



A Theory of Craft: Function and Aesthetic Expression

By Howard Risatti

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What is craft? How is it different from fine art or design? In *A Theory of Craft*, Howard Risatti examines these issues by comparing handmade ceramics, glass, metalwork, weaving, and furniture to painting, sculpture, photography, and machine-made design from Bauhaus to the Memphis Group. He describes craft as uniquely blending function with a deeper expression of human values that transcend culture, time, and space. Craft must articulate a role for itself in contemporary society, says Risatti; otherwise it will be absorbed by fine art or design, and its singular approach to understanding the world will be lost.

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Editorial Review

Review

Risatti has long been ahead of the curve in regards to bridging the art/craft divide. . . . A tantalizingly broad argument for craft's relevance.--*Surface Design Journal*

Destined to become required reading for undergraduate and graduate courses in art and craft history. . . . A book worth waiting for.--*Ceramics Monthly*

With a writing style that is direct and engaging, Risatti examines the value of the handmade in an age of mass-production and constructs a critical framework for evaluating the place of craft media in today's art environment.--*FiberArts*

[*A Theory of Craft*] lays out reasons for the historical dichotomy in Western philosophy between fine art and crafts.--*Library Journal*

Howard Risatti offers a very palatable narrative in *A Theory of Craft: Function and Aesthetic Expression*. Risatti dives headfirst into the craft versus art and design argument, peeling back the layers to understand the most basic definitions, functions and history of craft.--*Arts Reader*

A well-organized argument for the consideration of craft as art and its elevation in status. . . . An important contribution to the field of contemporary craft activity and its contributions.--*Wintherthur Portfolio*

Review

An unprecedented effort to define crafts and to place the work in a cultural context, both differentiating it from and aligning it with other aesthetic activities. Risatti's fluent, knowledgeable approach and his emphatic categorizing should be widely read--not because he offers a final answer but because his extraordinary book is so stimulating and provocative.--Janet Koplos, senior editor, *Art in America*

Risatti challenges many of the long-held stereotypes about craft that hinder a true understanding of the art form. His conclusions challenge us to reevaluate our ideas not only about craft but also about what actually constitutes a work of art.--Kenneth R. Trapp, from the Foreword

This book is notable for its logically progressive and rigorously philosophical development of a general theory of craft. In arguing his case, Risatti draws upon an extensive knowledge of aesthetics. *A Theory of Craft* sets an excellent precedent for future research in the field.--Glen R. Brown, Kansas State University

From the Inside Flap

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