‘In his beautiful book, Peter Korn invites us to understand craftsmanship as an activity that connects us to others, and affirms what is best in ourselves.’
Matthew Crawford, author of The Case for Working With Your Hands

WHY WE MAKE THINGS AND WHY IT MATTERS

The Education of a Craftsman

PETER KORN

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Heartfelt and thought-provoking, an eloquent meditation on the nature of work and craftsmanship and why it matters, more than ever, that we value the process of making things well

Why do we make things? Why do we choose the emotionally and physically demanding work of bringing new objects into the world with creativity and skill? Why does it matter that we make things well? What is the nature of work? And what is the nature of a good life?

Part memoir, part polemic, part philosophical reflection, this is a book about the process of creation and what it means to be a craftsman in a mass produced world. The good life that society prescribes - the untrammelled pursuit of wealth, fame, leisure and consumption - often leaves some essential part of us undernourished. We may be capable, competent individuals yet find ourselves starved for avenues of engagement that provide more satisfying sustenance. Furniture making, practiced as a craft in the 21st century, is a decidedly marginal occupation. Yet the view from the periphery can be illuminating.

For woodworker Peter Korn, the challenging work of bringing something new and meaningful into the world through one’s own efforts is exactly what generates authenticity, meaning, and
fulfilment, for which many of us yearn. This book asks: what does the process of making things reveal to us about ourselves? Korn draws on four decades of hands-on experience to answer this question in this heartfelt, personal and revealing book.

Peter Korn is the founder and Executive Director of the Centre for Furniture Craftmanship, a woodworking and design school in Rockport, Maine. A furniture maker since 1974, his work has been exhibited in galleries and museums across the United States. In addition to writing Why We Make Things and Why It Matters: The Education of a Craftsman, which won the 2014 Maine Literary Award, Korn is the author of several how-to books. These include the best-selling Woodworking Basics: Mastering the Essentials of Craftsmanship and The Woodworker’s Guide to Hand Tools.

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