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Makers: A History of American Studio Craft

Janet Koplos, Bruce Metcalf

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Janet Koplos, Bruce Metcalf : Makers: A History of American Studio Craft before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Makers: A History of American Studio Craft:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Less a History, More of a One Volume Encyclopedia By Carl E. Johnson Jr. The authors provide us with lots of information about crafters, but historical mostly only in that the information is arranged by decades. Thus, there's a chapter on 1900-1909, followed by one on 1910-1919, and so on by decade through the '90s. Within each decade the material is organized by medium, e.g., wood, clay and so on. Then, within the medium within the decade you've got short descriptions of the lives and work of significant crafters. To pick a well-known maker, Dale Chihuly's earlier work covered in Chapter 9, the '70s, and later work in Chapter 10, the '80's. An opening chapter surveys the "roots of studio craft." Moreover, the authors' work seems uneven, with some crafters being covered more carefully than others, without much reason as far as I can tell, that is, without sufficient

explanation from the authors. A somewhat more negative way of saying this is that certain of the artists seem to be included simply as fillers. Most artists are favored with one or sometimes two high quality pictures of their work, but for others you've got to conger an image yourself, or, better, research independently. In short, I thought I was buying a book with an greater emphasis on historical development and critical analysis of the studio craft movement, which to my way of looking at it, the book is not. I had expected a somewhat more academic approach, and am grading the book (three stars) against that expectation. Still, as a reference book and an organizational tool I believe that it will remain, for me, a very useful single volume. 28 of 30 people found the following review helpful. too much art critic, not enough scholar

By Doug Anderson
When it was announced that Bruce Metcalf would team up with Janet Koplos on this very important project, we were curious as to the decision as Ms. Koplos has a long held, very verbal prejudice against the world of glass. 20 years ago, the Art Alliance For Contemporary Glass funded Glass Magazine to commission critical essays by art critics as a way to get them to do research into the emerging world of artists using glass as an art-making medium. Janet Koplos was commissioned and what she had to say was that **THERE ARE NO PEOPLE WORKING IN GLASS WHOSE WORK RISES TO THE LEVEL OF ART**. She was talking about the 20 - 25 people she now covers in this book. 5 years ago, when William Warmus did a major show of art made from glass at the Norton Museum, Palm Beach, we invited Ms. Koplos to come as our guest to see how wrong she was. She declined saying that **NOTHING HAD CHANGED**. I bought this beautiful, large book to see how it came out and spent yesterday reading the parts about glass. I was pleased to see that many of the short pieces written about the glass people were accurate and not written from the perspective of an art critic.....but some were. Let me say, however, that what was written wasn't very informative. What shocked me, but it wasn't a surprise, were the entries about Dale Chihuly, William Morris and Michael Glancy. Ms. Koplos just couldn't get through this project without her critic's barbed tongue. Instead of talking about Chihuly as the engine that powered the Studio Glass Movement. Instead of talking about how he developed a vocabulary with his small work and let it take him naturally into his designs for grand installations. Instead of writing about the huge community of glass craftsmen who followed him to Seattle and worked for him over the years as they honed their skills, she concentrates on the economics of his business and the Disneyland effect of some of his major installations that have drawn millions of people. She never even covers "Chihuly Over Venice" or "Chihuly In The Light Of Jerusalem" which were spectacular projects. I guess Ms. Koplos just can't get over people who begin in the Studio Crafts Movement and who use their skills to break out into the art world. Maybe it has to do with money. Maybe Ms. Koplos is more comfortable with potters and weavers who eek out a living and uncomfortable with "craftspeople" who work in the world of large money where their work commands hundreds of thousands of dollars. But that's something for her to deal with.....but not in this book. As for her review of William Morris who she says is probably the most skillful gaffer of his time, it's horrifying to read "praised by his apologists as a spritual sensitive man. It is an image hard to reconcile with the marketing of a hunky glassblower. Being photographed in tank tops to muscular advantage in the hot shop.....". Give me a break. And the idea that the limited work from his Canopic Jar series commands more than a quarter of a million dollars ruins it for Ms. Koplos again, because she's more comfortable in the company of craftspeople who haven't "made it". Given this kind of personal prejudice, it's hard for me to want to really read this book in its entirety but I shall in the coming weeks. So how do I rate this book....."In the land of the blind, the one-eyed man is king". Jansen it ain't. DOUG ANDERSON doug@d2anderson.com

6 of 7 people found the following review helpful. A must read for aspiring makers

By Paul Stankard
I just finished listening/reading "Makers: A History of American Studio Craft" and felt fortunate it was available to download to my Kindle. Thank you, . This book was a long read and well worth the two month journey into the craft highlands on the path of originality. "Makers" represents a herculean effort that identifies the flow of significant objects evidencing a thriving creative culture across the twentieth century. This 529 page book could have been more attractive if produced in two volumes with additional images and information beyond who studied with who at what college. I would have enjoyed reading personal accounts from the artists still living, especially regarding the challenges and obstacles associated with establishing an audience and promoting one's work in the art/craft community. However, the book is a scholarly overview of the craft art scene that will have a major impact on the American art landscape, if for no other reason than promoting the diversity of personal visions executed with the highest standards of artistic integrity. I wish this type of book was available when I was starting in glass. For anyone interested in a career in the studio crafts environment, "Makers" is a must read. Paul Stankard, Glass Maker

Here is the first comprehensive survey of modern craft in the United States. Makers follows the development of studio craft--objects in fiber, clay, glass, wood, and metal--from its roots in nineteenth-century reform movements to the rich diversity of expression at the end of the twentieth century. More than four hundred illustrations complement this chronological exploration of the American craft tradition. Keeping as their main focus the objects and the makers, Janet Koplos and Bruce Metcalf offer a detailed analysis of seminal works and discussions of education, institutional support, and the philosophical underpinnings of craft. In a vivid and accessible narrative, they highlight the value of physical skill, examine craft as a force for moral reform, and consider the role of craft as an aesthetic alternative. Exploring craft's relationship to fine arts and design, Koplos and Metcalf foster a critical understanding of the field and

help explain craft's place in contemporary culture. *Makers* will be an indispensable volume for craftspeople, curators, collectors, critics, historians, students, and anyone who is interested in American craft.

Every part of this book is important. . . .It's been a long time coming.--*Surface Design*A comprehensive, absorbing account. . . . In accessible and unpretentious prose, the authors personalize and locate each maker, noting relevant biography, education, training, and connections. . . . Written with grace, erudition, and wit, peopled by a cast of hundreds of women and men . . . and copiously illustrated, *Makers* is a definitive work. . . . Essential.--*Choice*A wide-ranging and thoughtful survey--lucid, accessible and often compelling. . . .The most comprehensive compendium of information on studio craft and craftspeople to date." --*The Burlington Magazine*This is not a mystery novel and yet I have the impulse to write 'It's a page turner if there ever was one!'hellip;.[*Makers*] is an exciting narrative work of nonfictionhellip;.An important contribution to American world craft and textile history.--*The Velvet Highway*Janet Koplos and Bruce Metcalf have provided us with . . . [a] canon, and in so doing have taken on a very difficult task, for which we may be grateful.--*Glass Quarterly*A welcome addition to the literature on the Arts and Crafts Movement in America. . . . A definitive text covering two centuries that will also become a standard reference in the field.--*Art Libraries Society of North America*If you can't crisscross the country touring new museum wings and exhibitions, immerse yourself in *Makers*. . . . Don't miss the last two chapters--that's where the authors really dig in with detailed biographies, and where you'll find the anchors of the craft community we know today.--*American Style*A wonderful book. . . . Interesting and useful. . . . The inclusion of some biographical detail and the consideration of each artist's career choices and influences . . . make the text highly readable. . . . Anyone with an interest in making art or craft will love this book.--*Shuttle Spindle Dyepot*A reference for artists, educators, and scholars interested in the field. . . . Koplos and Metcalf consolidate, review, and analyze the literature already available on craft, while adding primary research of their own.--*Ceramics Monthly*For a field that has been without a definitive text for over a century and a half, [*Makers*] represents a high water mark. . . . An inspired reference that grounds craft movements in various contexts of craft education, production, display, sales and collecting. . . . Goes far toward paving the way for the study of studio craft to gain the credibility it has long deserved.--*American Craft* Koplos and Metcalf thoughtfully interweave their independent perspectives to construct an engaging narrative of American Studio Craft. *Makers* successfully blends existing scholarship with new insights on historical developments of material and technological innovations. A remarkable resource that will stimulate new research and theorization of craft history and material culture.--Patricia C. Phillips, Dean of Graduate Studies, Rhode Island School of DesignIn *Makers* the American crafts have their Iliad: a must-read story, a pantheon, and the first substantial ground for contention over the origins, agents, motives, and boundaries of what is functionally a cultural identity."--Glen R. Brown, Kansas State UniversityA coherent, well-contextualized, appropriately theorized, and artifact-driven introduction to a field currently dominated by scattered articles, narrowly focused volumes on canonical figures, media-specific surveys, and uncritical hagiography. By arguing that the field of craft is sometimes in synch with and sometimes at odds with larger cultural issues and by offering analysis and explanation of these trends, the authors have invigorated this often obscure field.--Edward S. Cooke Jr., Yale UniversityFrom the Inside FlapHere is the first comprehensive survey of modern craft in the United States. The book follows the development of studio craft--objects in fiber, clay, glass, wood, and metal--from its roots in 19th-century reform movements to the rich diversity of expression at the end of the 20th century. Keeping as their main focus the objects and the makers, Koplos and Metcalf offer a detailed analysis of seminal works and discussions of education, institutional support, and the philosophical underpinnings of craft. Oversize, with more than 400 illustrations.