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“Talking Shop is a brilliant exploration of craft and language, and of how they interlaced in the era of 1840–1920, as industrial production elevated the status of handmade objects. Peter Betjemann recasts the common view that craft is mute or unspoken; instead he reveals a complex discourse among writers, designers, and joiners that gave craft a startling new voice and syntax. I shall never again admire a Stickley table with the same senses.”—**William Howarth, Princeton University**

TALKING SHOP

The Language of Craft in an Age of Consumption

Describing everything from bread and cappuccinos to mass-market furnishings, a language of the “artisanal” saturates our culture today. That language, Peter Betjemann proposes, has a rich and specifiable history. Between 1840 and 1920, the cultural appetite for handmade chairs, tables, cabinets, and other material odds and ends flowed through narrative and texts as much as through dusty workshops or the physical surfaces of clay, wood, or metal. Judged by classic axioms about labor’s virtue—axioms originating with Plato and foundational to modern theories of workmanship—the vigorous life of craft as represented in these texts might seem a second-hand version of an ideal and purposeful activity. But **TALKING SHOP (October 2011, UVA Press)** celebrates these texts as a cultural phenomenon of their own.

In the first book to consider the literary representation of craft rather than of labor in general, Betjemann asks how nineteenth- and early twentieth-century craftspeople, writers, and consumers managed craft’s traditional attachment to physical objects and activities while also presenting craft in iconic, emblematic, preeminently textual terms. The durable model of workmanship that was created around correlations of craft and narrative, physical process and representation, and the body and text blurred the boundaries between the production of craft and its consumption. Discussing a wide range of material from fiction and essays to artifacts, Betjemann explores how the era paved the way for the vitality and the viability of a language of craft in much later decades.

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