

The Postworker's Pocket Book

Manifesto edition

"The craftsman's world does indeed carry within itself all the elements of wider living."

Chips from the Chisel in the Woodworker, March 1955

WORKER

VOL. LIX. N°. 745.

DECEMBER

ONE



ALGORITHMICALLY GENERATED WOOD FORMS

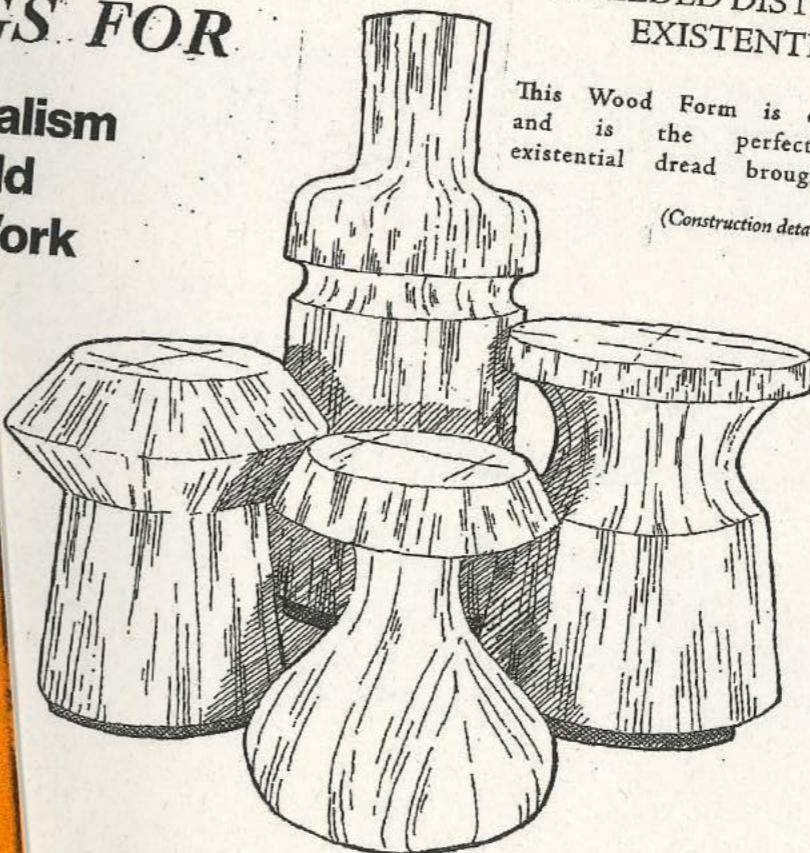
A NEEDED DISTRACTION FROM
EXISTENTIAL DREAD

This Wood Form is of simple construction
and is the perfect remedy for the
existential dread brought on by post-work

(Construction details on page 12)

GS FOR

italism
World
Work



Features this month

VISIT TO THE WOODTURNERS ASSOCIATION : A LEISURE MANIFESTO
EXPERIMENTAL SCIENCE FICTION AS CRACK MAKING MACHINES
AUTOMATION :: ALGORITHMICALLY GENERATED WOOD FORMS

WORKER



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THINGS FOR

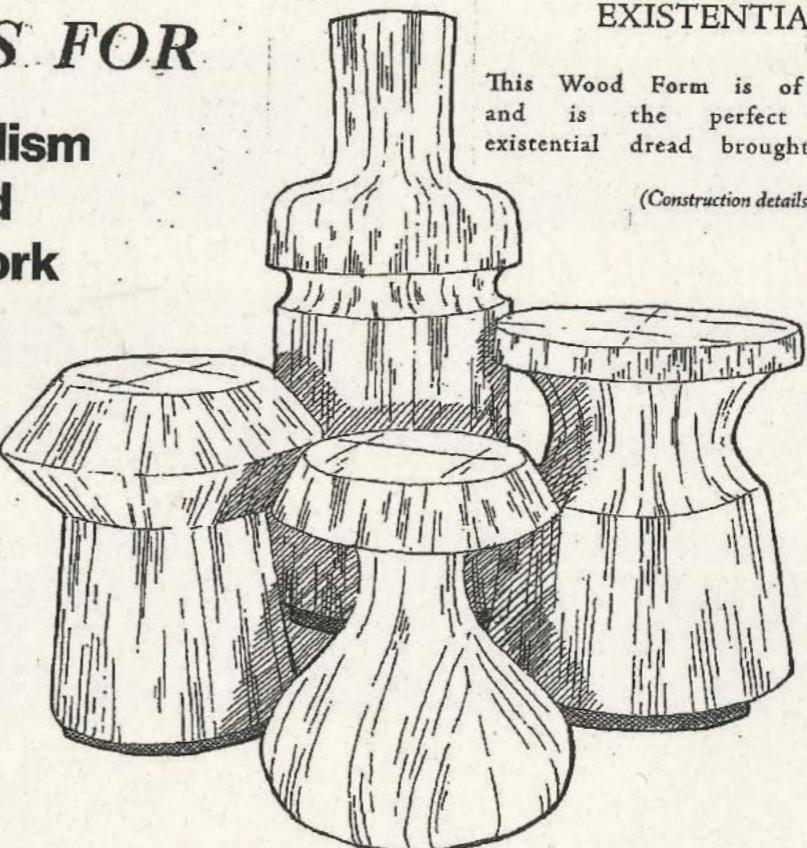
**Postcapitalism
and a World
Without Work**

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WOODWORKER

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WOODWORK BECOMES GOOD WORK

EXPERIMENTAL SCIENCE FICTIONS AS CRACK MAKING MACHINES

"Capital's economic science fictions cannot simply be opposed; they need to be countered by economic science fictions that exert pressure on capital's current monopolisation of possible realities. The development of economic science fictions would constitute a form of indirect action without which hegemonic struggle cannot hope to be successful. It is easy to be daunted by the seeming scale of this challenge - come up with a fully functioning blueprint for a post-capitalist society, or capitalism will rule forever! But we shouldn't be forced into silence by this false opposition. It is not a single-total vision that is required but a multiplicity of alternative perspectives, each potentially opening up a crack into another world. The injunction to produce fictions implies an open and experimental spirit, a certain loosening up of the heavy responsibility associated with the generation of determinate political programmes. Yet fictions can be engines for the development of future policy. They can be machines for designing the future, and fictions about what, say, a new housing, healthcare or transport system might look like inevitably also entail imagining what kind of society could house and facilitate these developments." (Fisher in Davies, 2018, p. xiii)

The project starts here, out of the necessity for science fiction, that dream beyond the present capitalist reality. This particular science fiction is constructed from the dreams embodied in 1950's *Woodworker* magazines and their writing on leisure, work and their thoughts about what constitutes a good life. The 1950's represent a time in our history, where the middle class was growing and with it leisure time and as such the *Woodworker* can be read as one narrative of how this leisure time should be spent. These are collided with the political project of post-work and their call for *universal basic income*, full automation and ultimately an expansion of leisure time. The fiction is developed and explored in the context of a small woodturners' association in the midlands. The result is something in between a research paper, a socialist pamphlet, a woodworking magazine and a science fiction giving a glimpse of another future, a post-work future.

The aim is by no means to construct a blueprint for what a post-work future should be. Instead the project embraces the open and experimental spirit that Fisher calls for. The goal is not to construct a utopia but to humbly remind us to keep searching. At the same time it tries to capture the absurdity of thinking outside the current capitalist reality. My hope is that in reading this you'll enter a space where you sway back and forth from utopia to dystopia. Between the hope of something else and the fear that that something might not at all be something that we want in the end. I agree with Srnicek and Williams in that "At their best, utopias include tensions and dynamism within themselves, rather than presenting a static image of a perfected society." (2015, p. 139). Consider this an attempt at constructing such a dynamic image of another reality with all its shortcomings and tensions.

It is important to note where this fiction plays out. It does not take place in a galaxy far far away or in the distant of future of an Ian M. Banks novel. It departs from the dominating urban centricity of most visions of the future as well as the common aesthetic of speculative design that all too often look like dystopian movie props designed by Apple. Instead it can maybe better be described as countryside speculation. This is not some fancy new piece of technology that can be bought or sold. It is a future that can only be made.

HAVE you ever tried your hand at *original* design? That is, sat down at a drawing board with a blank sheet of paper pinned to it, and attempted to put down on it something no man has ever seen before? If you have tried it and found the result discouraging you need not be unduly upset about it.

Most people find it impossible to get away from what they are familiar with already; and quite a lot cannot see anything except what is already in the room with them.

Many men pass through the throes of attempted creation, and some are more successful in the result than others. But most inexperienced men come to admit that the gift of fine design does not lie in them, and they turn with some little relief to the safer channels which others have dug out for them.

What is the man in the street to do about it? Well first there are the two smart twins, novelty and fashion.

Quite pleasant when you don't have to live with them all the time, but they have a habit of becoming old-fashioned very quickly. As a rule they don't last long and soon you become almost ashamed of them. Sudden changes are generally suspect, especially when they are bizarre.

Here is one suggestion. Consider whether this or that idea has come along purely in novelty or as the result of some practical consideration. If it is the latter it is generally safe, for design in any period is influenced more by events and circumstances than is generally realised. It may be the development of a new material, such as plywood, chipboard, or plastic sheet; a change in the laws of the country, prohibiting the import of this substance, or allowing that; the invention of a new glue with special properties; the production of a new machine; or what will you.

Design which is the result of events like this seem somehow to be anchored to something solid. There may be mistakes, especially at the start, but men seem more at home when dealing with practical things, and more inclined to avoid the livelier flights of fancy and the dangers that go with it. At any rate, the man who does not feel himself naturally equipped as a designer will generally do well to follow either the conventional work of past generations, or the more restrained efforts of modern design.

All told, then, it is quite a good idea to remember the advice of Dr. Primrose in *The Vicar of Wakefield*, who chose his wife on account of her good wearing qualities. Possibly it will not give you the immediate thrill that something rather more flamboyant would have done, but in the long run you will be the better pleased.

Day 1

INTRODUCTION

AUTOMATOR, LIBERATOR, SUBJUGATOR

SINCE the days when the first hunter devised the first hunting knife, people have always shown themselves eager to possess anything that had a rarity value, something a man had made or, having discovered, had wrought upon with such skill that it became infinitely desirable. The puzzle of it is that today so many men accept passively the idea that they should have nothing in their own homes of rarity value, forgetting that in their own two hands they have the power of making, and that which they make will be of necessity unique.

'At every point he is able to consult his own wishes so that, in the finish, this is no mere chattel turned out by a machine like hundreds of others, but something unique and personal to himself.'

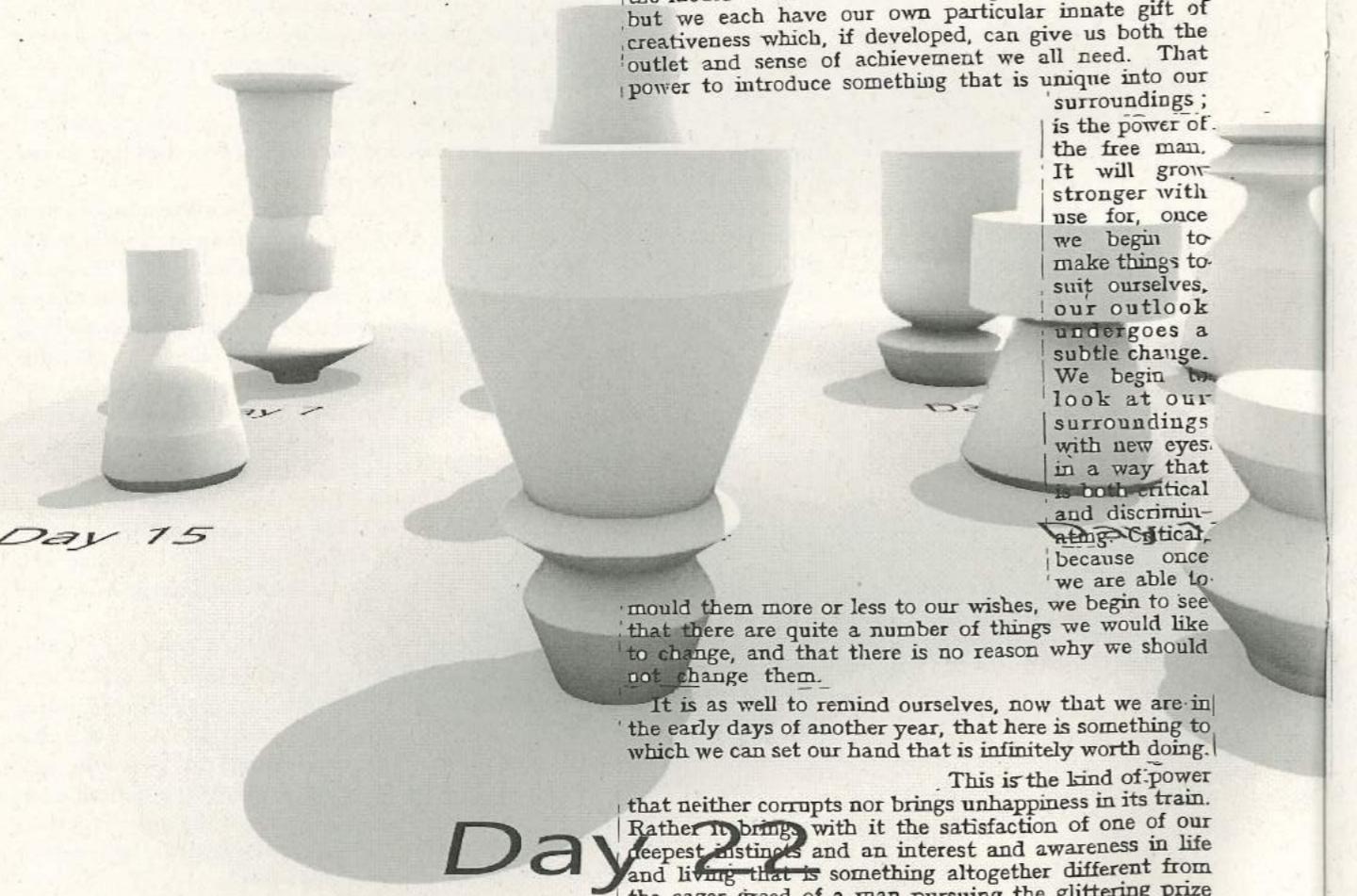
We are not all cast in the mould of elder statesmen and great leaders of men, but we each have our own particular innate gift of creativeness which, if developed, can give us both the outlet and sense of achievement we all need. That power to introduce something that is unique into our surroundings ;

is the power of the free man. It will grow stronger with use for, once we begin to make things to suit ourselves, our outlook undergoes a subtle change. We begin to look at our surroundings with new eyes in a way that is both critical and discriminating.

because once we are able to mould them more or less to our wishes, we begin to see that there are quite a number of things we would like to change, and that there is no reason why we should not change them.

It is as well to remind ourselves, now that we are in the early days of another year, that here is something to which we can set our hand that is infinitely worth doing.

This is the kind of power that neither corrupts nor brings unhappiness in its train. Rather it brings with it the satisfaction of one of our deepest instincts and an interest and awareness in life and living that is something altogether different from the eager greed of a man pursuing the glittering prize which the world calls power. For indeed, it is power over himself which the craftsman knows and which has adorned the face of the earth with the lovely monuments of his skill. (717)



Estimates vary greatly, but between 47 to 80 per cent of current jobs are likely to be automatable in the next two decades (Elliott, 2014; European Commission, 2018). One does not have to look far to see the media pushing their usual fear mongering doomsdays prophecies: "According to a new survey, a quarter of the workforce think their job won't be needed in future." (Cooper, 2018). And it's not just workers being paranoid of new technology. Their fears are backed up by a *Bank of England* report. Here "Andy Haldane, the bank's chief economist, said "automation posed a risk to almost half those employed in the UK and that a "third machine age" would hollow out the labour market, widening the gap between rich and poor." (Andy Haldane in Elliott, 2018).

In response, the group who could broadly be called *left-accelerationists* propose that the very same technology could be repurposed for socially beneficial and emancipatory ends. One of the boldest and maybe also most visionary inputs come from Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams in their manifesto for life after capitalism - *Inventing the Future* (2015). They argue for a completely automated world, combined with *universal basic income* as a way to liberate humanity from enforced drudgery freeing people from employment that are no longer realistic.

Between the two, it becomes possible to see the outline of the two extreme reactions to the rising possibility/threat of automation. At one end a dystopian vision of inequality brought on by automation, and on the other the utopian emancipation at the hands of the very same technology. The crux of the issue can be summed up in two simple questions: What do you do and what do you make? If your answers to those questions are your job and your salary - then of course automation is no less than a threat to your very existence. It goes to show how deeply ingrained the logic installed by the capitalist business ontology is in all of us. As Mark Fisher thought us with his concept of *capitalist realism*, capitalism exists as "[...] a pervasive atmosphere, conditioning not only the production of culture but also the regulation of work and education, and acting as a kind of invisible barrier constraining thought and action." (Fisher, 2010, p.16). We, long time inhabitants of capitalist realism serving our tours of service in the labour market, have lost our ability to imagine any other way of being. But it's a flawed logic that is increasingly

proving incapable of sustaining itself. An unsustainability that is only going to become more apparent as jobs are going to be automatable in the future.

I hope that the timeliness of this project have been made clear by now. We're standing at a critical junction where we are faced with a decision between fighting automation or embracing, seizing and reconfiguring automation to serve socially beneficial and emancipatory ends. Fighting automation seems like a futile route where one of the few possibilities afforded to us would be to ensure that we don't make too much of a fuss, like unionising and demanding respectable labour conditions, and to be cheaper than our robot counterparts.

This narrative plays out in Amazon's "fulfillment centers" around the world. They have the technology to automate, but as long as they can treat humans like robots then that is more appealing to their spreadsheet logic.

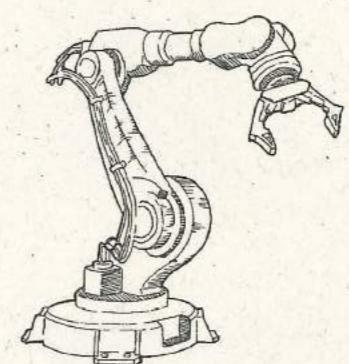
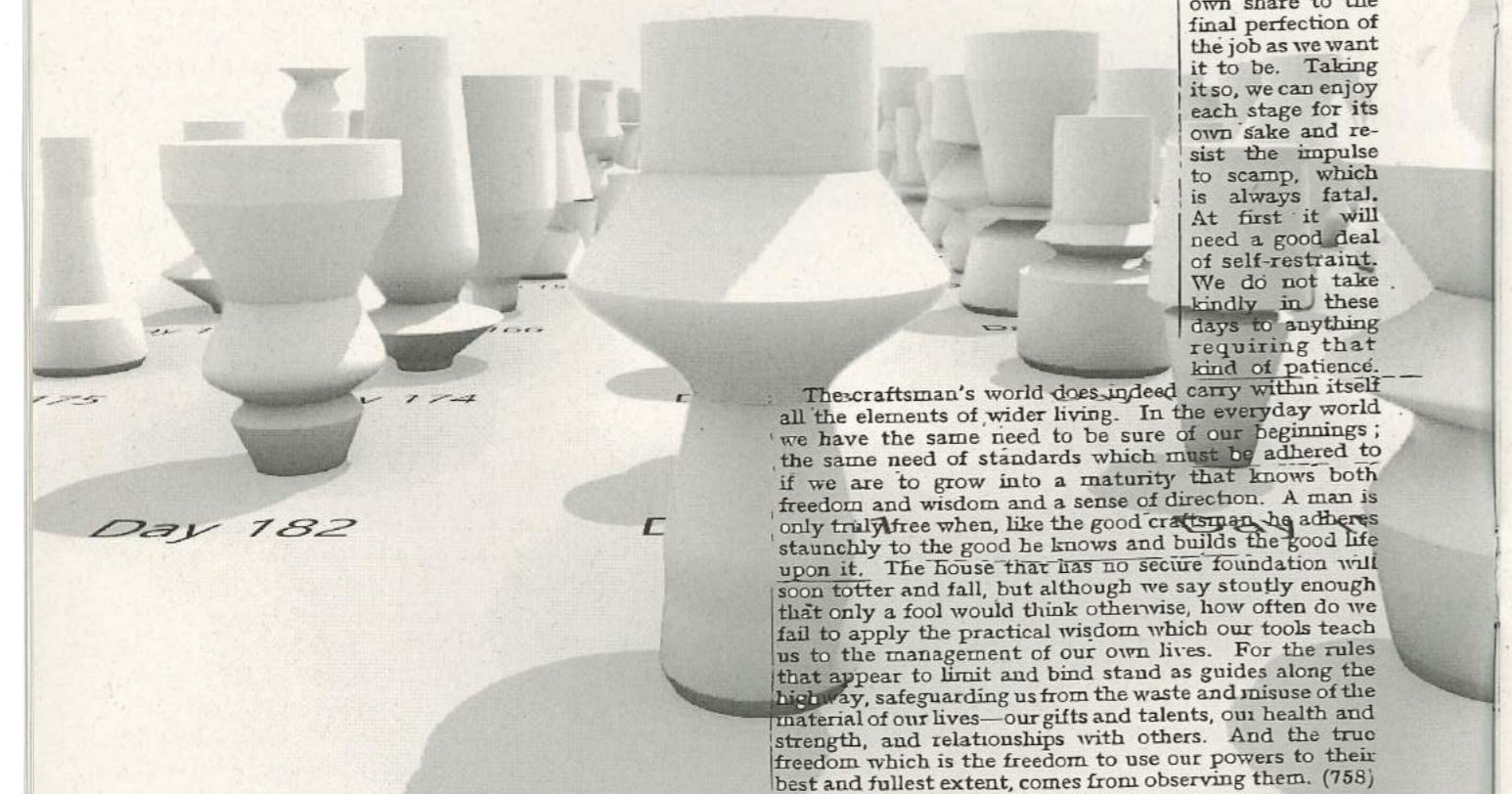


FIG. 1. INDUSTRIAL ROBOT
HARBRINGER OF DOOM OR EMANCIPATOR?

into a world of possibilities outside its narrow constraints. One particular enclave, the woodturners' association, serve as the departure point for a journey into a post-work reality and the objects that inhabit it with all their wonders, flaws and shortcomings. Here we see a different set of answers to the questions: What do you do and what do you make?

It becomes possible to see the contours of the utopian luxury of being able to act outside the narrow space of possibility offered by the capitalist *business ontology* (Fisher, 2010) that demand that every aspect of life must be validated in relation to worth. However, the dystopia of existential dread becomes visible too, brought on by the extreme futility of doing without a purpose in the sense we have all be made to think that things need a purpose. But most importantly the grey area between the two extremes, where we are unburdened by the crushing weight of work, but struggle to find things to take its place. Just because waged work disappears, it does not mean that a magical utopia will take its place. Therefore this project is about revealing that our current way of being is not neutral, it's designed and can therefore be redesigned.



Day 182

Day 189

THE modern craftsman is in a far happier state than the modern painter or sculptor, so much of whose work seems to have lost touch with reality. He is tied inexorably to facts.

And it is good for us to be so tethered. It is the world for which and in which we are working, whose needs we share and to whose ideas

we have it in our power to make some contribution. But only if we are willing to work within the framework it imposes. The way

of experience is to hold firmly to the knowledge that the end is in the beginning, and that each stage contributes its own share to the final perfection of the job as we want it to be. Taking it so, we can enjoy each stage for its own sake and resist the impulse to scamp, which is always fatal. At first it will need a good deal of self-restraint. We do not take kindly in these days to anything requiring that kind of patience.

The craftsman's world does indeed carry within itself all the elements of wider living. In the everyday world we have the same need to be sure of our beginnings; the same need of standards which must be adhered to if we are to grow into a maturity that knows both freedom and wisdom and a sense of direction. A man is only truly free when, like the good craftsman, he adheres staunchly to the good he knows and builds the good life upon it. The house that has no secure foundation will soon totter and fall, but although we say stoutly enough that only a fool would think otherwise, how often do we fail to apply the practical wisdom which our tools teach us to the management of our own lives. For the rules that appear to limit and bind stand as guides along the highway, safeguarding us from the waste and misuse of the material of our lives—our gifts and talents, our health and strength, and relationships with others. And the true freedom which is the freedom to use our powers to their best and fullest extent, comes from observing them. (758)

CHIPS FROM THE CHISEL A LEISURE MANIFESTO



"The craftsman's world does indeed carry within itself all the elements of wider living."

(Chips From the Chisel in the Woodworker, March 1955, p. 45)



FIG. 1. ALSO AVAILABLE AS THE
POSTWORKER'S POCKET BOOK
- A LEISURE MANIFESTO FOR
THE POST-WORKER

Chips From the Chisel was a segment in the *Woodworker* magazine around the 1950's. Each segment deals with a particular theme that while always unfolded through the rhetoric of craft, deals with themes much bigger than tool sharpening or how to build a solid foundation for your garden shed. When extracted from its original context of hobbyist craftsmanship the segments in parts begin to read almost like a manifesto for leisure and meaning making outside work. A suiting departure point for an exploration into meaning and doing beyond the confines of capitalist realism.

Throughout the publication fragments sourced from the segments featured in 1955 are extracted, remixed and collaged into a leisure manifesto. Each segment was chosen from passages where the writing transgress craft and begins to become something one could describe as wisdom or philosophy. These are juxtaposed with the growing body of post-work forms.

VISIT TO

MID-STAFFS WOODTURNERS ASSOCIATION

Woodturning associations can be found dotted around most areas of the countryside in Great Britain. From the North Highland Woodturning Association in the far north to the Cornwall Association of Woodturners on the southern tip of the island. Right in the middle, in the heart of the midlands, we find the Mid Staffs Woodturners Association.

Enclave, Island, Miniture Utopia

"Utopian thought privileges the role of enclaves and islands, cut off from the mainstream, thereby gaining or offering a glimpse of an alternative future for the whole." (Davies, 2018, p. 17)



FIG. 1. MEMBERS GATHERED FOR THE MONTHLY DEMONSTRATION.

My initial reason for coming to the midlands in the first place had little to do with craft or woodturning. I was there due to my interest in automation and labour conditions and this particular village is home to one of Amazon's monolithic "fulfillment centers", a site of many narratives around labour and automation. However, my interest was quickly diverted to a more unlikely place. Through sheer happenstance I came upon the local woodturners' association. After a brief correspondence I was invited to their monthly meeting. I arrived at the supplied address and found the Etchinghill Village Hall. The village hall was built in 1946 as a community hub for the village. It's an unassuming little red brick building that opens up into a main hall and an adjoining kitchen. Indeed a very different place than the giant Amazon warehouse I visited earlier.

At the day when I arrived at the village hall, I'm greeted by a both strange and familiar sight. The room was filled with rows of chairs, all facing towards a lathe, the piece of machinery used for woodturning. The lathe was accompanied by a strange setup equal parts fine craftsmanship and macgyveresque ingenuity. A common CCTV camera had been jury-rigged together with an elaborate mounting rig to provide an unobstructed view of the action on the lathe. The feed from the camera was manipulated by one of the members acting as a technician on a small set of controls. The resulting image was projected onto a screen. That allowed everyone in

the room a comfortable zoomed in view of the work at hand. The setup gave me associations of one of those craft tv-shows filmed before a live studio audience.

I was greeted by the chairperson of the association and explained that the structure of the monthly meeting was, as it always was, that a visiting craftsman would perform a demonstration for the association. Today's demonstration would be of the production of a intricate candlestick.

I found my seat and a workwear clad man stepped up to the lathe and the demonstration started. The association to a tv-show was only strengthen as the demonstration got under way. I got the distinct feeling that I was in the audience to a marvelous piece of slow TV. Hours went on as lumps of wood began to take on the shape of the finished piece we were shown in the beginning. Along the way the demonstrator shared tips and tricks for turning accompanied by anecdotes and small stories. An hour into the demonstration I felt like I was in a trance, watching the skilled hands manipulating the selection of tools to whittle away at the wood.

In the middle of the evening, we had a break for tea and biscuits. This allowed me the opportunity to talk with the members of the association and to see the various small projects that had been brought along for display. The membership is primarily made up of retired men with the single exception being their chairperson Dawn. In some sense these people are living post-work in the most literal interpretation as they are

now after work and this association is what they have chosen to spend their leisure time on. In conversation with members I was even told that some of them are members of multiple associations, because the one monthly meeting is not enough for them.



FIG. 1. DEMONSTRATOR WORKING ON LATHE

In addition to the main attraction, the demonstration, each meeting also features work from the members displayed around the room on small tables. When I looked at the work displayed and the various samples around the room I was struck by how the turners seem less concerned with functionality or even necessarily aesthetics. Every item was beautifully made to a lovely finish and all had a functionality attached to them. A bowl, a candlestick or a goblet, but none of them were necessarily made to be used. They are instead sites of play where the woodworkers try their skills against the wood but most importantly they are sources of joy. In conversation with the members I'm told that the items are seldom sold or commodified and many are not original designs. They are copies of other designs but for their creator the originality of the object is not the goal and many of the members state that they could not device their own designs, but also that they have no need for it. What we see here is Homo Faber (Bergson, 2008), Man the Maker, and Homo Ludens (Huizinga, 2016), humans defined as playful creatures, meeting each other outside the dualistic space

they normally inhabit. It is a mode of production that can be argued to be only tentatively linked to the reproduction of capitalism through its reliance on raw materials and its wider infrastructures.

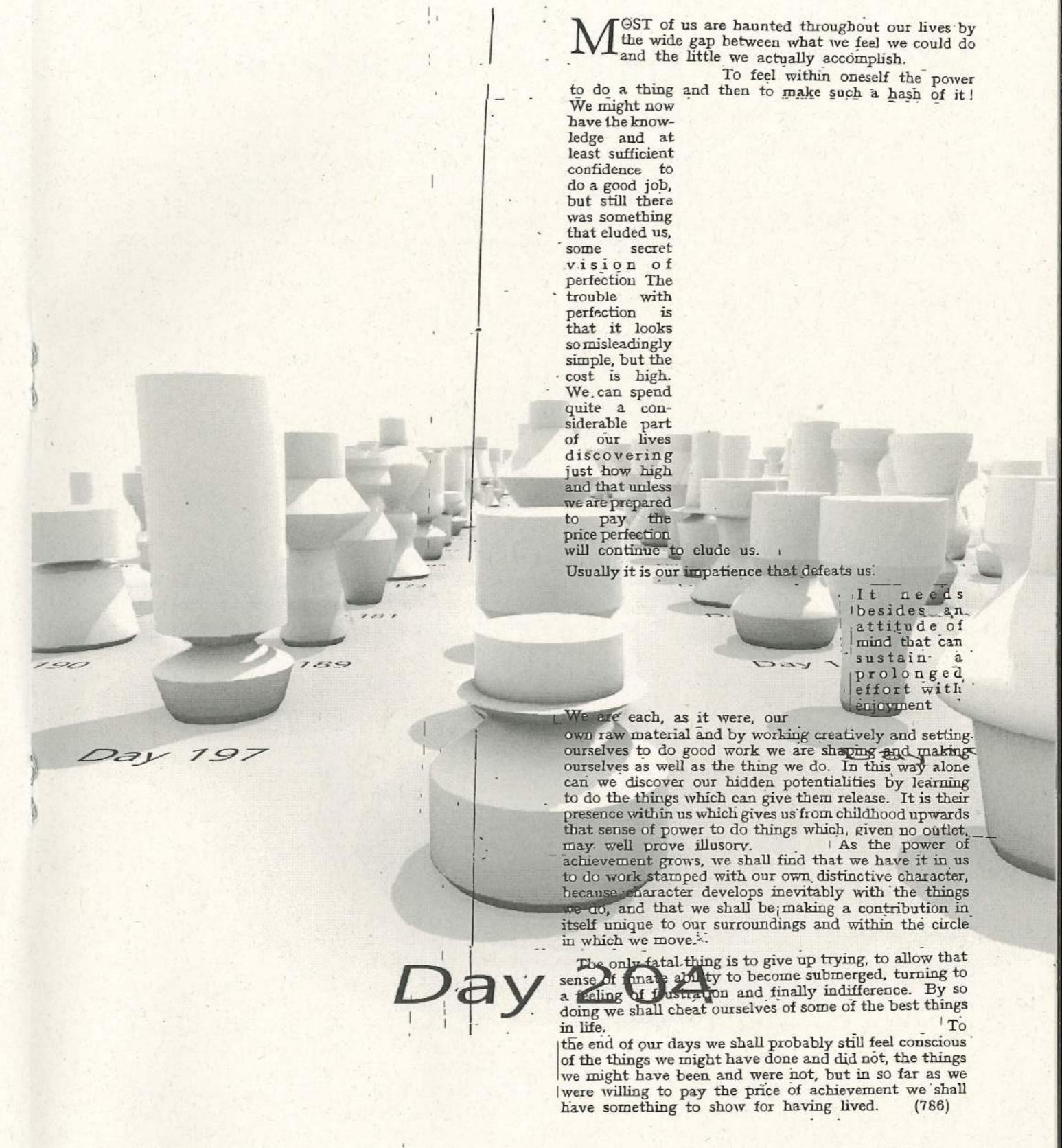
With our bellies lined with tea and biscuits we returned to our seats for the second half of the demonstration. I was no less entertained throughout this part. It's hard to describe because nothing much happened, we sat in our chairs and looked at the demonstrator and listened to his explanations and stories.

As the evening came to its end the demonstrator had finished the first half of the candlestick and would return next month to finish the other half. After the demonstration we all joined in putting away the chairs and packing down. I said my goodbyes and exchanged contact information with a few of the members. As I was leaving I was struck by the loving and friendly community tied together through their love of woodturning.

I was thinking to myself that I had found a Miniature Utopia that stood in such stark contrast to my earlier visit to the Amazon fulfilment center. I couldn't help but think that I had found a tiny island full of the kinds of activities we need to understand if we want to dream of a postcapitalist and post-work future.

The skeptical reader might accuse me of reading an awful lot into a group of retirees meeting around woodturning in a small village hall. The content would likely not satisfy the bloodlust of any proper revolutionary and doesn't spell the imminent demise of capitalism in any way. In a certain way it could be read as the very localism Srnicek and Williams critique. However, this would be mistaken. What I see in the small association is an enclave that presents itself as a crack in capitalist realism offering a glimpse of another mode of being. It is not romanticising the past or craft, it is using it as a lever for critical thinking.

In the next segment I attempt to peer through this crack, materialising it into an object or the process of an object that allows us to probe the questions of a post-work future.



MOST of us are haunted throughout our lives by the wide gap between what we feel we could do and the little we actually accomplish.

To feel within oneself the power to do a thing and then to make such a hash of it!

We might now have the knowledge and at least sufficient confidence to do a good job, but still there was something that eluded us, some secret vision of perfection. The trouble with perfection is that it looks so misleadingly simple, but the cost is high. We can spend quite a considerable part of our lives discovering just how high and that unless we are prepared to pay the price perfection will continue to elude us.

Usually it is our impatience that defeats us.

It needs besides an attitude of mind that can sustain a prolonged effort with enjoyment

We are each, as it were, our own raw material and by working creatively and setting ourselves to do good work we are shaping and making ourselves as well as the thing we do. In this way alone can we discover our hidden potentialities by learning to do the things which can give them release. It is their presence within us which gives us from childhood upwards that sense of power to do things which, given no outlet, may well prove illusory. As the power of achievement grows, we shall find that we have it in us to do work stamped with our own distinctive character, because character develops inevitably with the things we do, and that we shall be making a contribution in itself unique to our surroundings and within the circle in which we move.

The only fatal thing is to give up trying, to allow that sense of innate ability to become submerged, turning to a feeling of frustration and finally indifference. By so doing we shall cheat ourselves of some of the best things in life.

To the end of our days we shall probably still feel conscious of the things we might have done and did not, the things we might have been and were not, but in so far as we were willing to pay the price of achievement we shall have something to show for having lived. (786)

POST-WORK OBJECT

ALGORITHMICALLY GENERATED WOOD FORMS

These wood forms are of simple construction and is the perfect remedy for the existential dread brought on by post-work. It is made from the most readily available stock: 2x2 construction pine. The individual pieces are joined using cascamite resin glue, chosen for its long open time and for its durability and hardness. The imperfections of the stock result in large glue lines. These are turned into a feature by coloring in the cascamite with pink pigment. This creates a low cost blank ideal for woodturning. The template for the forms are generated by a Grasshopper algorithm running in Rhino.



FIG. 1. SELECTION OF FORMS

POST-WORK OBJECT

An exploration of how to design and give an aesthetic to a form of production that has no functionality. The aim is to probe and reveal the logic of a post-work future through the aesthetic of the post-work object. An artifact without a function within the business ontology installed by capitalism.

These wood forms are the result of research into existing woodturning practices. In a sense they are a distillation of the objects experienced in the woodturners association. At first this concept might seem abstract and sisyphean to the reader, but in the face of the implementation of universal basic income and the rise of automation we have to open our minds to making that goes beyond functionality. With increased leisure time our homes and houses would soon be filled with every possible expression of our desire to make. As we're all

aware our desire to craft goes well beyond functionality, the post-worker's pocket book makes this much clear. These forms allow you to reap the pleasure of craft without the heavy burden of functionality and original design.

The production of the forms are simple. Nine lengths of 2x2 stock is assembled into a turning blank bound by cascomite resin glue colored with pigments. The blank can then be mounted on most lathes and shaped using the usual array of woodturning tools.

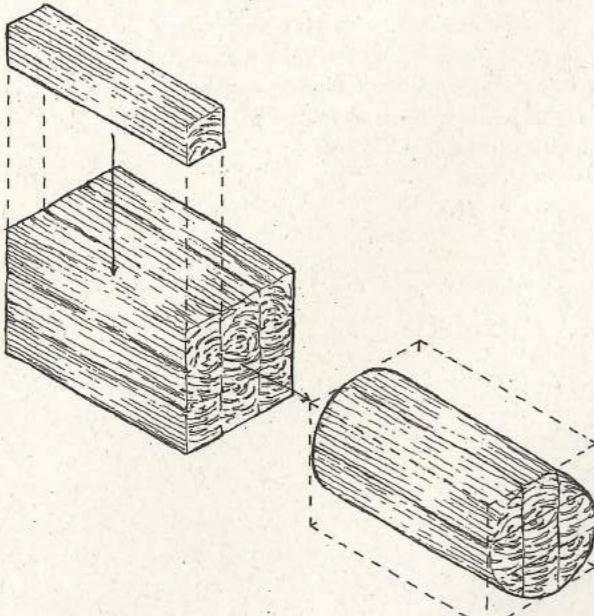


FIG. 2. CREATION OF BLANKS FROM 2x2 STOCK

To create the blank lengths of 2x2 are cut to measure. Each segment is laid out in a three by three grid with the endgrain facing the middle to avoid unintended splitting when the wood expands and contracts. The joining surfaces are then covered in cascomite, clamped and left to dry overnight.

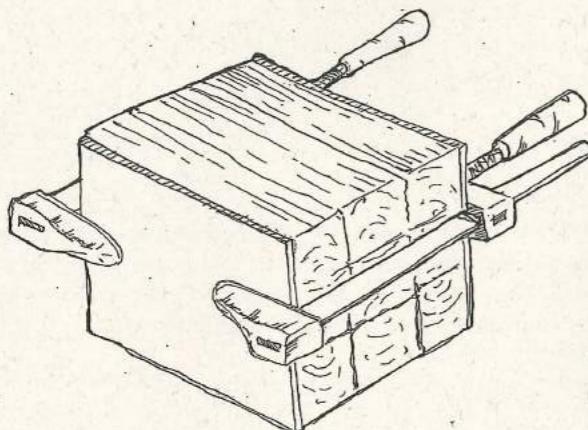


FIG. 3. CLAMPING USING SCRAP BOARD TO ENSURE A STABLE FIX

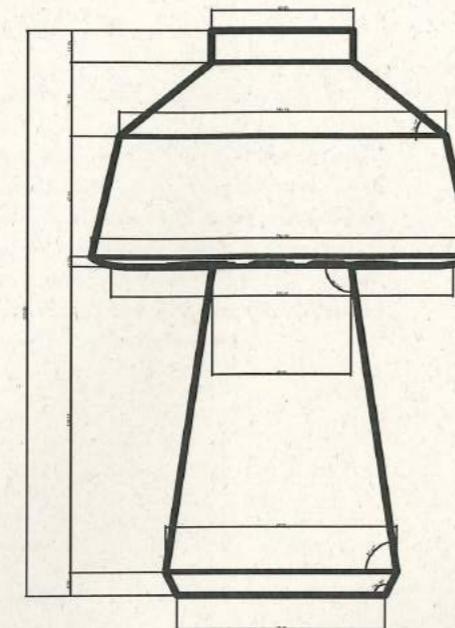


FIG. 4. EXPORTED FORM WITH MEASUREMENTS

Technology and advancements in production are no foreigner to woodworking, and these years the vanguard of advancement come from the power of computation. This have made our jobs automatable, however, these advancement should be embraced and utilized not only in industry but in our humble workshops. Just as it was the case when we experienced the transformation of our craft from one that was almost entirely hand-tool based to a time where machines were common, inexpensive and displaced the handplanes, chisels and backsaws. Therefore the forms are generated by an algorithm written in Grasshopper and run in the 3D modelling application Rhino. The algorithm is optimised for creating shapes that are turnable on a normal woodturning lathe. The forms are simply exported and used as a template. For this reason there is no end to the possible variations you can make. One could happily spend a lifetime exploring the endless array of forms.

COLORED CASCAMITE RESIN GLUE RECIPE

The following mixture provides a colored glue mixture appropriate for a 300mm long blank. Adjust mixture to fit the size of your intended blank. The mixture remain usable for three hours.

Ingredients:

Pigments	..	10 g
Cascamite resin powder	..	200 g
Water	..	90 g

Instructions:

1. Mix water and pigment.
2. Pour Cascamite into non matalic container.
3. Add water little by little while stirring.

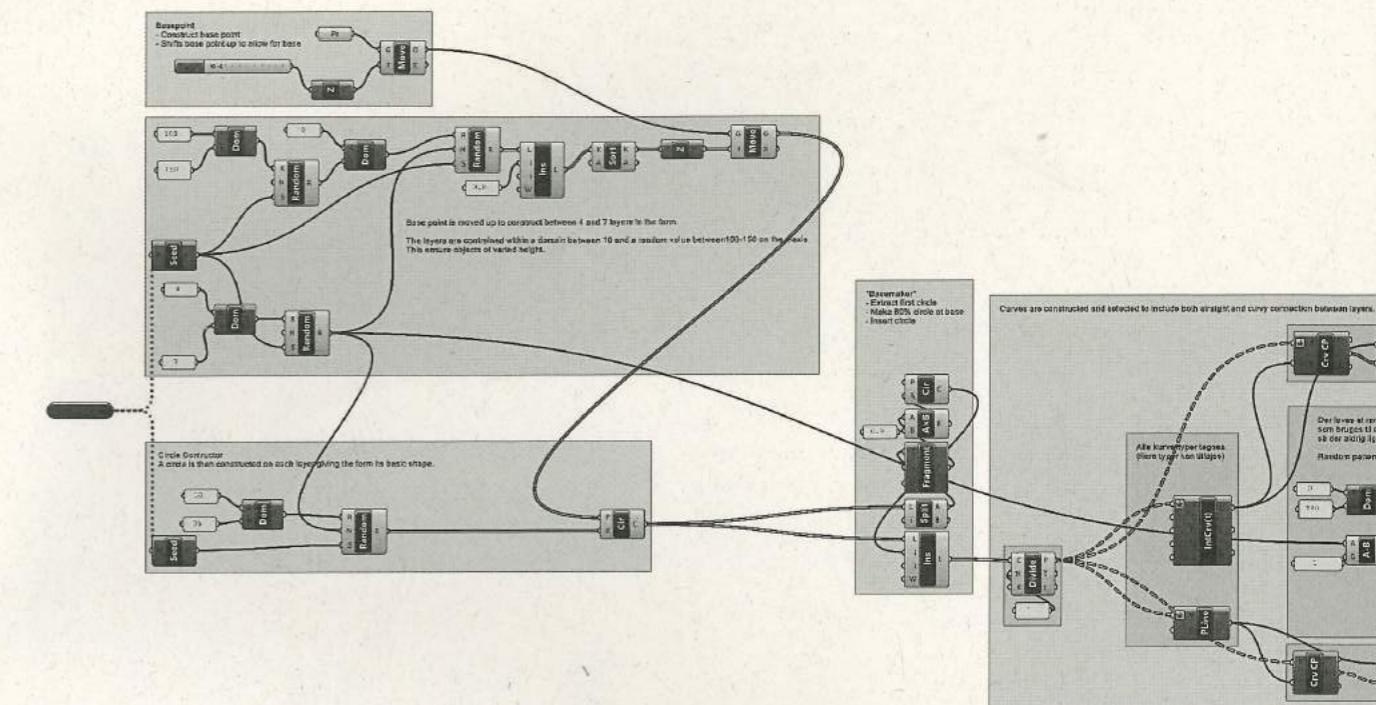
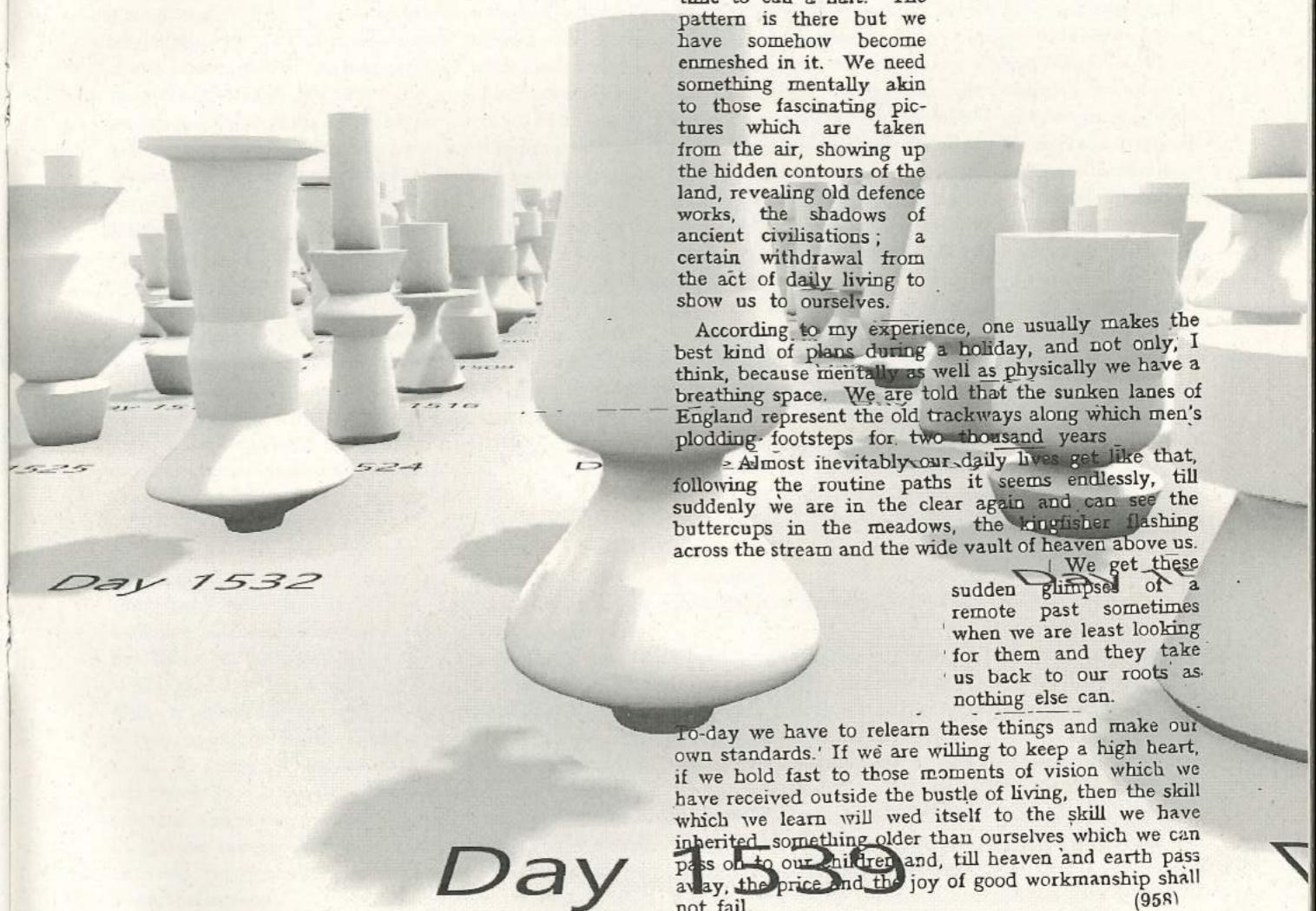
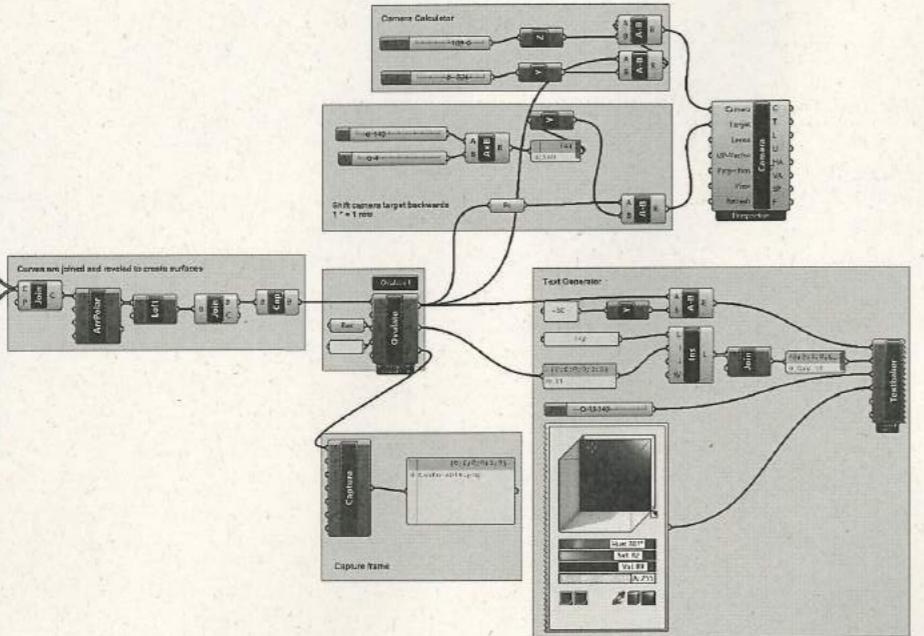
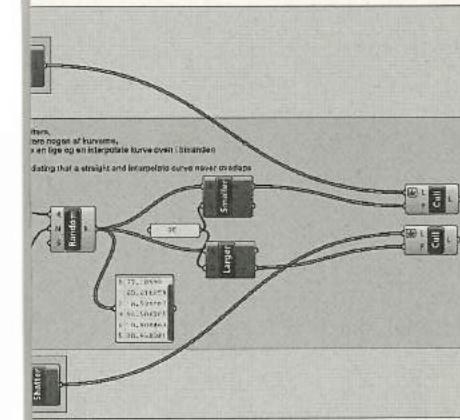


FIG. 1. GRASSHOPPER ALGORITHM.

FULL CODE CAN BE FOUND AND USED IN ACCORDANCE WITH GNU GENERAL PUBLIC LICENSE V3.0 ON:
[HTTPS://GITHUB.COM/SANDAHLCHRISTENSEN/WORKER.GIT](https://github.com/SandahlChristensen/WORKER.git)



DECEMBER

15

WORKER

WHAT WE SEE THROUGH THE CRACKS

The project came about in response to Srnicek and Williams manifesto - *Inventing the future*. Their manifesto is written from a bird's eye perspective leveraging facts and statistics as an effective tool to critique the present and chart a new course for society. However, this also means that it's somewhat removed from the human scale and the messiness of living. As such this project aims to build on their work by locating it out in the world, to explore what it means and feels like and not just if the columns in a spreadsheet adds up.

If Srnicek and Williams' *Inventing the future* is the manifesto for how to get to postcapitalism, then the goal of this project is the beginning of a manifesto for what we do when we arrive. While neoliberal capitalism presents itself as a fitting antagonist for the left-accelerationists, it's however less clear what vision of the future we're to reclaim and realise beyond broad strategic goals of universal basic income and full automation. If we're to dream of building a counter-hegemony, like the one Srnicek and Williams call for, we must understand what we fighting for, and not just what we're fighting against.

The primary tool for this is the experimental science fiction framed as countryside speculation. It locates an existing community and frames their activities as a resource in understanding what a post-work object could be. An object that has no functionality within business ontology. That however, does not mean that it has no functionality at all. In trying to describe what its functionality is, it then begins to open up cracks in our understanding of value, work and labour. It is an object whose sole functionality is to allow its maker to engage in woodturning. The object allows a different understanding of labour and work-ethic. The productions of any turned objects are, no doubt, laborious and demands a certain work-ethic from its producer. However, it is ultimately leisure oriented.

This particular understanding of leisure, labour and work-ethic is strongly embodied in the Chips From the Chisel segments found in the Woodworker. Work and work-ethic are central themes throughout the writing, but here we see it directed towards personal meaning making, a mode of being - and not towards capitalist reproduction. Reading through the collaged text it becomes possible to see a mode of being that does not rely on a job or a career for existence to make sense. It becomes possible to see automation, not as the thief that steals our jobs, but as the liberator that finally allows us to explore another mode of being.

Work and leisure are often seen as two opposing concepts. Of course it is not as simple as removing work and then we would be left with a utopia of sweet leisure. When we read the Woodworker, and its account of the joy and meaning that can be derived from laboring in the workshop, it is easy to forget

that an entire lifetime of this could soon prove to be futile and full of existential dread. After all there might be a finite limit to how many chairs, sheds and cabinets it can be meaningful to make. This is embodied in the algorithmically generated forms. They are the materialisation of an object that only serves to engage its user in leisure and makes away with functionality in any commodifiable sense. At the same time the never ending generation of forms is absurd and futile. They do not show us a magical utopia they signal a certain futility where post-work could begin to resemble work. It might be a naive and absurd idea than anyone would want to engage in a prolonged production of these. As a proposal for a utopian future it would be a failure. But then again maybe this proposal is no more absurd than the capitalist reality we are currently inhabiting.

However, the point was never for the objects to be such a proposal. They are probes that allows us to look underneath the surface, to zoom in beyond macro strategic goals and open it up to a new set of questions. Specifically what are we going to do if we're no longer working and what is supposed to take the place of jobs and careers as the dominating engine for meaning making. The answers are deeply individual, entangled and complex and i am less interested in providing answers than to facilitate the questions. From exposing the project to a varied audience from designers, artists, political economists and woodturners I feel confident saying that this project has been successful in directing debate towards these questions. Further research will be directed towards how these conversations can be captured and disseminated to allow a myriad of answers to coexist and intermingle.

The forms and the manifesto are best described as parafunctional objects that engage the viewer or user in a *value fiction* (Dunne and Gaver, 1997). "The viewer or imaginary user of a value fiction might ask herself why the values embodied in the proposal seem unreal and questions the social and cultural mechanism that define what is real in the first place." (Löwgren and Stolterman, 2007, p. 31). The reality, in which these objects exist, is a post-work reality. By trying to come to terms with why these seem unreal and absurdist, the aim is that the viewer begins to question the equally absurdist and unreal circumstances of their own existence within capitalist reality. How they themselves are conditioned and constrained by the invisible and pervasive atmosphere Fisher describes (2010). In this way they become caught in, not a value fiction, but a value friction.

The project looks through the cracks and there we find a radically different set of answers to the questions: What do you do and what do you make? It might not be better answers, but it emphasises the importance of those two questions for post-work.

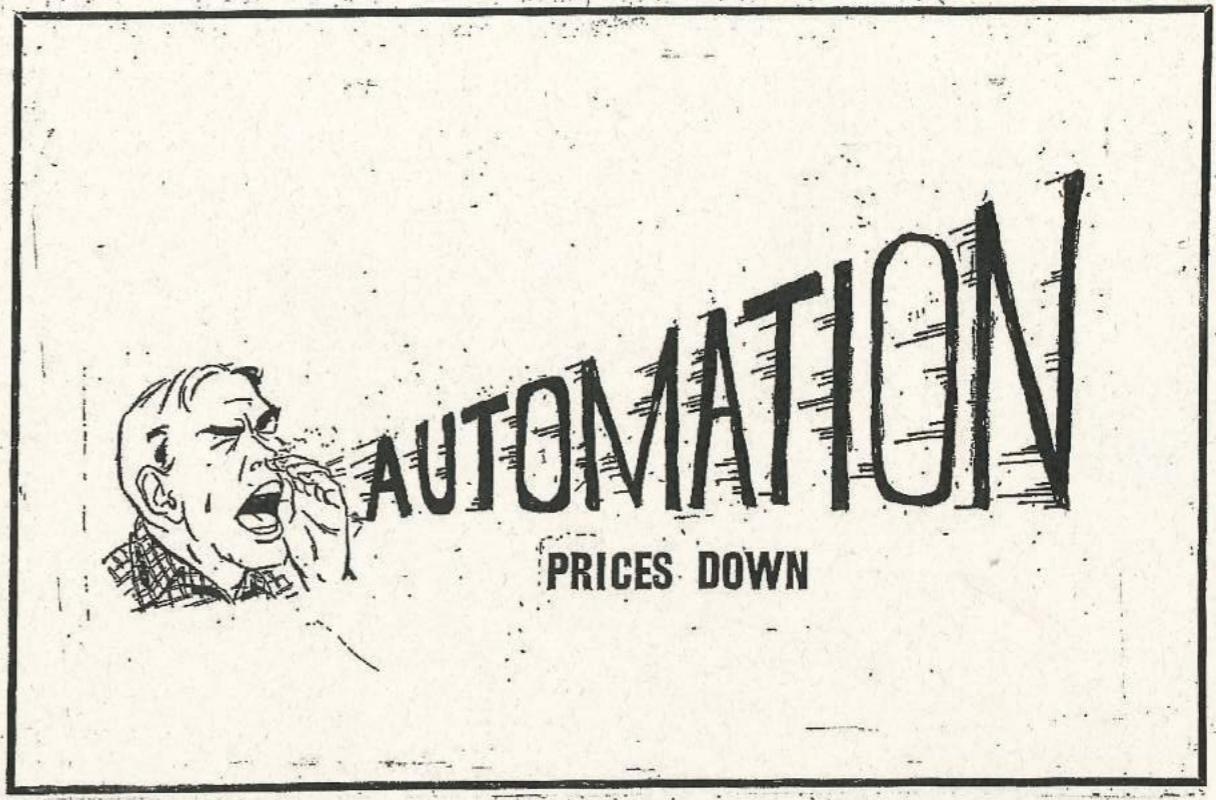
Thomas Sandahl Christensen
workermagazine@gmail.com

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*If SAMSON could have
tried his strength on
neoliberal capitalism*

... he would have torn out his hair in desperation.

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The Postworker's Pocket Book

Manifesto edition

"The craftsman's world does indeed carry within itself all the elements of wider living."

Chips from the Chisel in the Woodworker, March 1955

Chips From the Chisel was a segment in the *Woodworker* magazine around the 1950's. Each segment deals with a particular theme that while always unfolded through the rhetoric of craft, deals with themes much bigger than tool sharpening or how to build a solid foundation for your garden shed.

When extracted from its original context of hobbyist craftsmanship the segments in parts begin to read almost like a manifesto for leisure and meaning making outside work. A needed reference for any post-worker.

Throughout the publication fragments sourced from the segments featured in 1955 are extracted, remixed and collaged into a leisure manifesto. Each segment was chosen from passages where the writing transgresses craft and begin to become something one could describe as wisdom, or philosophy.

HAVE you ever tried your hand at *original* design? That is, sat down at a drawing board with a blank sheet of paper pinned to it, and attempted to put down on it something no man has ever seen before? If you have tried it and found the result discouraging you need not be unduly upset about it. Most people find it impossible to get away from what they are familiar with already; and quite a lot cannot see anything except what is already in the room with them.

Many men pass through the throes of attempted creation, and some are more successful in the result than others. But most inexperienced men come to admit that the gift of fine design does not lie in them, and they turn with some little relief to the safer chancels which others have dug out for them.

What is the man in the street to do about it? Well first there are the two smart twins, novelty and fashion. Quite pleasant when you don't have to live with them all the time, but they have a habit of becoming old-fashioned very quickly. As a rule they don't last long and soon you become almost ashamed of them. Sudden changes are generally suspect, especially when they are bizarre.

Here is one suggestion. Consider whether this or that idea comes along purely in novelty or as the result of some practical consideration. If it is the latter it is generally safe for design in any period is influenced more by events and circumstances than is generally realised. It may be the development of a new material, such as plywood, chipboard, or plastic sheet; a change in the laws of the country, prohibiting the import of this substance, or allowing that; the invention of a new glue with special properties; the production of a new machine; or what will you.

Design which is the result of events like this seem somehow to be anchored to something solid. There may be mistakes, especially at the start, but men seem more at home when dealing with practical things, and more inclined to avoid the livelier flights of fancy and the dangers that go with it. At any rate, the man who does not feel himself naturally equipped as a designer will generally do well to follow either the conventional work of past generations, or the more restrained efforts of modern design.

All told, then, it is quite a good idea to remember the advice of Dr. Primrose in *The Vicar of Wakefield*, who chose his wife on account of her good wearing qualities. Possibly it will not give you the immediate thrill that something rather more flamboyant would have done, but in the long run you will be the better pleased.

THE modern craftsman is in a far happier state than the modern painter or sculptor, so much of whose work seems to have lost touch with reality. He is tied inexorably to facts.

And it is good for us to be so tethered. It is the world for which and in which we are working, whose needs we share and to whose ideas

we have it in our power to make some contribution. But only if we are willing to work within the framework it imposes.

The way of experience is to hold firmly to the knowledge that the end is in the beginning, and that each stage contributes its own share to the final perfection of the job as we want it to be. Taking it so, we can enjoy each stage for its own sake and resist the impulse to scamp, which is always fatal. At first it will need a good deal of self-restraint. We do not take kindly in these days to anything requiring that kind of patience.

The craftsman's world does indeed carry within itself all the elements of wider living. In the everyday world we have the same need to be sure of our beginnings; the same need of standards which must be adhered to if we are to grow into a maturity that knows both freedom and wisdom and a sense of direction. A man is only truly free when, like the good craftsman, he adheres staunchly to the good he knows and builds the good life upon it. The house that has no secure foundation will soon totter and fall, but although we say stoutly enough that only a fool would think otherwise, how often do we fail to apply the practical wisdom which our tools teach us to the management of our own lives. For the rules that appear to limit and bind stand as guides along the highway, safeguarding us from the waste and misuse of the material of our lives—our gifts and talents, our health and strength, and relationships with others. And the true freedom which is the freedom to use our powers to their best and fullest extent, comes from observing them. (758)

MOST of us are haunted throughout our lives by the wide gap between what we feel we could do and the little we actually accomplish.

To feel within oneself the power to do a thing and then to make such a hash of it! We might now have the knowledge and at least sufficient confidence to do a good job, but still there was something that eluded us, some secret vision of perfection. The trouble with perfection is that it looks so misleadingly simple, but the cost is high. We can spend quite a considerable part of our lives discovering just how high and that unless we are prepared to pay the price perfection will continue to elude us.

Usually it is our impatience that defeats us.

It needs besides an attitude of mind that can sustain a prolonged effort with enjoyment

We are each, as it were, our own raw material and by working creatively and setting ourselves to do good work we are shaping and making ourselves as well as the thing we do. In this way alone can we discover our hidden potentialities by learning to do the things which can give them release. It is their presence within us which gives us from childhood upwards that sense of power to do things which, given no outlet, may well prove illusory. As the power of achievement grows, we shall find that we have it in us to do work stamped with our own distinctive character, because character develops inevitably with the things we do, and that we shall be making a contribution in itself unique to our surroundings and within the circle in which we move.

The only fatal thing is to give up trying, to allow that sense of innate ability to become submerged, turning to a feeling of frustration and finally indifference. By so doing we shall cheat ourselves of some of the best things in life.

To the end of our days we shall probably still feel conscious of the things we might have done and did not, the things we might have been and were not, but in, so far as we were willing to pay the price of achievement we shall have something to show for having lived. (788)

UNLESS he had been specially pointed out to me I should never have recognised him as the same man.

As different as could be from the times I had heard him speak before in his own surroundings

I found myself wondering how many of those rather dreary looking plain business men exteriors hid just such another world. Probably quite a number. For we can never even begin to know another man from any part of his workaday life.

I suppose it is true of all of us that we are really two men, the one who presents his face to the world and upon whom the world passes its hasty and partial judgments, who follows his job or profession, making provision for himself and his family and playing his part in the community, doing more or less the things that are expected of him.

And then there is that other self, Mr. X, the unknown quantity, and Mr. X is an important person. For although we can live and put up a tolerable facade to the world without his help, we should be infinitely poorer without him and so, oddly enough, would the world. For Mr. X is that self which we ourselves have most hand in the making, through our beliefs, our interests and hobbies and skills. He is the sum total of what we really are, away from the eyes of the world, the true self with its potentialities for good and evil.

for making and creating and being in turn made by the things we do. We can well-nigh kill him by neglect, turning him into a mere ghost or feeble caricature of a self or he can become something that is of the utmost account in the enriching of our lives.

MOST of us have some sort of general idea about a standard of living, always with the assumption that it shall be a good standard, and it is salutary to ask ourselves from time to time just what we expect of it. Certainly something more than simple basic needs. Money in the pocket, money in the bank, television and radio in the home, a car perhaps; every man has some kind of picture of the things he most desires.

Whatever the dream the tendency in times of easy money is to think of it in terms of the things money can buy.

For there is more in this standard of living than our earning capacity. There is the effort we are prepared to put into the business of living itself if the standard is to be really good.

They are qualities which need cultivation and a good deal of taking thought, the ability to assess the possibilities of material, to know—in part intuitively, in part by trial and error—just how far we can go and what we can do with it and a readiness to back our independent judgment.

We begin to consider the harmony of the whole and to go or step by step with a steadily rising standard till beauty creeps in, almost unaware, the beauty which money cannot buy because it has the seal of our own individuality stamped upon it. It is one of the few remaining curbs upon the barbarians in our midst, being the product of centuries of civilised living which bears within it the power to civilise still.

FURTHEST Asia has a way of getting into the news. It always had, even when, some four or five hundred years ago, it was mainly mythical news. Tales of the great Eastern Empire of Great Cathay and Prester John, its supposedly Christian Emperor, with his palace of crystal, gold, and amethyst and all the silken, jewelled and grotesque wonders of his kingdom made marvellous bedtime stories for the Middle Ages.

The world to-day has yielded up many of its secrets. No longer can we dream of lost Empires behind the horizon. The uttermost ends of the earth have been brought within reach of man and, hardly stirring from his own fireside, he can glimpse on television and cinema screen the lives of people in far countries very different from his own.

There are many things to arouse our wonder; so many experiences are thrust upon us in the course of a day, that they do, in fact, cease to have much effect on us.

The mind becomes surfeited when so many different experiences are thrust upon it. There is a human limit and we instinctively erect our own defences by taking them for granted. That is why we so often fail to observe and discriminate the things that are close at hand, sometimes to our own ultimate loss.

But something goes wrong when simplicity turns to austerity and bleakness and poverty of thought.

We, no less than the men of the Middle Ages, need an outlet for expression. Just as they, from the depths of their simple lives, expressed their wonder in grotesque fantasies, we out of our complexities can express ourselves through the simpler forms; if we do it with humour and understanding and in a colourful way. For we all of us need a mental Cathay, a land of imagination and beauty into which we can escape from the too great pressure of the world in which we live.

Knowledge of all kinds is poured upon us from every side in this twentieth century of ours. We have to select the thing that we would make our own and follow it faithfully, refusing to be distracted from it or be dazzled by the many alternatives. We are deliberately forcing the element of simplicity into our lives when we choose our own path and stick to it, but if we do we may find before long that we are blazing our own private trail to Cathay. (893)

DURING these holiday months a good many woodworkers will be travelling here and there over the country seeing, as I have been doing, how much there is which in spite of modern vandalism remains lovely and unspoiled.

Once we become conscious of a disharmony, a constant jarring note, we become restless and discontented.

Because before such a result is reached there has had to be joint interest, joint planning, full and understanding co-operation, and when a man and a woman's thoughts are centred in this way the accomplishment will reflect their unity of purpose in something that is gracious and true.

There are inexhaustible potentialities to life and time which can be for ever exploring, and as we get older we come to see that much of it resolves into the use we

make of our liberty. Always, within limits, there is a liberty of choice which, according to the way we use it, is moulding our lives and forming ourselves and our surroundings. We can use it to acquire knowledge and skill which will work in us and through us fruitfully making us wiser and better, more understanding and more able, or we can let it drift and dissolve away so that there is no inner core of harmony in the things we do. It may seem a little thing that a man should learn to use his hands and the mind that governs them in the making and planning of useful and beautiful things, but if in the doing of it he develops an ability and judgment which enable him to bring a gracious quality into his home, it is not such a little thing. Rather it will stand for ever as the use he has made of the potentialities within himself and the influence which in so doing he can bring to bear upon others, sowing the seed of ideas and kindling the desire for good living by showing it in action. Not for nothing do men venerate the idea of liberty as life's finest gift, but it is the use we make of it that gives grace to life.

(927)

SINCE the days when the first hunter devised the first hunting knife, people have always shown themselves eager to possess anything that had a rarity value, something man had made or, having discovered, had wrought upon with such skill that it became infinitely desirable. The puzzle of it is that today so many men accept passively the idea that they should have nothing in their own homes of rarity value, forgetting that in their own two hands they have the power of making, and that which they make will be of necessity unique.

[At every

point he is able

to consult his

own wishes so

that, in the

finish, this is

no mere chattel turned out by a machine like hundreds

of others, but something unique and personal to himself.

We are not all cast in the mould of elder statesmen and great leaders of men, but we each have our own particular innate gift of creativity which, if developed, can give us both the outlet and sense of achievement we all need. That power to introduce something that is unique into our surroundings;

that power to give an added grace and charm to the things we use, distinguishing them from the impersonality of manufactured articles,

is the power of the free man.

It will grow stronger with use for, once we begin to make things to suit ourselves, our outlook undergoes a subtle change.

We begin to look at our surroundings with new eyes, in a way that is both critical and discriminating.

Critical, because once we are able to

change them.

It is as well to remind ourselves, now that we are in the early days of another year, that here is something to which we can set our hand that is infinitely worth doing. This is the kind of power that neither corrupts nor brings unhappiness in its train. Rather it brings with it the satisfaction of one of our deepest instincts and an interest and awareness in life and living that is something altogether different from the eager greed of a man pursuing the glittering prize which the world calls power. For indeed, it is power over himself which the craftsman knows and which has adorned the face of the earth with the lovely monuments of his skill.

THERE comes a time every year when I seem to get literally bogged down in the very act or fact of living; hustling from one job to another with very little of a breather anywhere, almost losing sight of the reason for doing things in the struggle to get them done. Usually, of course, the summer holiday is the answer, or some break which will enable one to sit back and let things register on the mind for a change. When we don't see the wood for the trees, when we can see neither the shape nor meaning nor whither-away of our lives, then it is time to call a halt. The pattern is there but we have somehow become enmeshed in it. We need something mentally akin to those fascinating pictures which are taken from the air, showing up the hidden contours of the land, revealing old defence works, the shadows of ancient civilisations; a certain withdrawal from the act of daily living to show us to ourselves.

According to my experience, one usually makes the best kind of plans during a holiday, and not only, I think, because mentally as well as physically we have a breathing space. We are told that the sunken lanes of England represent the old trackways along which men's plodding footsteps for two thousand years

Almost inevitably our daily lives get like that, following the routine paths it seems endlessly, till suddenly we are in the clear again and can see the buttercups in the meadows, the kingfisher flashing across the stream and the wide vault of heaven above us.

We get these sudden glimpses of a remote past sometimes when we are least looking for them and they take us back to our roots as nothing else can.

To-day we have to relearn these things and 'make our own standards.' If we are willing to keep, a high heart, if we hold fast to those moments of vision which we have received outside the bustle of living, then the skill which we learn will wed itself to the skill we have inherited, something older than ourselves which we can pass on to our children and, till heaven and earth pass away, the price and the joy of good workmanship shall not fail. (958)

THE keen youngster launching out on his career is avid for experience.

So the young man who has begun to master a job soon gets restless.

The danger to most of us comes, I think, when we begin to settle down.

If we remain content to use our powers only so far as they will provide for us a decent living and to make decent provision for our family, we deprive ourselves of the

innate creative powers so personal to ourselves that, whether or not they have any bearing on the job we do, can, if developed, keep our faculties fresh and alert.

The man, for instance, whose job it is to make packing cases may be technically very highly skilled. Confront him with the need for any size and style of packing case whatever, and he will produce it expertly in the minimum of time. Any difficulties in that particular line have become for him a matter of routine: he has met them all so many times before.

And when we are content to settle down with what we have it is rather as if we resigned ourselves to a life of endless packing cases; something which calls for very little conscious effort and therefore leaves still undeveloped the fullness of our creative powers.

We have it when we are young because then our experience lies all before us: if we want to keep it as we grow older we have to be prepared to go on seeking experience and to keep our sense of effort alive.

Do we not know indeed that the work which pleases us most in retrospect is the work which has tested our powers to the utmost, which has been, as it were, a perpetual challenge, and when at last we have brought it to a successful conclusion has left us with a heightened sense of achievement? The challenge is repeated each time we undertake a really exacting piece of work, depending as it does each time on the degree of mental and manual effort we bring to the task. Just because we are not machines but living men, there can be no standard in our output except the one which we ourselves make.

So we find inspiration not only in the beauty which other men have created but in the recognition of what it has cost them. To be prepared ourselves to pay the cost of creative work in facing and overcoming difficulties, even in going out to seek them, by widening our range and finding joy in being the master of our material is to keep ourselves fully and adventurously alive. (956)

I ALWAYS experience a thrill when I find myself on any part of Watling Street, conscious that under those straight stretches of road is the ancient Roman highway on which the legionaries once swung along in their unhurried, purposeful stride and Roman colonists and country folk passed to and fro battering down the hard surface in the busy traffic of their lawful occasions.

For it is not only workmanship which lasts, but ideas too, when these relate to the simple, practical things that are used for basic needs. Large-scale methods advance and change with the development of engineering science, but the fundamental personal needs concerned with a man's own skill work pretty well within the same range.

It is difficult not to be infected by the atmosphere of speed and hustle in which the townsman lives, by the conviction that there is a quick way of doing everything and that the best part of a job is the having finished it.

There are things which have to take their time, good things like the growth of crops or wood when it is well seasoned, and no commercial short-cuts can give the same results.

workmanship needs a type of sympathetic collaboration between man and material which can never come to life in an atmosphere of hurry and impatience.

The achievement of quality takes the craftsman into a new world, one in which he can be a law to himself because there he is master and knows to what lengths he can go with his material and rejoices in the trial of his own skill, so that he is at once cautious and adventurous. Caution is one of the things experience has taught him, adventure comes with the consciousness of his own powers and the desire to use them to the full. He can be a pioneer or a dyed-in-the-wool traditionalist

according to temperament; the one thing certain is that he will be highly individual in his approach to his work which will stamp it as unmistakably his own. His quality is the essentially human one which no machine can emulate because no machine can evoke the response in the material itself which lies within the power of a craftsman's skilful fingers, backed with the knowledge and understanding that have come to him over the years. It will be coloured by his temperament and his prejudices, hence the individuality. Only when a man has mastered his material is he really free to give it expression and then he has judgment enough to use that freedom well.

(34)

THE return of Christmas is a kind of beacon in the year. It stands for the good, peaceful things, for the kindly things, for sanity, in a world in which these are too often eclipsed and, in spite of the trappings of festivity which seem to smother it yet do not, it sends out its light under the dark skies of midwinter to give us new heart.

Every kind of legend and all kinds of customs have gathered about it.

Christmas is the best of all times to relax in, with its break from the ordinary routine, free from the secret pressure of jobs waiting to be done which so often haunts other brief holidays. Time is so precious and those of us with eager and willing hands find more than enough to keep them busy and this question of relaxing can sometimes be quite difficult. How often we arrive home feeling tired at the end of a day's work and disinclined to make a fresh start on a job of woodwork for ourselves yet with a kind of inner conflict because we do want to get it done. So after a wash and a meal we rather grudgingly make a start and in next to no time our

tiredness vanishes and we become completely and happily absorbed in the work. By bedtime we are filled with a pleasant sense of achievement which will encourage us to repeat the process on other evenings. Nine times out of ten it works, but the tenth time may come when fatigue has gone deeper and on such an evening nothing goes right. Any little difficulty makes us impatient and irritable, something is lacking.

The only remedy is to learn to know the danger signals for what they are. The impatience that is founded on fatigue is something more than a mood.

One of the fascinations of craft work is that it compels us to this awareness of ourselves. We learn something of our limitations, of our tendencies, we learn to respect our own powers and feel a pride in developing them.

Contact:
workermagazine@gmail.com

