

home-made Europe: the DIY geniuses shaking up design

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Justin McGuirk in the Guardian today [\[Link\]](#) highlights a new book [\[Link\]](#) on challenges to industrial design:

The objects we buy are supposed to tell us something about who we are. But they don't tell us half as much as the objects we make, as even a quick flick through Home-Made Europe: Contemporary Folk Artifacts reveals. Here are everyday things people have fashioned with their own hands. Heaters, hammers, anchors, rat-traps, barbecues, showers and goalposts. They range from the pitiful – a child's grill for corn on the cob, rigged out of wires bent over tea lights – to the technically impressive – one man made a fridge. This is a catalogue of human resourcefulness.

Published by Fuel, the London-based design and publishing outfit that turned Russian criminal tattoos into a three-volume encyclopaedia, the project began with Home-Made: Contemporary Russian Folk Artifacts. This is the sequel. If the first volume was a testament to ingenuity behind the Iron Curtain, where not just poverty but a lack of consumer goods forced people to improvise, the European volume suggests something different: even when everything is available, it is still better to make your own.

The handmade has risen back to the surface of consumer culture, with luxury goods brands deciding that craftsmanship is the key to our wallets – cue advertising campaign featuring a man in a leather apron and a soft-focus close-up of his tools. Suddenly we want to know more about the people who made our handbag/jeans/whisky: we don't want products, but stories. When I wrote about this last year I called it "craft fetishism". But the objects in this book are the opposite. Not made to seduce, they possess none of the glamour of the master craftsman's finish ...



See also my recent comments on Maker Faire - [\[Link\]](#)