

The Wisdom of Our Hands: Crafting, a Life

Doug Stowe

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In his creative manifesto *The Wisdom of Our Hands*, master woodworker Doug Stowe issues a call to crafts. His stirring guide to the creative life includes reflections on building skills, crafting communities, and achieving meaning.

Stowe recalls that learning his craft was a slow process, during which supportive friendships became an important resource. Over time, he was able to build an arts and educational infrastructure in his community of Eureka Springs, Arkansas, where arts and crafts are ubiquitous and respect for the environment is paramount. While Eureka Springs provided Stowe's own framework for living a more hands-on life, he relays that it doesn't take a special place or an established community to be a maker; the book encourages others to start where they are.

And Stowe notes that creating useful and beautiful objects, teaching others how to do the same, and writing about those experiences are all ways to build a legacy and live a fulfilling life. Whether as a vocation or a hobby, making items gives people a connection to themselves, other people, and the world around them; it's also a way to physically manifest one's values.

Drawing on scientific research on connections between one's hands and mind, combined with anecdotes from Stowe's forty-five years as a woodworker and twenty-five years as a teacher, these essays cover the importance of materials, tools, techniques, designs, and learning by hand. They also cover how crafts contribute to community-building and the reclamation of what's real. Most of their examples have to do with woodworking, but their approaches and encouragements are transferable to anyone who crafts.

The Wisdom of Our Hands encourages people to engage themselves in crafting, applying their hearts and minds to the art of bringing about a better world.

SARAH WHITE (March / April 2022)

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