

HOME HANDICRAFTS

DURING THE ARTS AND CRAFTS ERA, books and magazines were filled with how-to articles encouraging homeowners to personalize their bungalows through crafting handmade items—from embroidered table runners and stenciled curtains to baskets for transporting sandwiches.

"No artistic talent is needed for this work," proclaimed a 1915 *Craftsman* article on reed basket making, "just an eye for form, a sense of proportion, and a certain amount of manual dexterity." Detailed directions for building various items were regularly included in publications, including the article "Useful Wooden Things" from the 1914 encyclopedia *Our Wonder World*, which showed how to construct a trash can out of hardwood and stenciled burlap-covered cardboard. Another *Craftsman* feature urged, "In fact, by consulting any of the good books on block printing, draperies ... could be made. This opens up a new opportunity for women to use their native good taste, and at comparatively little expense furnish rooms expressive of their own individuality, rooms differing delightfully from those dependent upon the standard sets and draperies offered in the shops."

These periodicals make a good point about putting a personal touch on your home by finding and expressing your own creativity.

As a historic interior designer specializing in the Craftsman style, I feel very fortunate that my chosen profession has provided me the opportunity to work with antiques of past artists, as well as many talented craftspeople of today. I always enjoy hearing the stories of others, of how they discovered their interest in this wonderful era.

In my case, my maternal grandmother Margaret Costello painted china, wrote poetry in lovely penmanship and embroidered, although she was a professional woman. Born in 1878 and married in 1916, during her era women created hope chests full of linens and embroidered pieces for their

future homes. In the '50s she tutored me in sewing and embroidering in the "Craftsman style." My mother then taught me the interior design aspects of wallpapering and painting, and my two grandfathers—one a furniture designer and the other a landscape artist—brought more exposure to the Craftsman style and movement.



As an *American Bungalow* reader, you already have the taste for decorative objects, an awareness of nature-inspired design or a fascination for Craftsman architecture. I strongly encourage you to not only collect furniture, or take pride in owning a fine bungalow, but to learn about the processes necessary to make Arts and Crafts-style objects. Experience the thrill of creation yourself—even if it is only one embroidery kit that you make into a pillow, or one piece of copper that you pound into a bowl or a decorative copper repose.

Find a simple wooden box and embellish it with a wood-burning tool. Or try sanding, staining and finishing a picture frame. Gather some stones and a sack of Ready-mix and create a garden resting place. Through this experience you will get closer to the roots of the Arts and Crafts movement. It's all about participation.

"Heart, head and hand" refers to the passion that draws one to handcrafted objects and to the bungalow lifestyle. Understanding the spirit of the materials used in their creation, and feeling the satisfaction of creating with your own hands, will increase your appreciation for that decorative piece you already have or may find in the next antique shop.

If this hands-on concept is a new idea for you, I promise you will be changed by the experience and inspired by the creative energy that is in all of us. If you think you're excited about this era now... just wait.

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