

Rapid River Magazine

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BOOKS & AUTHORS

HUMOR IN CRAFT

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Humor in Craft, written by Brigitte Martin

review by Marcianne Miller

I received this look-at-me-size gallery book months ago but waited until now to review it because I think it would make a perfect holiday gift. In this city of artists, craftspeople and lovers of all creative media, not to mention the huge number of folks who are just downright funny, this beautiful award-winning book, *Humor in Craft*, would find many appreciative coffee tables upon which to rest.

In the field of craft books, there are many lovely books, but most of them are organized by media (i.e. ceramics or gourds) or function (i.e. jewelry or candles). Some are geared toward specialist markets, such as weaving with exotic wools or Appalachian basketry. Such books appeal to craft people and fans in those specific fields, but rarely attract others. A book with a theme, however, particularly one as enjoyable as humor, goes beyond narrow niches and makes the work shown in the book accessible to a wider readership.

As a former craft book editor/writer myself, I thought *Humor in Craft* was a brilliant concept. I was thrilled to discover that it was also an exquisitely planned and produced book, all the more delightful

because it's the debut book of a new writer.

Brigitte Martin is a jewelry maker and gallery owner in Pittsburgh, PA and the creator and editor of *crafthaus*, a social network for professional craft artists world wide. Her author photo at the beginning of the book immediately sets the tone for the whole volume. She's lounging imperiously on a found chair, renovated with red fabric and bottle caps (*Pharoah's Chair*, by the artist Mr. Imagination, 2003). She has a hilarious regal look on her face. "Yes, I'm totally ludicrous," she seems to say. "We're serious artists but we don't have to take ourselves seriously. Lighten up, everybody! "It was an invitation I couldn't resist.

My favorite image in the book is the goofy mug on the cover. It makes me laugh just to imagine drinking my coffee every morning from it. "Part of what I love about being an artist," says Houston artist Joseph Kishell, "is using my art to entertain people."

Craft artists like to play with words as well as images. I didn't really get the humor of the clay donut piece until I saw the title, *Balanced Diet*, and then I laughed out loud—someone discovered my favorite diet—the same number of donuts on alternate days. "Sometimes we take food a little too seriously," says Missouri-born ceramicist, Alice Abrams.

I love wearing my craft purchases, especially if they're humorous. San Francisco recycling artist, Emiko Oye, made her fit-for-a-princess "ceremonial jewels" neckpiece from Lego pieces. She calls it a 21st century take on Lalique's *Necklace with Insect Women and Black Swans*.

How much fun it would be to walk into a room wearing an announcement of what my mood was. "I challenge the viewer to look at the world with a grin," says Seattle jewelry maker, Lori Bugaj. "It is my goal to have my work bring a smile to your face."

Humor in Craft contains the work of 200+ craft artists, mostly Americans, but a few from Europe and Asia as well. The media are traditional, non-traditional, new, and recycled. The humor is in-your face, or subtle. It runs the gamut from child-like to sophisticated, R-rated, to political, an incredible range of humor that was an amazing feat to collect in one volume. Every page of this book is a treat.

Bottom-line: A terrific gift for any craft person or art lover.

Purchase *Humor in Craft* online at www.humorincraft.com. For more information on author Brigitte Martin, visit www.crafthouse.ning.com.

Humor in Craft, written by Brigitte Martin; Schiffer Publishing, Ltd. 2012; hardback; 256, pp. \$50.

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