

# HANDS AT WORK

## CRAFTWORK AT ITS BEST

The "Hands at Work" reception desk is a large and remarkable collaborative craft object. And it is so much more than that. It is also a concept that attempts to capture what the League of NH Craftsmen is all about. "Hands at Work" – lets look at the words individually and tease out some of the threads of meaning.

### HANDS

When you see any object made by the juried members of the League, we hope you see much more than just an object. Imbedded in that object is the process by which it was created. It was created by human hands, the hands of real people, living in a familiar and distinctive location, following in the long traditions of their craft. The object has been truly handcrafted, each step controlled by a discerning eye and an inquisitive mind. The process is motivated by the passionate heart and the self-discipline of the maker. All of this is channeled through the experienced hands of the craftsperson. This is what "handcrafted" means to the League: the story of how the object is made becomes so intermingled with the craft object that they become one thing.

### AT

You might well think this tiny word is a throwaway word, a benign bridge between the important nouns. But give this word a chance. "At" has been called a preposition of direction and location. These hands of the craftspeople have a directive, a deliberate movement that is sometimes as graceful as a ballet, sometimes tentative and awkward in the moment of difficult exploration. These hands are directed by their owners AT the intention of making something extraordinary.

A wise woodworker (with the amazingly appropriate name of Art Carpenter) once said that craft stands as a metaphor for skill, care and love. The League's craftspeople are directed AT expressing the skills we have learned over many years, AT epitomizing a caring attitude about the objects and their eventual owners, AT the almost spiritual idea that these objects are invested with love, and carry our love into the larger world.

### WORK

Now here is a word that sometimes gets a bad rap! For some, work is an onerous obligation. Yet for the true craftsperson, work is a joy and an opportunity. It is an amazing chance to express who we are, what we love, how we interpret the world in visual and tactile ways.

Which is not to say it is an easy lifestyle: the craftsperson is usually a one-person small business that includes everything from promoter to bookkeeper, designer to floor sweeper. The boss we blame for our troubles is the person we see in the mirror each morning. But when we embrace the notion that it is all part of a much

larger picture – the calling we have answered that happily impels us to create works of art by hand.

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Together these words speak volumes to craftspeople and to those who appreciate the beautiful objects we create. When you look at the Hands at Work collaboration, you see the evocative images of the carved panels, showing those hands working on a variety of craft media. When you examine the entire project, you will see how hands have been at work. You can see it close up, in the most minute of details, and you can see it from afar as the many parts coalesce into an unexpectedly beautiful whole!

Five craftspeople created the Hands at Work Collaboration. But this piece carries the memory of all the League craftspeople who come before us, and welcomes all that will arrive at our doorstep in the future. Our hands are extended to you.

*Peter Bloch*