

December 16, 2007

Handmade 2.0

By [ROB WALKER](#)

The declaration from something called the Handmade Consortium materialized on a Web site called buyhandmade.org in late October. “I pledge to buy handmade this holiday season, and request that others do the same for me,” it said, and you could type in your name to “sign” on; within a few weeks, more than 6,500 people had done so. “Buying handmade is better for people,” a statement on the site read in part, and “better for the environment,” because mass production is a “major cause” of [global warming](#), among other things. There were links to an anti-sweatshop site and a Wal-Mart watchdog site.

The pledge echoed the idealistic language of a tree-hugger activist group, but actually the consortium’s most prominent member was the online shopping bazaar Etsy, a very much for-profit entity that bills itself as “your place to buy & sell all things handmade.” Etsy does not fulfill orders from an inventory; it’s a place where sellers set up virtual storefronts, giving the site a cut of sales. While eBay rose to prominence nearly a decade ago as an endless garage sale for the auctioning of collectibles and bric-a-brac, Etsy is more of an online craft fair, or art show, where the idea is that individuals can sell things that they have made. How many such people can there be? At last count, more than 70,000 — about 90 percent of whom were women — were using Etsy to peddle their jewelry, art, toys, clothes, dishware, stationery, zines and a variety of objects from the mundane to the highly idiosyncratic. Each seller has a profile page telling shoppers a bit about themselves, and maybe offering a link to a blog or a [MySpace](#) page or a mailing list; most have devised some clever store or brand name for whatever they’re selling.

Maybe you’re interested in a “random music generator” called the Orb of Sound (\$80), built by an Australian tinkerer calling himself RareBeasts. Or a whistle made out of a tin can and bottle caps (\$12), by loranscruggs, near Seattle. Or the “hand-painted antique ceramic doll-head planters” sold under the name Clayflower22 by a retired schoolteacher near Las Cruces, N.M. Or the “Kaleidoscope Pearberry

Soapsicle” (\$5), made by a woman in Daytona Beach, Fla., who calls her shop Simply Soaps. Or a porcelain bowl with an image of a skull on it, from a Chicago couple who call themselves Circa Ceramics. Or an original painting from an artist in Athens, Ga., who goes by the moniker the Black Apple.

Browsing Etsy is both exhilarating and exhausting. There is enough here to mount an astonishing museum exhibition. There is also plenty of junk. Most of all there is a dizzying amount of *stuff*, and it is similarly difficult to figure out how to characterize what it all represents: an art movement, a craft phenomenon or shopping trend. Whatever this is, it’s not something that Etsy created but rather something that it is trying to make bigger, more visible and more accessible — partly by mixing high-minded ideas about consumer responsibility with the unsentimental notion of the profit motive.

On July 29, Etsy registered its one-millionth sale and is expecting to hit two million items sold by mid-December. Shoppers spent \$4.3 million buying 300,000 items from the site’s sellers in November alone — a 43 percent increase over the previous month. Thus far in December, the site has had record-breaking sales every day. Only about two years old, the company is not currently profitable but is somewhat unusual among Internet-based start-ups of the so-called Web 2.0 era in having a model that does not depend on advertising revenue. It depends on people buying things, in a manner that the founders position as a throwback to the way consumption ought to be: individuals buying from other individuals. “Our ties to the local and human sources of our goods have been lost,” the Handmade Pledge site asserts. “Buying handmade helps us reconnect.” The idea is a digital-age version of artisanal culture — that the future of shopping is all about the past.

STEP 1: Weave Do-It-Yourself Spirit Into a Community

The path that has led to Etsy begins with a motto — do it yourself — that implies distaste for consumer culture. That notion was front and center last year, when O’Reilly Media, best known for computer-related publications, introduced a magazine called Craft. A

spinoff of Make magazine (a latter-day Popular Mechanics for the hacker-tinkerer set), Craft addresses “the new craft movement.” The issue contained a variety of instructional projects: “Stitch a Robot,” one cover line read. “Felt an iPod Cocoon,”

said another. Inside, an essay by a longtime crafter named Jean Railla argued that making something yourself is a form of “political statement” and a protest against chain stores that are turning “America into one big mini-mall.”

This dissonant-sounding juxtaposition — politics and felted iPod cocoons? — is what makes the craft thing hard to pin down. Of course Railla wasn’t saying that stitching a robot is akin to a march on Washington; she was writing about a broader do-it-yourself idea that she has watched gradually permeate popular culture over the course of a decade.

Railla, who is 37, founded a Web site called Getcrafty back in 1998, when renewed interest in traditional crafts among young women was still something of a curiosity. It wasn’t as if such skills and hobbies had ceased to exist; from [Martha Stewart](#) to nationwide chains like Michaels, major businesses catered to a range of quilt makers and scrapbookers. But the new wave of crafters infused uncool-sounding domestic skills like knitting and sewing with a postpunk attitude that revolved partly around mall-rejecting self-sufficiency. Railla wrote about how to make your own soap and lip gloss — and also about how to knit a bikini. “I really came to it from more of an indie-rock, do-it-yourself kind of political place,” she told me recently. “Sort of married with making peace with feminism.”

Getcrafty was filled with project ideas and how-tos as well as discussion forums, which played a crucial role in building the craft-as-community idea that Etsy would later tap into. “Knitting is part of the same do-it-yourself ethos that spawned zines and mixtapes,” Debbie Stoller, editor of *Bust*, a pop-culture-meets-feminism magazine, declared. Stoller wrote a series of “Stitch N Bitch” books, which became part of a trend toward the formation of social-crafting groups across the country. More Web gathering points emerged, like Craftster and SuperNaturale. Offline, a communal make-stuff group called Church of Craft formed chapters in several cities.

Crafting had attained a subculture status by 2004, when Railla hired a [New York University](#) student named Robert Kalin and some friends to redesign Getcrafty. Kalin had been studying philosophy and classics, but, he told me, he was pessimistic about the job-market value of his degree and was looking for something more entrepreneurial. While he had a bit of woodworking experience, he and his friend Chris Maguire were basically techie types; they hadn’t known much about the

handcrafting movement that was bringing so many young women to Getcrafty. “We were the only guys around,” Kalin recalls.

Soon he had an idea for a different kind of site that this burgeoning craft community might find useful: an online marketplace. By that time, plenty of crafters were not simply doing it themselves — they were selling what they had done. There’s nothing surprising about people who enjoy doing something (playing guitar, writing poetry, knitting a bikini) wondering if maybe there isn’t a way to make a living at it. But the scene that Kalin stumbled upon turned out to be brimming with entrepreneurial spirit.

Consider, for instance, the Austin Craft Mafia. This group of nine indiepreneurs traces its roots to a 2001 meeting of young women who hoped to leverage their craft skills into a way to quit their day jobs. Each member built her own business and helped the others do the same. They continued to offer advice and connections with others in Austin and, eventually, beyond. There are now 42 officially sanctioned Craft Mafias, in cities from Omaha to New Orleans to Anchorage to Glasgow. (The Austin Craft Mafia, like Etsy, is a member of the consortium backing the Handmade Pledge.)

For some years now, crafters have been selling on their own sites online. Craft boutiques have opened as fast as independent book and record stores closed. And a new wave of fairs has come to life, not of the country-craft, “Bless This Mess” style, but venues for a younger, more indie-punk aesthetic. These happen all over the country now — the Bazaar Bizarre in Boston and other cities, the Renegade Craft Fair in Chicago, the Girlie Show in Oklahoma City — and each one seems to get bigger every year.

So it’s no surprise that when Kalin suggested something akin to an online version of a craft fair but infinitely large and open all the time, to everyone, everywhere, Railla thought it was a “brilliant” idea. She was happy to consult on the new enterprise but gives Kalin and his partners credit for spotting the business opportunity and making it a reality. To her, crafting remains more of a philosophy, and its satisfactions are in participation, not consumption. She reiterated that idea in her Craft magazine column, arguing that the practice satisfies the urge to create, values feminine art

Handmade 2.0 is not just a theme upgrade – it is a re-invention of one of our most popular themes offering several enhancements, integrated support for WooCommerce and updated widgets. To learn more about why we did what we did, head over to the Obox Blog. Due to the number of changes in Handmade 2.0, it is only available as a new install and will not be available through the theme updater.

Handmade 2.0. By Rob Walker. Dec. The declaration from something called the Handmade Consortium materialized on a Web site called buyhandmade.org in late October. I pledge to buy handmade this holiday season, and request that others do the same for me, it said, and you could type in your name to “sign” on; within a few weeks, more than 6,500 people had done so. I stop often for interludes of the funnier kind, share finds and laud the world of handmade2.0. Nice to meet you! :) Joined December 2010.

Website <http://handmadezwoonull.blogspot.com>. Testimonials. Have something nice to say about handmade2.0? Write a testimonial.

HANDMADE 2.0. The future of fablabs is a subject that deserves our attention. His very recent emergence gives us the right to anticipate and see how we can shape it before it becomes governed by strict rules as every institution. There is no doubt that the fablab is a young institution. The two essential factors for its development are the possession of a knowledge and its social necessity. We will turn to the self-skills, to the ability to produce ourselves. Until now, it was difficult to start producing ourselves. Handmade Web 2.0

Buffer Blogs, like PBN network on sites with DA 99-67, strong link juice!! Benefits of our Web 2.0 Handmade blogs: - handmade blogs aren't delete. 1 day 2 days 3 days 4 days 5 days 6 days 7 days 8 days 9 days 10 days 11 days 12 days 13 days 14 days 15 days 16 days 17 days 18 days 19 days 20 days 21 days 22 days 23 days 24 days 25 days 26 days 27 days 28 days 29 days 30 days 31 days 32.