point in their lives, and holds a common interpretive framework shaped by historical circumstances."<sup>15</sup> In this instance I am arguing that much of the tension we are seeing within craft has to do with allegiances and historical conditions set forth by one political generation and being confronted by another. Clearly, we can see a disconnect between the ideals and values of the baby boomers and second-wave feminists and the newer perspectives of the Gen Xers and third-wave feminists.

Second, my use of these terms is intended to be read in light of the sociologist Max Weber's concept of the ideal type, a useful analytic de-

vice for the comparative study or analysis of social and economic phenomena. In describing the concept, Weber writes, "An ideal type is formed by the one-sided accentuation of one or more points of view and by the synthesis of a great many diffuse, discrete, more or less present and occasionally absent concrete individual phenomena, which are arranged according to those one-sidedly emphasized viewpoints into a unified analytical construct"<sup>16</sup>; thus, the use of ideal types is not intended to reveal or adequately describe all the characteristics and elements of any given sociological phenomenon but is rather a tool for its analysis in abstract terms.

With these clarifications in mind, it is important to consider the pending demographic shift between the baby boom generation (born between 1946 and 1964) and Generation X (born between 1965 and 1981), as these two demographic groups have quasi-oppositional views on the definitions of art and craft. The differences in points of view and the inherent generational differences are a result of the two generation's distinct evolutionary histories. Currently, baby boomers are in the positions of authority, have the majority of the money, and do most of the collecting of craft; therefore, they alone are allowed to be the arbiters of validity in the dominant, traditional model of craft culture: the museums, galleries, and journals dedicated to craft media. It seems that Generation X can do nothing but keep working hard and waiting for their day. However, the caveat here is that technology has given the Gen Xers a voice. To understand how this concept of generational differences impacts our cultural theories, definitions, and classifications surrounding the concepts of art and craft, we must look at the distinct origins of each demographic group.

Artists of the baby boom generation established their understanding of art based on the traditions of modernism, and while they do not necessarily maintain an allegiance to modernist methods in their present work, they nonetheless view their world in light of a distinct artistic hierarchical order. Conversely, Gen-X artists cut their teeth on the tenets of postmodernism, and their worldview is a more loosely structured, interdisciplinary construct than the baby boomer ideal. . The baby boom generation experienced modernism as part of their educational development because many of their college art professors and role models were modernist artists. Generation X, however, abides by a different framework because their art professors and mentors were quite often baby boomers, who were by this time teaching the merits (if not necessarily

practicing the tenets) of postmodernism. It is important to consider how this rejection of the old and the subsequent generational quest for newness continues to affect our theoretical viewpoint. This concept is important because it is at the root of crafts' problems today.

So far this essay has addressed various forms of power and how it is used to assert hegemonic control over the ways in which new ideas have been either rejected or assimilated into craft culture. As originally defined by Gramsci, hegemony occurs within modern societies when power is exercised through the perception of "common sense" rather than through force or coercion, resulting in the empowerment of certain cultural beliefs, values, and practices to the partial exclusion of others.<sup>17</sup> Hegemony influences the perspective of mainstream history, as history is written by the victors. When groups of people feel dominated, subordinated, or exploited, they can challenge the hegemony through radical forms of protest, even, at times, forming themselves into subcultures which differentiate themselves by new values, often defined by their opposition to the values of the larger culture or community of practice to which they belong. Case in point: the emerging subdomain of the craft movement which, for the purposes of this essay, we will call do-it-yourself (DIY) craft.

DIY craft refers to a form of domestic creativity that emerges from a do-it-yourself ethos that seeks to confront mass market consumerism and the perceived homogenization of culture as a result of the aggressive expansion of big-box retailers and multinational corporations. The DIY craft movement makes a conscious effort to avoid crassness, but DIY craft is unquestionably about style, irony, and sometimes a touch of kitsch. It is about wit and humor and it is about being "in the know" from a young person's perspective, but it is also about the choices that we make as consumers. However, DIY craft does not often seek validation within the traditional methodologies of the museum, the media, or the market; it is rather motivated by a desire for creative and economic freedom from the same.

In contrast to the structure of the Studio Craft movement discussed in this volume by M. Anna Fariello, the products of the human hand within DIY craft are produced generally through social activities that are related to community activism and third-wave feminism,<sup>18</sup> with allegiances to the 1980s punk movement, zine activity, and the early 1990s Riot Grrrl movement. At its essence, this form of crafting demonstrates a "because we can, dammit" form of domestic creativity that,

while inspired by second-wave feminists' appropriation and celebration of craft media traditionally stereotyped as "feminine," often makes many of those women who came of age during the women's liberation movement of the 1970s cringe over its openness and ambivalence. Because these emerging Gen-X and Gen-Y artists have more choice to make whatever they want in our contemporary art world—unlike the more clearly hierarchical modernist art world of their predecessors—many of them choose to create using traditional domestic processes such as knitting, quilting, weaving, sewing, and decoupage with little, if any of the strident politics that attended similar work by their predecessors.

However, just as feminism's second wave was a sociopolitical response to power and perceived forms of male domination, as well as the evolution of pluralism at the start of the postmodern era, most DIY craft has emerged as a radical force of resistance and activism that seeks to subvert systems of hegemonic power. Predominantly driven by the ideology of third-wave feminism, DIY craft comprises loosely connected groups of individuals with a general collective interest in reshaping, or at least taking a stand against, what they view as the inequities of social and economic power within capitalism. The DIY craft movement is socially based and at times it reaches out as social activism; for some, crafting is a form of political protest, perhaps against sweatshop manufacturing or big-box consumerism, for others, it is about self-sufficiency and getting "off the grid," as their parents may have termed it. In any case, it is a new rethinking of the oft-repeated, second-wave feminist assertion that "the personal is the political."

Admittedly, the DIY craft movement is reminiscent of the 1970s craft movement in this regard, but rather being an intentional realignment within any particular strategy of public engagement, in actuality it is a rather unintentional remix of the earlier movement's principles and aesthetics. The 1970s craft movement was driven by a specific set of values that rejected mass culture and its forms of production; similarly, DIY possesses a core ethos that rejects mass market consumerism and the homogenization of culture. During the 1970s, many artisans were interested in resurrecting traditional crafts; DIY artisans are likewise pursuing a similar cause with subtly familiar aesthetics and a radically different outcome. The difference inheres in how the DIY work is positioned semiotically within the culture. The 1970s craft movement was primarily interested in offering work that sought to re-present traditional crafts as a way to reconnect modern culture to a tradition of making things

ourselves without reliance on the tools of modern mechanization. In contrast, DIY craft has embraced the commercial and capitalistic ethos of modern society and has thus positioned itself as a witty, nostalgically ironic, and somewhat aloof response to what the American craft movement represented in the 1970s. In a large sense, DIY crafters seem to have embraced the realities of how the culture of capitalism, marketing, and corporate co-optation have pervaded American lives since the 1970s—and essentially negated all of the 1970s' naive aspirations of ever living independent of capitalism's reach. DIY craft also offers biting sarcasm with regard to the presumed role of domestic creativity within our culture, especially by way of its often unabashed embrace of crochet, needlepoint, and knitting. Quite ironically, these are forms of domestic production that many second-wave feminists previously denounced and rejected for their role in subjugating women to the home. For DIY practitioners, these methods are not only symbiotic with Gen-Xers' cynicism toward the potential of radical change; they also cut to the core of what third-wave feminism is all about. This form of craft is interested in making a cultural statement. Often, on the surface the work looks like common and sometimes kitschy objects intended to be disarming, but at second glance these works are frequently subversively loaded with signification. DIY crafters deploy parody and satire as cultural commentary. Certainly, these strategies still constitute craft or crafting, just not "craft" as we have traditionally known it, laden with earnest meaning concerning the inherent, positive morality of making. Instead, they seek comment on the present through the postmodern deployment of nostalgic irony.

Concurrent with the rise of the DIY craft movement, a new form of craft fair has emerged over the past several years in many cities throughout the United States. Examples include the Renegade Craft Fair in Brooklyn and Chicago; Art vs. Craft in Milwaukee; and Bazaar Bizarre, held in Boston, Los Angeles, Cleveland, and San Francisco. While these fairs reflect some characteristics of traditional crafts fairs, the difference is that the vendors are mainly Gen Xers who are commercially savvy, art-educated, conscious of good design, and who seek to transform what was once considered mere feminine and domestic forms of creativity and decoration into something new. In these fairs, it seems that DIY craft as a subculture has an interest in capitalizing on the subversive allure of hipness in an effort to subvert hegemonic systems of taste and consumption. At DIY craft events, one frequently senses a

palatable measure of tastemakers' confidence. These craft practitioners are insiders because they have not only built up social capital through communal work sessions in crafts production but have also embraced their inner geek and built an identity for themselves via the social community of craft that exists on the Internet.

A tremendous number of bloggers are using the technology of the Web to address and celebrate this emergent field, and their taglines are descriptive of the common themes among DIY craft practitioners. For example, ExtremeCraft.com touts itself as "a compendium of craft masquerading as art, art masquerading as craft, and craft extending its middle finger," while Craftster.com exclaims "No tea cozy's without irony." In contrast, SuperNaturale.com "*celebrates ingenuity, creativity and the handmade,*" while Craftivism.com is "*documenting the crafty life, stitch by political stitch*" and WhipUp.net focuses on "handcraft in a hectic world." These are just a few examples within a large, loosely connected community that blogs in an attempt to document a vast democratic system of object makers who care little about status or fame but much about creativity, irony, and subverting the greed- and ego-driven components they see within the capitalistic economic system—traditional craft communities included.

As we have seen, craft is at a crossroads in that, after fifty years of trying to sort out its identity within the shifting tides of modernism and postmodernism, the old regime of American craft is suddenly confronted with a new, nebulous cultural force that shares its name. Certainly, within society and social trending, one can anticipate that the youth will attempt to carry out their own version of truth, through whatever means are possible. Just as the baby boomers' countercultural activism in the 1960s was a response to the conformity of the 1950s, DIY craft is not at all interested in American craft's hierarchies, power structures, or institutional methods for confirming status.

However, despite these differences, it does seem that if we dig below the surface, it is possible to locate a shared *raison d'être* for craft. An analysis of craft's ethos leads us back through a long history of resistance to both the industrial revolution and the general tendency of technology and capitalism to replace the more genuine and authentic forms of human production, namely, the things made by hand. Yet aside from the tendency of history to repeat itself, we must not underestimate the struggle of the youth to be understood and to live out their generational experiences and "truths" in their own unique manner; theirs are

the paths that will lead the culture to new places and, ultimately, new reasons for being.

As the conceptual artist and writer David Robbins suggests: "Every generation of artist configures culture to match its own experience. The conditions of our upbringing imprint us and when we come to maturity we return the favor, imprinting our sensibilities upon the culture and bending it to our wills."<sup>19</sup> It is with these words in mind that one can assert that craft today comprises multiple groups with their own goals, ambitions, and internal methods of knowledge production and sharing; these groups are navigating their own way through previously unmapped territories.

During their youth, the baby boom generation, and also the second-wave feminists, believed that revolution was necessary to change the world. During their formative stages as adolescents and young adults, they experienced political turmoil including the Vietnam War, the assassination of John F. Kennedy, and the struggles associated with both the civil rights and women's liberation movements. Correspondingly, young adults in the mid-1960s were portrayed by the French filmmaker Jean-Luc Godard as "the children of Marx and Coca-Cola."<sup>20</sup>

In contrast, young adults in the mid-1980s are described by David Robbins as the children of Barthes and Coca-Cola, and he further describes his shared generational experience as having "no use for 60's naïveté or 70's embitterment."<sup>21</sup> He further comments on his shared experience as a young adult in the 1980s: "Cynicism springs from disappointment, disappointment from naïveté; obvious, it seemed to us, that to ward off the cynicism's black flowers, naïveté had to be nipped in the bud. We wielded the shears cheerfully."<sup>22</sup>

Somewhere in the transition and despite Robbins's generational claim to success, a mere decade later the cynicism returned in full bloom within the Gen Xers and third-wave feminist attitudes toward the media and political change. In contrast to the baby-boom experience, punk rock, grunge, hip-hop, and mass-consumerism constituted the experiences of these groups as adolescents and young adults. As a result of these experiences as well as the history that they inherited from their parents' generation, somewhere within their ethos the Gen Xers and third-wave feminists began to see the inherent difficulty, and perhaps the impossibility, of changing the world through direct political action. Today these groups' efforts to bring about political change often remain subversively masked within their culturally fluent use of irony, satire,

and parody. Further, as the first generation to grow up with MTV and the Internet, Gen X's media literacy and methods for engaging with the culture are strikingly different from how their parents did business.

Gen Xers and third-wave feminists alike have a strong sense of semiotics, whether they have studied Roland Barthes or not, and they like to use the tools of the re-mix, namely, satire, parody, and irony along with an occasional tinge of cynicism or nihilism, respectively drawn from their grunge and punk influences, to make cultural statements that often manifest themselves via their nostalgically ironic aesthetics. Often their experience with culture is such that their creative outcomes are aimed at drawing our attention to the chasm between a diverse range of experiences and "truths" that are at the root of the postmodern condition, underscoring the idea that the Western metanarrative is dead and truth can be found relative to one's own experience, or, to put it more esoterically, relative to one's own unique social phenomenological experience.<sup>23</sup>

DIY craft seeks to redefine the antiquated nomenclatures of artist, maker, craftsperson, designer, and small-business owner. Although the DIY movement has a certain reverence for what American craft represented, it is unquestionably an independent and burgeoning cultural and economic force, as evidenced by its own magazines, websites, fairs, books, television programs, and documentary video projects.<sup>24</sup>

At least in the short term, the difficulty will continue to be whether these two distinct fields will be able to accept their differences and evolve into a dynamic, singular entity that unites to celebrate all things handmade,<sup>25</sup> or whether they will continue to operate apart from one another and move in distinct directions, a result of each community's inability to reconcile the other's divergent social constructs. My intuition is that the challenge to unite these two distinct fields of craft will continue to be difficult, primarily because their systems of knowledge are derived from several very different worldviews.

I argue this closing point on the basis of a brief essay by Walter Truett Anderson, which discusses how distinct worldviews within contemporary Western societies have their own languages for public discourse.<sup>26</sup> In looking at the two fields of craft through the lens of Anderson's articulations, I believe that it is possible to better understand the lines of logic which I have articulated in this essay. The worldview that I have argued for here can be best described as social constructionist, and in a similarly postmodern sense the DIY craft field is operating from the

perspective of what Anderson would define as “postmodern player.” As I have described, DIY crafters enjoy irony as an expressive part of their attitude, and according to Anderson’s formulation, they like to “play mix-and-match” with various aspects of our cultural heritage. In contrast, traditional studio craft, as I have known it, generally can be summarized as having two hybridized systems of logic. The first is “neo-romantic” in that it primarily rejects modern and postmodern worldviews and desires to return to a spiritual and ecological golden era, prior to both the Industrial Revolution and the age of Enlightenment, like Europe during the sixteenth century when craft guilds were popular. Studio craft’s second system of knowledge seems to fit within what Anderson would call “social-traditional” in that it holds beliefs that are reliant upon the more classical truths of Western (and sometimes Eastern) civilization. Within social-traditional craft logic there seems to be a general yearning to return to the time of craft’s greatest optimism, the days in which Aileen Osborn Webb was leading the charge. Also, within this perspective, the objective seems to be to produce objects whose meaning is clearly understood within a “universal” sensibility; often this leads to a discounting of postmodern thought as mere frivolous pedantry.

The larger challenge for the craft field, if we can label it cohesively, is for its members to use this mapping of epistemological landscapes to learn how to better understand and talk to one another. This is assuming, of course, that what I have outlined above is deemed to be “true,” which, ironically, is the whole point of my endeavor here. Validity within craft is entirely dependent upon the manner in which the map is conceptualized and manifested. Who gets to draw the map and who “beholds” it matters more than ever as we confront the enormous shifts evident in craft’s communities in the early twenty-first century.

#### NOTES

1. Tacit knowledge is personal and rooted in action, and it is evidenced by skill and craft; it is also difficult to codify or measure.
2. Michael Polyani, *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post Critical Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1958), and *The Tacit Dimension* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1966).
3. Bruce Metcalf, “Craft and Art, Culture and Biology,” *The Culture of Craft*, ed. Peter Dormer (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 77. See Metcalf’s essay for a more detailed explanation of Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligence and its relationship to craft theory; see also Howard Gardner, *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* (New York: Basic Books, 1983).

4. Ferdinand Tönnies, *Community and Civil Society*, trans. Jose Harris and Margaret Hollis (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 17.
5. *Ibid.*
6. For further context, see Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (London: Routledge, 1984); Michel De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); and Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991).
7. Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Cambridge: Polity, 1991), 88.
8. John Storey, *Cultural Consumption and Everyday Life* (London: Arnold, 1999).
9. Marx was the first to clearly articulate the notion that would later become known as commodity culture; for a more contemporary context and also a critique of Marx's notion of critique of political economy, see Jean Baudrillard, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, trans. Charles Levin (Paris: Denoël, 1972).
10. See Etienne Wenger, Richard McDermott, and William Snyder, *Cultivating Communities of Practice: A Guide to Managing Knowledge* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2002).
11. Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger, *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).
12. See Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder, *Cultivating Communities of Practice*.
13. For example, ceramists have professional organizations such as the National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts and journals like *Ceramics Monthly*, *Clay Times*, and *Ceramics Art and Perception*; fiber artists have the Surface Design Association and *Fiber Arts*, *Surface Design Journal*, and *Selvedge*, among other publications.
14. Chris Scoates, "Speed and Fire: An Interview with Dave Hickey," *Sculpture*, May/June 1996, 31.
15. Nancy Whittier, "Turning It Over: Personal Change in the Columbus, Ohio, Women's Movement, 1969–1984," *Feminist Organizations: Harvest of the New Women's Movement*, ed. Myra Marx Ferec and Patricia Yancey Martin (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995).
16. Max Weber, *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*, trans. Edward A. Shils and Henry A. Finch (New York: Free Press, 1997), 88.
17. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 180.
18. *Third-wave feminism* is a term used to describe a new form of feminist activity that emerged in the early 1990s. At its core, it seeks to challenge what it considers to be the failures and shortcomings of second-wave feminism; particularly its perceived assumptions of universal female identity and what the third-wave views as an overemphasis on the experiences of upper-middle-class white women.
19. David Robbins, *The Velvet Grind: Selected Essays, Interviews and Satires (1983–2005)*, ed. Lionel Bovier and Fabrice Stroun (Dijon: JRP/Ringier and Les presses du réel, 2006), 108.
20. In *Masculin, feminine* (1966), directed by the French filmmaker Jean-Luc

Godard, an intertitle between scenes states: "This film could be called The Children of Marx and Coca-Cola."

21. Robbins, *The Velvet Grind*, 108. Roland Barthes (b. November 12, 1915; d. March 25, 1980) was a French literary critic, literary and social theorist, philosopher, and semiologist. His work extended over many fields and he influenced the development of schools of theory including structuralism, semiology, existentialism, Marxism, and poststructuralism.

22. Robbins, *The Velvet Grind*, 108.

23. Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985); Alfred Schütz, *The Phenomenology of the Social World* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1967).

24. *Handmade Nation, The Documentary*, directed by Faythe Levine (Milwaukee DIY, 2009).

25. Imogene Blog Archive, "Confessions," 9 March 2008, <http://www.imogene.org/blog/>.

26. Walter Truett Anderson, "Four Different Ways To Be Absolutely Right," *The Truth about the Truth: De-confusing and Re-constructing the Postmodern World*, ed. Anderson (New York: Tarcher/Penguin, 1995), 110–16.