



Perspective on business--a craftpersons tradition: a prospective business model for contemporary craftspeople based on the historical craftpersons tradition in colonial america  
by James LeRoy Goehrung

A paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF ARTS in ART

Montana State University

© Copyright by James LeRoy Goehrung (1982)

Abstract:

As fewer teaching positions become available for university graduates of crafts programs, other options for employment must be developed. Universities and craft colleges have historically been the training ground for American art and craft programs. As more university trained craftspeople become self-employed producers, it is possible students will soon be requesting that practical business courses be included as part of their curriculum.

These working artisans have a number of specific economic and philosophic concerns associated with their production process; some of these concerns are: limited markets, labor practices, life style issues, pricing products, and the ability to respond to trend changes. Craftspeople can learn a great deal about these issues from business type courses, but understanding the historical reasons behind these practices and the connections to contemporary society will provide the opportunity to adopt the more successful practices for current business ventures.

Craftspeople have a number of traditions at their disposal, for adaptation, rejection, or synthesis; models that can and have been used successfully by autonomous producers. The early colonial and pre-revolutionary craftspeople of America established a number of business and life style practices that are useful to contemporary artisans. This paper focuses on colonial craft practices and, by identifying similar practices that exist today among contemporary artisans, proposes a prospective business model for working craftspeople.

STATEMENT OF PERMISSION OF COPY

In presenting this paper in partial fulfillment of the requirements for an advanced degree at Montana State University, I agree that the Library shall make it freely available for inspection. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this paper for scholarly purposes may be granted by my major professor, or, in his absence, by the Director of Libraries. It is understood that any copying or publication of this paper for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Signature

Date

James L. Goehring  
June 10, 1982

PERSPECTIVE ON BUSINESS - A CRAFTSPERSON'S TRADITION:  
A PROSPECTIVE BUSINESS MODEL FOR CONTEMPORARY CRAFTSPEOPLE BASED  
ON THE HISTORICAL CRAFTSPERSON'S TRADITION IN COLONIAL AMERICA

by

JAMES LEROY GOHRUNG

A paper submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree

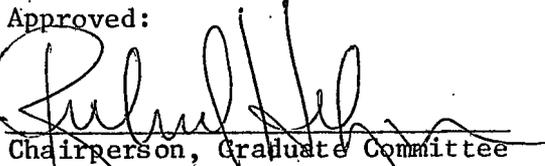
of

MASTER OF ARTS

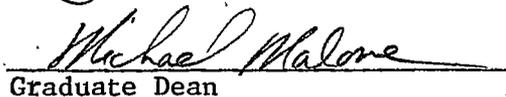
in

ART

Approved:

  
Chairperson, Graduate Committee

  
Head, Major Department

  
Graduate Dean

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY  
Bozeman, Montana

June, 1982

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my gratitude to the following: Phil Mott, who taught me the jewelry trade and, more important, what to expect after my apprenticeship. Richard Helzer, for his patience, praise, and criticism; good luck as the new director. John Catterall, for always having a little dry humor when the flood-waters were upon me; good luck in New Mexico. Kate Wagle, for possessing the correcting pen that never ran dry; good luck in New Mexico. Glenn Law, who has taken on the responsibility of showing me that sentences are not harder than diamonds. And Nita Sierke and Connie Palmersheim, who made me do what I said I was going to do for all those years. Thank you all.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
	Vita. . . . .	ii
	Acknowledgements. . . . .	iii
	Table of Contents . . . . .	iv
	Abstract. . . . .	v
	INTRODUCTION. . . . .	1
	Forward. . . . .	3
1	THE COLONIAL MODEL. . . . .	6
	The Studio and Lifestyle . . . . .	7
	Economy and Philosophy . . . . .	8
	Status of the Artisan. . . . .	10
	Limited Markets and the Influence of England . . . . .	13
	Labor Practices. . . . .	15
	Indentured Servants and Apprentices. . . . .	16
	The Move to Modern Markets . . . . .	18
2	THE CRAFTS REVIVAL MOVEMENT . . . . .	20
	A Contemporary Model . . . . .	21
	Universities as Contemporary Training Grounds. . . . .	23
	Reviving Apprenticeships . . . . .	24
	Looking Beyond Romantic Notions. . . . .	27
	A Pragmatic Philosophy . . . . .	29
	The Contemporary Studio and Lifestyle. . . . .	31
3	A BUSINESS APPROACH . . . . .	33
	Command of Tools and Time. . . . .	36
	Pricing. . . . .	38
	Marketing. . . . .	38
	Trend Changes. . . . .	42
	Maintaining a Historical Perspective . . . . .	44
	Conclusion . . . . .	47
	BIBLIOGRAPHY. . . . .	50

## ABSTRACT

As fewer teaching positions become available for university graduates of crafts programs, other options for employment must be developed. Universities and craft colleges have historically been the training ground for American art and craft programs. As more university trained craftspeople become self-employed producers, it is possible students will soon be requesting that practical business courses be included as part of their curriculum.

These working artisans have a number of specific economic and philosophic concerns associated with their production process; some of these concerns are: limited markets, labor practices, life style issues, pricing products, and the ability to respond to trend changes. Craftspeople can learn a great deal about these issues from business type courses, but understanding the historical reasons behind these practices and the connections to contemporary society will provide the opportunity to adopt the more successful practices for current business ventures.

Craftspeople have a number of traditions at their disposal, for adaptation, rejection, or synthesis; models that can and have been used successfully by autonomous producers. The early colonial and pre-revolutionary craftspeople of America established a number of business and life style practices that are useful to contemporary artisans. This paper focuses on colonial craft practices and, by identifying similar practices that exist today among contemporary artisans, proposes a prospective business model for working craftspeople.

## INTRODUCTION

I have worked as a jeweler for the last ten years, as a professional, and as a sideline, supplementing my income while attending school. I started in 1972, as an apprentice in a trade shop in Kansas City, Missouri. I have since worked for a number of retail jewelers, in backrooms and basements, and in two wholesale trade shops. Through these experiences I have gained a comprehensive understanding of the materials and techniques of producing and repairing jewelry, a sense of discipline toward the process, and a thorough understanding of the practical applications of the trade.

For me, working for someone else was a valuable experience. It was an opportunity to learn from my mistakes at someone else's expense and provided a time to study the subtleties of operating a business. I learned how to schedule my day and how to deal with customers. Some people are able to work a lifetime for someone else; others, after a certain point, develop a sense of alienation towards an employer. This is especially true of a worker who possesses a high level of skill or expertise, and is called upon day after day to perform services for the gain of an employer. I learned a great deal from my apprenticeship, but after a certain time I felt pressed to apply my own ideas and practices to the trade.

Partially from this sense of alienation, mostly from a great deal

of curiosity, I turned to an academic study of jewelry for some unanswered questions. I sought an understanding of creativity that involved academic thinking and a feeling of recognition and acknowledgement from peers. I gained from this study a different way of viewing all work based on a sense of aesthetic criteria rather than monetary incentive.

I now had a second view of my work, but I knew that school could not last forever. Also, school lacked an outlook, or information, presented along with the skills on how to effectively continue work outside of academia: specifically, information and philosophy concerned with making a living within a hostile economic environment, one that I knew from my business experience had little regard for my artistic welfare.

In school, I found few people wanted to talk about how it felt to wait tables or drive busses to support their obsession to make "art". I knew that freedom and spontaneity toward my work would be tempered after coming home from paying someone my eight hours, too tired to work for myself or too immersed in economic culture to think of anything other than what would sell to subsidize my income.

I knew I was not comfortable with either of the two extremes I had experienced, but I also knew I was not alone. Contemporary society is constantly confronted by choice. Quite often we hear an individual express a notion about simpler times, a longing for a less

complicated existence. This attitude denies the fact that things could have been just as confusing back in the "good old days", or that being involved in a culture with limited choice can also be exploitative. As a craftsman, I have become interested in ways to synthesize these two attitudes; to look for models that will allow a level of acceptance for both extremes of the contradictions between working and making a living.

#### FORWARD

The model I have chosen for this paper is based on the artisanship and craft practices of the early Colonial and pre-revolutionary periods of America.

My purpose in selecting this time period is not with the intention of romanticising puritan morality or the pioneer spirit. In fact, it is my desire to overcome a high degree of the romanticism associated with the American craft movement. I am not in any way advocating a return to their outdated means of production or a simpler and purer way of working and living. What I will promote is their sense of innovation and invention toward machinery and market.

These early American craftspeople were involved in a concerted economic struggle for a commensurable standard of living, a struggle against a repressive economic social order imposed and controlled by England. Just as the colonial craftsperson struggled against the

rules and traditions of the British marketplace, contemporary craft-workers find themselves confronting an American economic social order that leaves little room for production on a human or personal scale. Many parallels can be drawn between attitudes and business practices of pre-revolutionary production and contemporary craftspeople, a number of which I will address. For the purposes of this paper, I will define a craftsperson as: An individual who obtains his/her immediate income from a fabricated product whose process of production he/she directly controls and participates in.

The lifestyle of the American craftsperson has been referred to by Olivia Emery as the "Gentle Revolution". However, in talking with a number of artisans it is clear that, while soothing and satisfying at times, the lifestyle is far from gentle. It is not a quite lifestyle, voices are raised time and time again, whether it is to sound the virtues of products produced or to condemn the co-option or a market lost to mass production or compromised aesthetics. It is not living lightly, the burden of establishing and maintaining your own product and taking on the responsibility of your own livelihood, coupled with the threat of economic or physiological degradation can weigh quite heavily upon an individual.

Because the impact of any contemporary American economic revolution has yet to be felt, the models and rules of the business community are constantly embraced by contemporary craftspeople, although in a

highly stylized form; at times flowing over to pre-industrial forms of barter and socialistic forms of studio sharing and cooperative buying. This idea is perhaps the most basic and interesting place to start in discussing a craftsperson's perspective, or attitude toward business, for this idea and lifestyle are and have been revolutionary in both concept and application. The Colonial model I will present gives a historical perspective of the evolution of ideas and an understanding of the circumstances that gave rise to various approaches to art as livelihood.

There is a critical need for workable models that contemporary artisans can use in planning their business venture. The Colonial background will show the concerns of early artisans and the practices they employed to serve their patrons. From some specific comparisons, and some that are implied, I will advocate that a number of these methods are still appropriate for contemporary artisans.

## Chapter 1

### THE COLONIAL MODEL

Philadelphia was the financial and commercial center of the colonies in the mid-1700's. It was the home of the arts, the theater, education and philanthropic institutions, with some historians describing it more as a major European metropolis than any other colonial city. Philadelphia was probably more advanced economically than other colonial cities, but it had virtually no corporate enterprises, the typical business activity was carried on by an individual or loose partnership. Most business relationships were face-to-face transactions between people who knew one another personally.<sup>1</sup>

Colonial Philadelphia was the great center for American craftspeople. More goods were produced in Philadelphia than in any other American city, and craftspeople in other localities were frequently trained in Philadelphia. The artisan's occupation required manual labor, administrative and commercial decisions, and the ability to handle capital. The typical artisan either worked in a home workshop along with one or two journeymen, apprentices or indentured servants, or was an independent craftworker who owned his/her own tools but worked for wages. Prior to the Revolution, only a few of Philadelphia's

---

<sup>1</sup>Eric Foner, Tom Paine and Revolutionary America, (Oxford University Press, London, Oxford, New York, 1976), p. 24.

crafts were organized on a large scale basis.

#### THE STUDIO AND LIFESTYLE

Shops were roughly divided into three kinds: those of craftspeople who did bespoke work, that is, custom work to order; those of artisans who offered salework on a take-it-or-leave-it basis; and those of specialists who performed some direct personal service to the public.<sup>2</sup> A country artisan usually owned a house and farm, and worked at his/her trade in a shop out back. In a town of some size, the urban craftsperson usually operated a shop on the first floor of a rented house. If the trade was a dirty one or if it required a forge, the craftworker's shop was in the backyard and only the sales room was behind the front door. The family lived and slept on the upper floor or floors, and cooked and ate in the cellar or in a kitchen built on to the house.<sup>3</sup> This early model of economic evolution was a basic extension of the family organization, what would today be called a sole proprietorship, or more appropriately the "ma and pa store". Proprietors owned their own tools, made their own decisions, kept all the profits for themselves and family, and suffered any losses

---

<sup>2</sup>Edwin Tunis, Colonial Craftsmen, (World Publishing Co., Cleveland, New York, 1965), p. 39.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

that occurred.<sup>4</sup> Working in their own homes, artisans were not subjected to rigid work discipline or direct supervision. The nature of many artisan crafts, in which one person performed a variety of tasks until they completed a finished product - picking up and putting down tools, changing from one type of work operation to another - strongly encouraged breaks in the work day. The artisan's control over his/her time was one of their most precious possessions; it gave them much more freedom than the common laborer to take part in political affairs, and it enabled them to participate more or less at will in the leisure and organizational activities of their community.<sup>5</sup>

#### ECONOMY AND PHILOSOPHY

While this early mercantile activity had not begun to fully implement a division of labor approach to production - that would come during later industrialization - responsibilities and markets were narrowly divided. Individuals were trained for a particular trade, and the marketing system was an abbreviated model of today's,

---

<sup>4</sup> Martin Gerhard Giesbrecht, The Evolution of Economic Society, (W. H. Freeman and Co., San Francisco, 1972), p. 90.

<sup>5</sup> Eric Foner, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

with direct links between producers and consumers. Artisans made extensive use of direct marketing, as there were few middle retailers who sold goods they did not directly produce or import. Capital was in short supply and banking interests had not developed to the point of moneylending. Money was much too tight to have it tied up in a finished-goods inventory.

This economic model was clearly reflected in the philosophy of the day. The property of the artisan included their skills, tools, perhaps a shop, and trade or customers. To the artisan, property was legitimate and natural only if it were the product of visible labor, reflecting the Lockean theory of property which dominated eighteenth-century thought. In general, Locke seemed to sanctify existing inequalities by emphasizing that all private property was inviolate, a position the merchant community embraced with enthusiasm. In his discussion of the state of nature, however, Locke tied the legitimacy of property directly to individual labor and to the provision that men accumulate only enough to meet their own needs, leaving sufficient property for others.<sup>6</sup>

The principal exception to this paradigm was the aristocracy of the colonies, the approximate 10 percent who controlled or were

---

<sup>6</sup>C. B. MacPherson, The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism, (Oxford Press, Oxford, 1962), p. 62.

controlled by the import trade with England. Products for this group were obtained in trade from England under terms of English credit. This arrangement gave these Tory merchants a distinct advantage over their colonial counterparts. As the import rules became tighter and the colonists felt the impact through inflated pricing, scarcity of goods or raw materials, and excise taxes, the lines of loyalty would be clearly drawn for colonial nationalists. Their strategy, which is discussed later under the heading "Limited Markets and Influence of England", was to oppose these merchants on the basis of unfair competition. Here was another device to counter British hegemony and the colonists used it to their full advantage. During the early stages of the revolution, Locke's theories were used to legitimize the popular movement to the citizenry further solidifying the connection between economy and philosophy.

#### STATUS OF THE ARTISAN

Commerce dominated the lives of Philadelphians. Not only were the city's merchants its leading entrepreneurs and economic innovators, but the livelihood of many artisans and laborers was tied to trade.<sup>7</sup> Despite the great disparity in their wealth, an intricate web of

---

<sup>7</sup> Eric Foner, op. cit. p. 21.

economic and social relationships linked artisans and merchants, creating an apparent community of interest between them. Artisans were economically independent in the sense that they had control over the means of production - their own tools and skills - but they relied heavily on merchants for credit and access to capital, the keys to business success. Merchants controlled the artisan's supply of raw materials from nearly rural areas - wood for carpenters, coopers and shipbuilders, hides for tanners and shoemakers, iron for metalworkers. The relationship was compounded even further by the fact that the market for many finished goods was limited. Wealthy merchants were the main consumers of the products of many craftsmen, especially such luxury crafts as silver and goldsmithing, coachmaking, clockmaking, and the luxury branches of clothing manufacture.<sup>8</sup>

Historians have been unable to agree upon the economic and political status of the artisans, or even the correct terminology to use in describing this group that comprised roughly one-half the population of Philadelphia's 30,000 inhabitants. Some restrict the definition of artisan to self-employed craftspeople, while others use it, or its synonym "mechanic", to apply to the entire urban working population, from skilled master craftsperson and their wage-earning

---

<sup>8</sup>Ibid. p. 33.

journeymen, to laborers, apprentices and indentured servants. The latter definition is perhaps too broad. In their own minds and in the minds of contemporaries, masters and journeymen (people who possessed a skill, owned their own tools and had usually served an apprenticeship) were clearly distinguished both from merchants and professionals above, and from the pre-industrial, pre-proletariat class of sailors and laborers below. The very nature of craftwork required dexterity with tools, mastery of physical materials and a technical knowledge which often stimulated a further interest in science. The key to the life of an artisan was their acquired skill, the possession of which set them apart from the unskilled laborer, and upon which their opportunities for advancement depended.

Philadelphia's artisan culture was pervaded by ambiguities and tensions, beginning with the inherent dualism of the artisan's role. On one hand, the artisan served as entrepreneur and employer; and on the other as a laborer and a craftsperson. Culturally, there was a recurrent tension between the sense of mutuality and community, and the strong tendency toward individualism and self-improvement. The artisans' impulse toward egalitarianism, their nationalism and their position as urban consumers, would often cast them as the ideological leaders of the lower class in flights for extension of political rights, independence, and, for a time, price

controls.<sup>9</sup>

#### LIMITED MARKETS AND THE INFLUENCE OF ENGLAND

Limited markets forced colonial craftworkers into a number of behaviors and business patterns. Artisans made extensive use of local newspapers for advertising, not only extolling the virtues of their own products, but at times criticising their competition's wares, sometimes to the point of character assassination. In small towns, and for some special products, there simply was not enough demand to support full-time work; thus the artisan had to have a sideline or two. Even large and successful operations diversified. There was either a second related trade, such as a cabinet maker who made coffins and conducted funerals; or a related business. A bookbinder was also a bookseller, or a baker sold the by-products of baking fires as charcoal.

Quite naturally, the basic designs for almost everything originated in England. To the older generation, England was "home". They were bound to the mother country by ties of sentiment and culture. Their church was the Church of England, their books and songs were English, and English-made goods were to them obviously better than

---

<sup>9</sup>Eric Foner, op. cit. p. 41.

the colonial variety.<sup>10</sup> The colonies had a history of various non-importation associations and buy-American movements. The boycotting of British goods, however, was a political technique adopted for a particular purpose - to put pressure on Parliament to repeal the Townshend duties and similar legislation. When that purpose was accomplished, or seemed certain to be, the old preferences for imported goods reasserted themselves.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, during the 1760's and 1770's, increasing numbers of artisans would come to regard the importation of manufactured goods from Great Britain as a principal threat to their economic well-being. The large leather, clothing, and metal crafts suffered the most from British imports, and the shipbuilding industry often felt the sting of competition as well.<sup>12</sup> These associates would form a core of opposition to British economic rule and become ardent nationalists, supporters of the various non-importation agreements of the pre-war years and of state tariffs on imported goods after independence.

---

<sup>10</sup> Williamsburg Craft Series, The Silversmith in Eighteenth-Century Williamsburg, (Colonial Williamsburg, Williamsburg, 1976), p. 12.

<sup>11</sup> Williamsburg Craft Series, op. cit., p. 13.

<sup>12</sup> Eric Foner, op. cit., p. 34.

## LABOR PRACTICES

Colonial artisans faced competitions similar to those we experience today. For example, four years ago American jewelers could not compete with Italian gold chain makers, and today jewelers find that many of their faceted stones are still cut overseas because it is less expensive than American labor costs. Due to sophisticated production processes, on the part of competitors and abundance of skilled and unskilled labor - viz, lower wages - foreign products could be shipped to the colonies and sold at lower prices than could be matched locally. Sometimes this importation was due to a scarcity of raw materials (early glass and ceramics), but more often it was a result of European technology or cheap exploited labor.

From its earliest conception, the colonies were pressed for labor power and confronted with wages higher than in Europe or West Indies Trading. England made extensive use of its guild system in the way many craft unions do today. In England, no craftsman could set up in business until the guild of the trade licensed them. Even, then, they were supervised by the guild, which could legally condemn inferior workmanship and materials. Early efforts to start guilds in this country died on the vine: the guild system belonged to an old and rigid way of life, supported by a vast excess of labor.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> Edwin Tunis, op. Cit. p. 16.

This led to a desire on the part of colonial producers to lower their costs of production and adopt the labor practices of the southern colonies. Northern producers adopted an abridged form of servitude that ties an individual to a specific term of service, at a reduced wage, in trade for skills and knowledge of a particular craft. If the northern colonies reflect a true "market society", such a society was at a rudimentary stage of development. Allowing labor as well as the products of labor to be valued as commodities remains one of the basic requirements for proper consideration and definition of a "market society".<sup>14</sup> These labor practices were a unique development in our economic evolution. They do not relate to any contemporary business practice, but it is important to understand the apprenticeship system as a socialization and training process that has been adopted by contemporary craftspeople.

#### INDENTURED SERVANTS AND APPRENTICES

Until the very eve of the War for Independence, various forms of obligatory labor - slavery, indentured servitude and apprenticeships - comprised a high percentage of the cities' work force. During the colonial years, one-half to two-thirds of the white immigrants had

---

<sup>14</sup>C. B. MacPherson, op. cit., p. 49.

arrived bound to labor.<sup>15</sup> Those unwilling or unable to pay the cost of their own passage became bond servants for a period of years to some colonial master who paid for them. They were variously known as indentured servants, redemptioners, or, in order to distinguish them from the Negroes, as Christian or white servants. More than half of all persons who came to the colonies south of New England were servants. The puritan communities, scanty in their agriculture, charity or favors, and hostile to newcomers as they were, received few.

That a man or woman would become a bond servant by legal contract was not strange, for the ancient institution of apprenticeships was well known to all. The colonies followed an apprenticeship program similar to England's: a boy/girl often starting work at age 12 to 14. The oldest son almost automatically followed the father's trade and inherited his tools and shop.

The master who accepted a youngster as an apprentice would not only teach the trade but also provide him/her board, lodging, clothing and an occasional shilling (but no wages) for the full period of the apprenticeship. By and large, colonial boys/girls became colonial craftspersons only by completing an arduous apprenticeship period of

---

<sup>15</sup>Eric Foner, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

seven years - more or less. During this time they learned the "art and mysterie" of the craft and gained skill in using its tools. At the age of 21 they became "journeymen" for an additional period of time, where they could travel from master to master until they decided on a location for their shop and had acquired enough capital to set up in business for themselves.

The colonies offered freedom of movement encouraged by the beckoning frontier of opportunity, and especially of cheap land, breaking down many social and economic barriers.<sup>16</sup> Artisans encouraged this expansion by sending journeymen out to the fringe areas to provide new services and as a means of limiting competition in the urban centers.

#### THE MOVE TO MODERN MARKETS

The primary catalyst for transforming our economic system to a greater level of sophistication was the War of Independence. The struggle for economic and nationalist independence destroyed the old economic patterns and social relations and created new financial institutions and opportunities for economic innovation. The Revolutionary movement would prompt the formation of new classes, particularly, the city's artisans who would emerge into political consciousness,

---

<sup>16</sup>Williamsburg Craft Series, op. cit., p. 17.

challenging the dominance of a previously entrenched elite.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, during the 1770's and 1780's, a significant number of artisan-entrepreneurs took advantage of the new opportunities offered by war production, urban growth and the development of modern financial institutions. They moved into the merchant's realm of economic activity, attempting to gain control of their own sources of raw materials and becoming involved in important, exporting, and wholesaling. For the commercially oriented segment of the artisan community, such activities marked a fundamental break from the modest business methods of the majority of artisans which led to an increased identity of interests with large merchants.<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 41.

## Chapter 2

### THE CRAFTS REVIVAL MOVEMENT

The English Arts and Crafts movement of William Morris and Company created a second wave of influence on American craftspeople. The position of the crafts in America today is to a large degree a product of the crafts revival movement of the late 1800's. The earliest and strongest influences of the crafts movement stemmed from an intellectual and social elite whose concerns were political, or at least broadly social, and perhaps more theoretical than practical in living terms. Their products were not conceived for industrial mass production, the socialists and moralists of the Arts and Crafts movement felt an ethical obligation to reconcile art and society and to create a better environment for themselves and for the working classes with objects of more honest design and production: adherents wanted to transform every object of daily life into a work of art. Their emphasis was not on crafts having descended directly from pre-industrial village or cottage industry, as is my point, but more from the revival of that era by the romantics who hated machines.

The products of the romantics turned out to be highly impractical for everyday consumption, the cost far beyond the means of the common person. The movement generated more interest among educational institutions and hobbyists, who could afford in some way to subsidize

the expensive handworking processes, than among serious craftspeople trying to operate on a realistic economic basis. By and large educational institutions are affluent users of public money, and hobbyists are comparatively wealthy people with jobs or private means. Because these two groups are cushioned from the immediate demands of the market, neither are under any compulsion to be realistic in practical economic terms.<sup>19</sup> For this reason, these institutions continue to serve as experimental vanguards, developing new techniques and processes that craftspeople later adopt as they become more predictable and popular. This is not to imply that working craftspeople lack creativity, but that the work of these contemporary craftworkers reflect the economic environment in which they operate. As did their colonial counterparts, contemporary craftspeople respond to the demands of the market or create new markets and new demands for their products.

#### A CONTEMPORARY MODEL

The American economy has moved beyond the colonial market just outlined. For the early tradesworker, employment opportunities were so limited it became an almost self-imposed destiny to enter into an

---

<sup>19</sup>H. C. Davis, "The Craft Movement Assessed Historically", Studio Potter, Vol. 9, #1, Dec. 1980, p. 61.

apprenticeship at an early age. Colonial artisans were primarily involved in fulfilling the needs of society with some opportunity for new product or market development emerging due to demand or innovation on the part of the artisan. Most of our Colonial ancestors were struggling in a state of "primary poverty", today, however, there are millions of people who for the first time in human history are able to exercise "consumer choice", both in product selection and job choice.

The basis of the Colonial apprenticeship was as much a process of socialization as practical training. The guild system in Europe helped reinforce this practice through their legislative and watchdog activities, but this stringent supervision was lacking in the colonies. The methodology and institution of training contemporary craftworkers has changed dramatically since the turn of the 20th century. There are still identifiable training grounds for contemporary craftspeople, but the element of choice is a decisive factor. In fact, the pursuit of a traditional crafts occupation is universally a conscious and considered choice in the modern western world. The educational level of today's autonomous craftsperson is high and other career opportunities have obviously been available. This option results in an extraordinary degree of commitment and identification with their work. Among artisans today there is an understanding that being a craftsperson implies a certain stance and

attitude, a way of life, that by necessity involves a reevaluation of standard American priorities, including repudiation of expected roles and in many cases, of the material goods whose acquisition has so long been an aim in itself.

#### UNIVERSITIES AS CONTEMPORARY TRAINING GROUNDS

Our craft training is now done within a school environment instead of within the workshop environment. Since the romantic revival of the late 19th century, crafts have steadily drifted into the orbit of higher education. They are now firmly entrenched in colleges and universities. Crafts have become "studio" oriented - that is "study" oriented. Curricula, teachers, and books now control our training. "American craftsmen and women are intellectuals," says Rose Slivka. "The intellectualization of the crafts and their passionate affair with Art have been a salient fact in the craft movement of the last hundred years."<sup>20</sup> This emphasis on the intellect has instilled an inherent bias toward the practical training opportunities available in the trade or industry of certain craft fields. However, as models of working craftspeople emerge, this dichotomy is tempered as students are now more willing to enter into practical training arrangements with studio craftspeople. Formerly

---

<sup>20</sup>Gerry Williams, "Apprenticeship: The Master's Degree," Studio Potter, Vol. 6, #2, Winter 1977, p. 75.

artisans who earned graduate degrees really felt prepared to enter the job world as academic instructors. But now more and more students and graduates realize that schools are not meeting alternative needs as the opportunities for teaching become fewer and fewer. There is a real need to expand the skills taught to include business information along with technical skills, so that graduates are prepared to create their own job if necessary. One technique gaining popularity is to acquire these work skills from established craftworkers through internships or apprenticeships.

#### REVIVING APPRENTICESHIPS

In the colonial era the level of industrial sophistication required a labor intensive approach to most craft processes. Today more craftspersons also operate on a relatively high level of labor intensive production, versus large capital expenditures for machinery. As John Glick points out in Studio Potter: "One of the major facts of economic survival for a potter today is the need for some kind of studio help".<sup>21</sup> Couple this with the desire of many students for meaningful work experiences, and you get a symbiotic relationship similar to the colonial apprenticeship program.

---

<sup>21</sup>John Glick, "Studio Management", Studio Potter, Vol. 2, #2, Winter, 73-74, p. 49.

The accepted definition of apprenticeship is training in an art, trade, or craft under a legal agreement defining the relationship between the master and the apprentice, as well as the duration and conditions of the relationship. There still remain three basic types of apprenticeships. The first is the traditional style, where the apprentice is accepted at an early age for a long time period. It follows a close personal relationship with the master and no money exchanges hands. The second is when basic studio labor is exchanged for the opportunity to work with the master. No money is paid the apprentice, though sometimes the apprentice pays the master. The third and most common, is one in which the apprentice plays an active role in basic studio production, and receives a living stipend or wage.

The primary underlying theme of this arrangement is that the obligation of the teacher lies not only in conveying the technical knowledge of the medium, but also the understanding of its relation to everyday living. Jeanne Judson, in an interview on apprenticeships, says, "I feel that most prospective apprentices don't realize the full value of an apprenticeship; they want to learn to throw better and want to learn what's in our glazes; but the hardest part of becoming a producing potter is not in learning how to throw, or developing glazes, but the organization of the pottery. How it runs

and how to solve the problems on a day to day basis, how to keep books and how to deal with sales and customers. All this is obviously lacking in schools and only the working potter can convey this information in a useful form."<sup>22</sup>

A craft production shop is a unique enterprise, dependent to a large degree on skilled labor. In the United States, the skilled worker must be trained in-house, for there is virtually no pool of experienced persons upon which to draw. The re-emergence of the small one person workshop is once more creating conditions favorable for the acceptance of apprentices. The growing importance of apprentices reflects the general trend away from structured education. But, in particular, it underscores the limitations inherent in crafts curricula offered at most universities and art schools. Limitations, which Peter Sabin, the editor of Studio Potter, points out: "Become more apparent as the goals shift away from teacher education to that of self-supporting craftspeople".<sup>23</sup> This phenomenon of craftspeople coming out of universities is uniquely American, as is the expectation of universities training them.

---

<sup>22</sup> Carl and Jeann Judson, "A Dialogue on Apprenticeship," Studio Potter, Vol. 2, #2, Winter 72-74, p. 15.

<sup>23</sup> Peter Sabin, "Some Thoughts on Apprenticeships," Studio Potter, Vol. 1, #1, Fall 1972, p. 8.

## LOOKING BEYOND ROMANTIC NOTIONS

The romantic attitude still dominates the movement. Artistic creativity is only part of the business of being a craftsman. Practicing artisanship involves many choices and hard manual labor. Contemporary craftspeople fall subject to the same dilemma of many colonial artisans, being both employers and workers: working-class in terms of income, and middle-class in terms of background and education. While it is not clear that colonial artisans fully accepted the common association of poverty with idleness, dissipation and drunkenness (many craftspeople, after all, lived on the edge of poverty), Benjamin Franklin's writings certainly lent credence to the belief that it was lack of "industry, frugality, and sobriety" which accounted for economic misfortune.<sup>24</sup> Indeed the stress on self-discipline, thrift, and self-improvement are still present in the contemporary artisan work ethic, all attempts are made to preserve the artisan's personal pride and self-confidence and to avoid dropping down into the ranks of the dependent and poor.

It should be remembered that the pieces we admire in our museums were often the work of illiterate people who were carried to great heights of achievement by their culture. While this is possible

---

<sup>24</sup>Eric Foner, *Op. Cit.*, p. 47.

today, it seems very unlikely since our culture is chaotic, fragmented, and lacks affluent philanthropists. Instead, we have come to single out and concentrate on the achievement of the individual; polarizing the issue, we talk about objects or people, one to the exclusion of the other. My emphasis would be a third approach, to discuss a process or approach to working, a synthesis of object and object maker and the aspects of lifestyle each person embraces to facilitate their process of production provide the basis for a new model.

The contradictions involved in training for an artisan lifestyle are numerous. For example, an artisan in the position of developing a sense of aesthetics and creativity to an extremely high level of awareness and specialization, must simultaneously deal with the more mundane tasks of everyday businesslife, and somehow strike a balance. Contemporary craftspeople are constantly working to define a business space in which to operate. Both accepting the business influences that are appropriate and workable for them, and rejecting those that do not facilitate the goals toward which they work are necessary choices to be made by the modern craftsperson. For instance, specialization is one aspect of choice that the artisan must consider as part of the production process. Specialization developed naturally along with social and technological evolution, and, up to a point,

specialization is beneficial as it encourages rational economics and enriches communal life. But as Harry Davis points out, we have long passed that point today. "We are now living in a society which frowns on self reliance and strives deliberately to create states of dependency and people - even craftspeople - have an extraordinary over-estimation of their limitations."<sup>25</sup>

#### A PRAGMATIC PHILOSOPHY

If we get beyond the question of how or why to set up a business for yourself and accept the premise that an artisan accepts a lifestyle along with his/her self employment, we begin to isolate the factors that distinguish the craftsperson as a unique entrepreneur.

There remains some confusion among craftspeople, at least those trained in the universities, as to whether they are craftspeople in the 18th or 19th century tradition; making the things society needs, or whether they are artists. The objects we produce no longer reflect a strict utilitarian, liturgical, or ritual function. Artists possess a social support system that is willing to question to need for function in the finished product. This is less prevalent in the crafts. Jewelry must be wearable, pots must be light, functional, and inexpensive in order to be exchanged for the goods or dollars necessary

---

<sup>25</sup>H. C. Davis, op. cit., p. 58.

for the artisan to make a living.

The emphasis is then back on the individual to pursue every opportunity for training and practice. Even if it means going outside of the cultural milieu with which they are in affinity at the time. In terms of the business world, we are immersed in a system of economics in seeming indifference to the real needs of humankind. A society almost totally dominated by monetary values - commercial values - is at an extreme disadvantage when it tries to accommodate an aesthetic philosophy into its thinking. This dichotomy can work to the disadvantage of contemporary craftspeople as it did to their colonial counterparts. Immediately after the revolutionary war, individuals moved from the status of manufacturing producers, to strict retailers who lost all contact and knowledge of the specific steps involved in product manufacturing.

Artisans must now work to gain back some of that knowledge. Any process requires time to learn, to practice, and to implement into a production facility. Then, the artisan must be competitive enough to break into the markets held for so long by established concerns, all at a time when capital is subject to almost prohibitive rates of interest.

Questions and trade-offs will always be present, all of the problems will never be overcome and some of the answers will lead to further contradictions. For example, consider the analogy of the

rural and urban craftsperson. The rural, or colonial, artisan's problems revolve around isolation and transportation, and the difficulties of dealing with sales markets and suppliers who are usually quite a distance away or nonexistent. This same isolation, however, allows rural craftspeople to enjoy the benefits of a relatively secure and harmonious environment, where working and living spaces are easily intertwined. Urban, or contemporary, artisans on the other hand, are close to markets and suppliers, but they have more difficulty combining working and living space in a comfortable and efficient setting. As one individual pointed out in the book, Craftsman Lifestyle: The Gentle Revolution, "Urban (contemporary) craftsmen come out of a whole different environment. We practically all come out of the university system. We live in cities or in urban areas and we're caught up in these conditions."<sup>26</sup>

#### THE CONTEMPORARY STUDIO AND LIFESTYLE

The first choice of a contemporary artisan is a living environment with shop or studio space. In recent years there has been a definite trend toward the cottage industry, in which an individual conducts business out of his/her residence. Some of the more obvious reasons for this trend are increased costs, and a desire to soften the

---

<sup>26</sup>Olivia H. Emery, Craftsman Lifestyle: The Gentle Revolution, California Design Publication, Pasadena, CA. 1980), p. 6.

hard edges of the business world. The second choice is access to a space close to the place of residence. Cooperative space is still a popular alternative with a number of artisans from various disciplines sharing a large space and the expenses of major renovations. This affords them a private studio within the larger remodeled facility and cross-overs of customers, who come to look at pots and wander over into the wood shop.

Media and technique do, of course, affect the creative process; they affect everything from the selection of studio location and space to the amount of capital invested in machinery and equipment. Colonial artisans were limited both by the level of technological development and the availability of equipment from England. Today, almost any industrial tool is available to the craftsperson. However, every industrial tool, because of the increased control over material which it affords, is a step toward automation. Today, the combination of high technology, automation, and expertise has led to tremendous growth in the size of industrial undertakings. Tools and materials of comparative simplicity - which were in general use fifty or more years ago - are no longer available; so it has become very difficult to tool an enterprise on a small scale, what Davis refers to as a human scale.<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> H. C. Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

## Chapter 3

### A BUSINESS APPROACH

The beginning craftsperson has a severe problem in making a start, finding capital and establishing markets for his/her work. Imagine the level of difficulty involved for the colonial craftworker in acquiring the necessary tools for carrying out a production process when England tightly controlled the importation of tools and raw materials, and local deposits had yet to be discovered or developed. The successful contemporary craftsperson faces equally serious problems which are connected with bookkeeping, packing, billing, collection, correspondence, advertising, and keeping up with exhibitions. The demands of operating a business must somehow be reconciled with the maintenance of quality and with that joy in the work which is the basis of worth in the crafts.<sup>28</sup> A small business is exactly the same as a large one and all the problems are the same. The only difference is all aspects of the business are handled by one person. The intention of any business is to make a profit and profits for a craftsperson are based on production. There is, however, a limit to the amount of work one person can do, especially when confronted by so many tasks.

---

<sup>28</sup> Daniel Rhodes, "Production and Marketing", Asilomal, First Annual Conference of American Craftsmen, (American Crafts Council, New York, 1957), p. 135.

In response to a questionnaire for jewelers at the Baltimore Winter Market of Crafts, the average overall answer to the question of, "How do you spend your work week?", was: fifty percent of working time is spent doing production work. About 25 percent is spent doing creative design and one of a kind pieces. Desk work takes up an average 9 percent, selling 6 percent, and teaching and supervising only 5 percent. The "Other" category showed 5 percent, with running errands, research and purchasing specifically noted.<sup>29</sup>

My emphasis here is not to discourage individuals from investing in modern equipment for the sake of the old ways, but to plan carefully. Quite often the decision will be dictated by the type of services offered. In manufacturing, the efficiency of labor can be improved by the addition of machinery. In the service or repair field, however, increased productivity can be achieved only by better utilization of and performance by human resources.

In seeking a solution, a number of difficult questions emerge. How many co-workers, assistants, apprentices, or employees can be assembled before the studio becomes a factory and the artisan changes from a designer-craftsperson into a foreman-business executive? For the artisan involved in production work, what is the limit of

---

<sup>29</sup>Betsy Fuller, *Metalsmiths in Business - Baltimore's Winter Market of Crafts*, Goldsmith Journal, Vol. IV, #2. April 1978, p. 12.

developing efficient production methods without lowering aesthetic standards; and how does he/she achieve adequate distribution without crass commercialism?

The answers lie not with any bit of colonial wisdom, but more with the approach or attitude of artisans to their pursuit as a business and a means of livelihood. Sound business practices will not only sell more products and establish better relations with clients and customers, but will also help to create working conditions and states of mind that will benefit the quantity and quality of work produced. The main problem of the artisan as I have defined it is that their sole livelihood is derived from their labor. Their job is to secure raw materials, produce objects and sell, trade, or barter for other products to sustain a livelihood. There are few other areas of business requiring an individual or a small group of individuals to serve so many capacities.

Contemporaries are still subject to the same economic practices as their colonial counterparts. Most contemporaries still do either custom order work, or production for sale. Another category is work done primarily for competitive shows and recognition in the professional field. Most craftspeople are still involved with a secondary source of income. Quite often this is a partner or spouse involved in another occupation, a teaching position, or second job.

## COMMAND OF TOOLS AND TIME

In the period prior to the outbreak of the revolutionary war, colonial artisans emerged as a powerful interest group in opposition to English dominance. The root of this power lay in two aspects of their lifestyle that are still an important source of support for contemporary artisans.

The first factor is that artisans were independent and mobil. They owned their own tools, or means, of production. Just as any independent operator owns the tools or equipment of their particular trade, the artisan possesses the skills, tools, and knowledge necessary to secure an income. Quite often the equipment was minimal, requiring only the physical facility and raw materials necessary to turn out finished goods. If a market was oversupplied or economically depressed, the artisan was generally mobile enough to move where the work might be. The colonial artisan was afforded a great deal of mobility in comparison to their European counterpart. Some trades were extremely mobil, following the expansion of markets as the contemporary construction trades do today. Others looked carefully for a prospective community and made an all out effort to become part of a chosen environment. "The colonial smith, whatever his/her skill, had to have a reputation of probity. An honest man who had grown up in a community had a good start, but he did all he could to improve his standing. He joined local clubs, took part in community affairs, and undertook

increasingly responsible public duties.<sup>30</sup>

The second factor was the control of time that the artisan possessed. Contemporary artisans, like their colonial counterparts, are responsible for establishing their own studio hours and schedules. This affords a great deal of latitude and was the practical basis of colonial artisans' involvement in English opposition. This element of control has allowed the craftsperson to take part in community affairs, to be recognized as a part of the community and to acquire a following from these meetings for prospective business contacts and clients.

Besides the business functions that must be performed, a craftsperson must be conscious of elements of business that affect results, one of the most important of which is impact. Impact is a forceful collision between ideas or objects. Impact can also be the result of any action or decision made by the craftsperson. Whatever its origin, impact can be debilitating, exhilarating, devastating, hardly ever is it benign. Impact ought to be the result of a thoughtful decision, often it is the outcome of default. Pricing and marketing are two areas that have a great deal of impact on the artisan and deserve some additional attention to avoid decision-making by default behavior.

---

<sup>30</sup> Edwin Tunis, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

## PRICING

Any business person should take into consideration the income level of the intended customer before establishing a general price policy. A lack of knowledge concerning the income levels and their specific demographic composition may lead to miscalculations in planning, especially if you are just breaking into a market. It becomes extremely important to know the motives that direct the consumer toward satisfying a need. Colonial society was primarily a mono-culture in terms of needs and services. Common everyday and relatively inexpensive items were subject to comparison pricing and fluctuated in cost with local supply and demand, service being the primary deciding factor of patronage. Luxury goods had a limited market found mostly in urban areas and were either subject to the conditions and demands of their affluent buyers or operated from a sense of prestige and set their own schedules and prices.

To survive today a business must price at a level that will permit profitable operation. This means that prices should be sufficiently high to cover all out-of-pocket costs and, to cover such fixed costs as building or studio depreciation and property and equipment.

## MARKETING

The practice of marketing, or the application of the marketing

concepts to a business, first and foremost means the establishment of over-all goals. Relatively few professional craftspeople have ever bothered to set down their particular business goals, let alone develop the planning required to achieve them. Upgrading one's professional capabilities is a matter of doing one's utmost to improve service - the product - as a matter of personal aesthetic pride without regard for market demand.<sup>31</sup> Successfully selling that product is closely related to an artisan's professional capabilities, but entails a number of divergent concerns. It becomes important for each craftsman to ask such questions as: What group of people do I want to produce for? Do I want to produce a number of small pieces or a few large ones? Do I want to serve existing markets or take the time and energy to create new ones that will be more satisfying?

Most contemporary craftspeople have worked to fill the needs of the cultured middle-class mono-culture of today, primarily people involved to one extent or another with the arts. This is perhaps one area where there is a need for either innovation to break outside of this limited market, or a concerted effort to fully understand the needs of this cultured group we cater to. Both colonial and contemporary artisans share the experience of serving the needs of an

---

<sup>31</sup> John Philip Bachner and Naresh Kumar Hosla, Marketing and Promotion, Design Professionals, (Van Nostrand Reinhold Co., New York, London, 1977) pp. X-XI.

enlightened group of consumers while simultaneously nurturing a successive generation of patrons. Consumers often desire the same product or service for varying reasons. Conversely, they may desire differing products and services for similar reasons.

Effectively marketing a product may require more thought than designing it. The nature of a craftperson's business requires that he/she avoid competition with mass-produced items. Pricing is not the answer. Customer patronage is better built on total offerings rather than strictly on price appeal. The Quakers, in fact, had a concern that the price of merchandise should be its cost plus an honest profit.

If craftspeople are to become increasingly important culturally and economically, they must arouse public interest. Since the primary purpose of professional craftspeople is to make products for others, they must make their products available to the public in some kind of business-like fashion. Contemporary artisans still face limited markets for their products. As trained professionals, who produce products of above average quality and aesthetic integrity, the results of their labor should receive a wage reflecting these criteria. There are, however, a limited number of collectors, and the craftsperson's products are often placed in the same context with mass produced or imported wares, or with hobbyists or educators who view sales as second incomes and extra money. Locally-crafted products

faced the same prejudices in colonial times. Imports were cheaper, and reminiscent of the Motherland, while the market appeal of the Colonial artisan was finally a sense of patriotism. Today, the higher calling is "aesthetics", and, as in colonial times, the people who can afford to be patriotic, or to show their sense of refinement, are not always the best customers. Quite often the people one has the most in common with either overlook his/her products when it comes time to buy, or finally come to make a purchase only to find that you are out of business due to a lack of sales.

Direct sales is still the marketing strategy most followed by craftspeople. As John Glick points out, "The common factor of direct sales is that you get full dollar return on the sale, and this means greater flexibility. It also gives me the chance to observe on a first hand basis how my newer ideas were received."<sup>32</sup> This should not, however, be viewed as the only outlet for creative movement. The craftsperson has to take the lead in directing the selling and distribution. One has to be sensitive to outside influences, but not strictly follow commercial pressures. Every manufacturer, large or small, is faced with determining which product lines to produce. There must be some planning to determine the types, kinds and extent of products to sell. Distribution, which means placing each produced

---

<sup>32</sup> John Glick, op. cit., p. 51.

item where it will be seen by the person whose taste, finances, and present need it fits precisely, is also important. Ivy Ross, in discussing the goldsmith as a free-lance designer states:

One of the most difficult adjustments the goldsmith goes through when first starting to design commercially, is of learning what her market is - who is the type of person that will ultimately buy the piece she has made. This can be a problem for many of us because in our own studios we are primarily concerned with personal expression of ideas, form and technique - to satisfy ourselves rather than a customer. But, once you understand the market, and the need to satisfy it, finding the right design solution can sometimes be as rewarding as the personal design challenges we solve in our own studios each day.<sup>33</sup>

#### TREND CHANGES

An increasing number of social, economic, and cultural pressures are building against any individual thinking of going into business for themselves. All of us are directly removed from any production process whether it be job specialization, or contemporary conveniences. Time is the contemporary standard measurement of efficiency. Very few contemporary artisans fully control their production cycle. Most craftspeople today buy their equipment from manufacturers. A jeweler buys gold, silver sheet, and wire pre-milled, formed and alloyed to government regulations. Many potters buy their clay premixed and blacksmiths now have the luxury of buying their own tools; rather

---

<sup>33</sup> Ivy Ross, "The Goldsmith as a Freelance Designer," Goldsmith Journal, Vol. IV, #4, Aug. 1978, p. 16.

than making tools, to make more tools, to make products.

Trend changes are also one of the elements of impact. For example, collection of polished pewter, used and proudly displayed, symbolized prosperity to early artisans and shopkeepers. The gentry ate from silver and imported china; the very poor made out with wooden trenchers and pottery mugs. This lasted until 1825; when the white ware of American potters invaded simple dining rooms and banished pewter to the kitchens.<sup>34</sup> Contemporary craftspeople must contend with similar shifts in buying behavior and new industrial products and processes. Industry has taken on the task of furnishing inexpensive wares for daily use. Plastic and stainless steel now serve many of the functions formerly satisfied with ceramics.<sup>35</sup>

The practices and philosophies I have described are not without their contradictions. Having a shop in your own home, a three cornered hat, stockings, and linen breeches will not guarantee you success as a craftsperson. Contemporary craftspeople must deal with more hectic lifestyles and workplace pressures. There are more demands in the form of higher standards of quality and the necessity of making proportionally more dollars to get by in an inflated economy. It was a lot easier to be a social activist or a counter-culture jeweler

---

<sup>34</sup>Eric Foner, op. cit., p. 73.

<sup>35</sup>Dr. Carl With, "Opening Statements", Asilomar, First Annual Conference of American Craftsman, op. cit., p. 12.

in the 60's and 70's. Small shops selling imported products and locally crafted items opened. All it took was some brass wire, a handful of beads and a VW bus and you were in business. Rents were cheap, materials were less expensive and while the culture expressed a lack of emphasis on material possessions, people still had their priorities, which fortunately included the craft items typical of that time period. Try the same thing in the 80's, and you run the chance of going back to washing dishes in six months. The social supports for those behaviors are gone and buying behaviors have shifted dramatically as audiences have been exposed to more products and higher levels of creative sophistication.

In order to remain as a viable economic force, craftspeople must maintain their sense of innovation. I have presented only a basic model, more a philosophy of how to approach a craft lifestyle. It is the responsibility of each person to build on this philosophy, experimenting to find what works and to reject the things that do not and replace them with a more useful paradigm. A sense of history will always help put a practice in the proper perspective. The trial and error is still one of the best research models, although also the most costly in terms of time and impact.

#### MAINTAINING A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Michael Cardew, when addressing the question of "Why Make Pots in

the Last Quarter of the 20th Century?", points out that:

We think that those old-time craftspeople only made jugs, pitchers, pans, jars, plates, and the rest because there was a compelling economic necessity for them. Nobody denies the economic necessity: the potters of those times were ordinary human craftspeople who knew all about economic necessities. But they were good craftspeople as well as economists; and nearly all of them, even those of small or underdeveloped talents, achieved a kind of greatness, because though they might have been "serfs" in terms of wealth, they were free agents, where their sense of form was concerned, and they responded to it instinctively and with magnanimity which is always there in ordinary working people - a magnanimity latent and waiting to be given a chance to show itself.<sup>36</sup>

Even with ceramic manufacturers still present, the scale of production is far removed from a craftsperson's expressive aesthetic. An inherent danger of this observation is that this philosophy toward the tradition of the craft - antiquated ways of thinking and working - will bind the worker to a production process that does not allow for survival in an inflated economy. The romantic attitudes toward the austere producer are appealing, but are not conducive to a successful business venture. Old-fashioned craftship is not a copying of historic forms, but related to a profound comprehension of the way in which they were created. Byron Temple, of Penland, describes this feeling as: A deep preoccupation with functional utility, a respectful

---

<sup>36</sup> Michael Cardew, "Why Make Pots in the Last Quarter of the 20th Century", Studio Potter, Vol. 7, #1, Fall, 1978, p. 46.















