



Craftsman of the Cumberlandds: Tradition and Creativity

Michael Jones

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Why do people consider aesthetic qualities as well as utilitarian ones in the making of everyday objects? Why do they maintain traditions? What is the nature of their creative process? These are some of the larger questions addressed by Michael Owen Jones in his book on craftsmen in the Cumberland Mountains of eastern Kentucky. Concentrating on the work of one man, woodworker and chairmaker Chester Cornett, Jones not only describes the tools and techniques employed by Cornett but also his aspirations and values. Cornett possessed a deep knowledge of his materials and a mastery of construction methods. Some of his chairs represent not objects of utility but aesthetic developments of the chair form. Cornett sought to cope with the problems of his life, Jones maintains; their massiveness provided a sense of security, the virtuosity of their design and construction, a feeling of self-esteem. Jones also compares other area craftsmen and their views about their work.

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