A man with short, light brown hair and a light beard is looking directly at the camera. He is wearing a dark blue long-sleeved shirt under a grey and white checkered blazer. He is holding two large spools of thread: a white one in front of his chest and a grey one below it. The background is a workshop with various tools and materials. A sewing machine is visible on the right, and a workbench with tools like a hammer and a saw is in the foreground. The overall tone is professional and artistic.

The **CRAFT** and the **MAKERS**

TRADITION WITH
ATTITUDE

gestalten



GULL LAKE BOAT WORKS CANOE MAKER

SPECIALIZING IN TRADITIONAL WOOD AND COMPOSITE

BOAT CONSTRUCTION, MARC RUSSELL HAND-BUILDS

CANOES AND KAYAKS WHICH CELEBRATE THE SPIRIT OF

THE GREAT NORTH AMERICAN OUTDOORS.

Gull Lake Boat Works is a boat workshop that custom-builds wooden canoes, kayaks, and runabouts for discerning enthusiasts. Specializing in wood and composites, they build, repair, and restore all types of small watercraft on the shore of the lake that lends its name to the business in Ontario, Canada. It was founded out of necessity in 2008, by owner and head builder Marc Russell, when he was asked to repair and replace the aging fleet of antique cedar plank and canvas canoes at Kilcoo Camp, a venerable private summer camp for boys founded in 1932. Marc himself had attended the camp for almost twenty years, both as a camper and as a member of staff. Under an intensive apprenticeship with master builder Ron Frennette of Canadian Canoes, he was taught the craft and now combines traditional designs, modern methods, and meticulous handwork to create one-of-a-kind vessels including the Kilcoo 15'7" canoe, the modern equivalent of those found in the old fleet.

A small and personal operation, Marc describes the boats as being like children—some being terrible and temperamental to make, and some just coming

together naturally. Primarily made out of wood, they all have a personality and an identity, the natural materials being what makes each boat so special, aiding their buoyancy and balance, and making them smoother to paddle.

Each boat requires 100 to 200 work hours to create. In addition to seventy board feet of white cedar wood from northern Ontario, white ash, 2,200 brass canoe tags from Massachusetts, brass stembands from Scandinavia, and impregnated and water tight canvas are used. The first step, is to dress the rough cut cedar and chosen hardwood in the shop, to exacting measurements before the hardwood elements are prepared: Stems being steam-bent and epoxy-laminated, inwales are steamed, and bent and both are attached to a solid mold. The cedar ribs are then soaked and steamed, making them supple and able to be bent around the mould and attached to the inwales and stems. To even out the rough edges, the ribs are then "faired"—sanded smooth to the desired profile before the cedar planking is nailed to the skeletal boat. The brass canoe tacks are driven through the plank and rib, hitting steel clinching bands and collapsing



"ALL DESIGN HAS A TRACEABLE EVOLUTION, AND BOATS ARE NO DIFFERENT, SPECIFICALLY THE 'TRADITIONAL' NORTH AMERICAN CANOE."

tightly upon themselves. At this stage, Mark carefully removes the hull from the mould, installing the decks, while checking that every tack, nail, and screw is tight as additional ribs and planks are attached.

After the joints and small gaps are filled with epoxy resin and filler, the hull is faired again and at this point, receives two coats of spar varnish while the inner hull is checked for blemishes and prepared for varnishing. In total, each boat will receive up to eight coats. Then the canvas is stretched and carefully "gored," or cut to shape, and attached with brass tacks before being impregnated with another three to six layers of epoxy resin and fillers. Now, the hardwood

outwales, keel and brass stem bands are attached, all joints are sealed with epoxy resin while the seats, thwarts, yokes, and lift handles are installed. Finally the canvas and epoxy are faired again, the last detail, which is the anti-fouling undercoat is applied, faired, and covered with up to ten coats of marine enamel in the desired colour.

"All design has a traceable evolution, and boats are no different," says Marc. "Specifically, the 'traditional' North American canoe—from dug-out birch bark or skin-on-frame, wood to aluminum, fiberglass, Royalex, Kevlar, and carbon fiber, the canoe has always been a willing subject and beneficiary for the growth of technological design and innovation. The use of combined materials. As such, the versatility, strength, and durability of composite construction in boatmaking has been apparent for centuries. Gull Lake Boat Works is furthering the practice by continuing to fuse the best of design, method, and materials."

right: Gull Lake Boat Works creates custom canoes and kayaks that are made to last for generations.





A SMALL AND PERSONAL OPERATION, MARC DESCRIBES THE BOATS AS BEING LIKE CHILDREN—SOME BEING TERRIBLE AND TEMPERAMENTAL TO MAKE AND SOME JUST COMING TOGETHER NATURALLY.

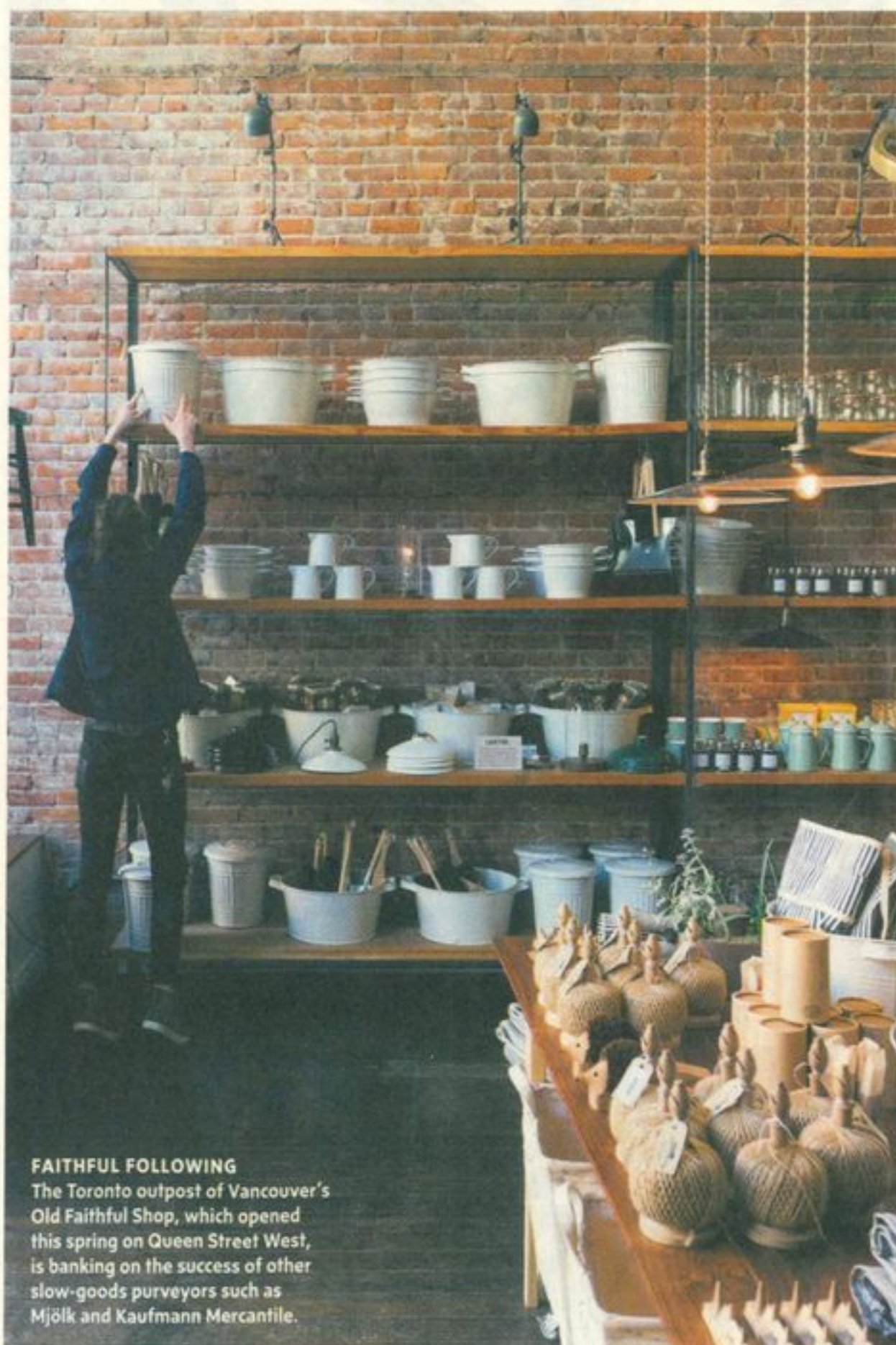




left: Each canoe takes 100
to 200 man-hours to execute.

above: Marc Russell planking
the ribs of a canoe hull.





FAITHFUL FOLLOWING

The Toronto outpost of Vancouver's Old Faithful Shop, which opened this spring on Queen Street West, is banking on the success of other slow-goods purveyors such as Mjolk and Kaufmann Mercantile.



HI, KEY

This Horween leather keychain (\$62 through www.oldfaithfulshop.com) that fastens to a belt loop for ease of retrieval comes from MAKR, a small company founded by former architect Jason Gregory that produces simple handmade accessories in Winter Park, Fla.



MAKERS' MARK

The Craft and the Makers (\$65, Gestalten Books through www.oldfaithfulshop.com), the slow-goods movement's bible, spotlights small enterprises and the people behind them.



SNIP SERVICE

Made in Ono City, Japan, these solid-copper scissors (from \$85 through www.mjolk.ca) are hand-forged in the four-generations-old Tajika Haruo ironworks.



NEW LEASH ON LIFE

Accented with solid brass trigger snap clips, this dog leash (\$59 through www.kaufmann-mercantile.com) is made of hand-spliced marine-grade hemp in a small Brooklyn studio.



KING OF CUPS

This Large Belted ceramic mug (\$50 through www.oldfaithfulshop.com) from Portland, Ore., company Mazama curves to fit the hand, has a tapered base for stacking and comfortably holds a 12-ounce bottle of beer with room for head.

FAITHFUL FOLLOWING
The Toronto outpost of Vancouver's Old Faithful Shop, which opened this spring on Queen Street West, is banking on the success of other slow-goods purveyors such as Mjolk and Kaufmann Mercantile.



NEW LEASH ON LIFE
Accented with solid brass trigger snap clips, this dog leash (\$59 through www.kaufmann-mercantile.com) is made of hand-spliced marine-grade hemp in a small Brooklyn studio.

KING OF CUPS
This Large Belted ceramic mug (\$50 through www.oldfaithfulshop.com) from Portland, Ore., company Mazama curves to fit the hand, has a tapered base for stacking and comfortably holds a 12-ounce bottle of beer with room for head.

HANDMADE'S TALE

What do you call a movement that prizes top-quality everyday objects that are built to last a lifetime – and with price tags that show it? So far, ‘slow goods.’ It’s a concept that’s gaining momentum, **Adam McDowell** reports, judging by the growing number of retailers who are putting craftsmanship – and the story behind their housewares – first. quality, hand-spliced dog leash yet?

At Old Faithful Shop, every object has a story to tell, according to co-founder Walter Manning. For proof, he holds up a key fob made of leather tanned in Chicago and brass fasteners from Germany that prompts an anecdote about its maker, a former architect who quit his job to work with his hands. Crossing the dark hardwood floors to the other side of the store, Manning turns a Japanese tea kettle into a lesson in utility: The stainless steel is thin, so that it feels light even when filled with water, and an elongated spout results in an easy-to-control pour.

This is Old Faithful Shop’s newest outpost, on Toronto’s Queen Street West, which opened its doors in March; the original location was established in Vancouver’s Gastown in 2010. Whether or not its clientele realize it yet, shopping here enlists them in a movement. At Old Faithful Shop, objects earn their spot on the shelf on the basis of ruggedness and quality, not the allure of branding. People come to Old Faithful, Manning says, because “they want to get something a little nicer, something

an English-language coffee-table book profiling manufacturers from tiny one-person startups to storied family firms. (The book is available at Old Faithful Shop; the lone Canadian profiled is Ontario-based canoe maker Marc Russell.) What unites the makers, Ehmann says, is “dedication to quality over everything else.” Traditional materials such as iron, bone and canvas are favoured over plastics and aluminum. Time-honoured techniques are prized, sweatshops shunned.

Every trend needs a name, and suggestions for this one include “heirloom-quality products.” Old Faithful Shop sometimes uses the self-consciously clunky slogan “good quality goods.” But for simplicity and utility, the best candidate is “slow goods.”

Followers of this spreading movement trace its origins to Scandinavia and Japan, where cheap mass retailing never did push traditional handicrafts to the brink of extinction. The English-speaking world caught on more recently. Labour and Wait set up shop in a former pub in the hip Shoreditch area of London back in 2000 and continues to sell hefty English-made

life, delivered in the form of an \$850 iron-and-lacquer kettle or a \$240 brass tape dispenser that’s heavy as a brick.

The store’s aesthetic is an idiosyncratic blend of two central influences: Most of the furniture comes from Scandinavia while the housewares, such as the kettle and tape dispenser, hail from Japan – though there are a few exceptions, co-owner John Baker notes.

Mjolk’s psychogeography is in keeping with the slow-goods movement’s implicit, but rarely stated, preference for objects that originate in industrialized countries. Kaufmann Mercantile, for example, lets shoppers browse items by place of origin; most dots on the map are in North America, Europe and Japan.

Baker says he isn’t motivated by any anti-“Made in China” sentiment – in fact, he’s impressed by traditional craftsmanship there, as well as in India – but he has found quality goods from developing countries difficult to source and import.

That partly explains why slow goods are typically expensive. They are largely handmade by artisans earning a living wage close to consumers’ homes, in many cases (Kaufmann Mercantile includes “production and design” notes for every item it sells on its site, which give shoppers detailed information about each maker’s backstory and studio location, and even lists the provenance of the individual materials used.)

The willingness to splurge on high-quality housewares is also about a reverence for “the ritualistic quality of the object,” as Baker puts it. He acknowledges that it’s only worth spending a lot on a well-crafted item – say, a \$50 porcelain Oji Masanori tea mug fired in Japan’s 350-year-old Touetsugama kiln as opposed to a mass-produced one – if it “elevates your daily routines.”

At Old Faithful Shop, Manning says



This is Old Faithful Shop's newest outpost, on Toronto's Queen Street West, which opened its doors in March; the original location was established in Vancouver's Gastown in 2010. Whether or not its clientele realize it yet, shopping here enlists them in a movement. At Old Faithful Shop, objects earn their spot on the shelf on the basis of ruggedness and quality, not the allure of branding. People come to Old Faithful, Manning says, because "they want to get something a little nicer, something that's going to last longer."

The pitch here, and at the growing number of similar retailers and e-tailers, is that these high-quality handmade everyday goods feel sufficiently well-built to be hand-me-downs from your grandparents. As the thinking goes, why buy \$20 kitchen scissors from a well-known brand that are flimsy and destined to break when you can have a beautiful \$100 pair that are well-made enough to outlive you?

These wares, and the retailers who sell them, share characteristics that add up to a tangible ethos. Sven Ehmann, creative director of the publishing house Gestalten, believes the wholesomeness and authenticity-seeking aspects of the Slow Food movement are gradually reaching beyond the pantry and into other realms of consumer life, posing a small but growing challenge to fast fashion and big-box retailing. "There's been a shift ... over the past couple of years from mass-produced, low-priced and quick-and-dirty to the opposite," namely objects that are reliable, well-made, trustworthy and "rather pricey but worth the money," Ehmann says over the phone from Gestalten's offices in Berlin.

In response to the trend, last year Gestalten published *The Craft and the Makers*,

clunky slogan "good quality goods." But for simplicity and utility, the best candidate is "slow goods."

Followers of this spreading movement trace its origins to Scandinavia and Japan, where cheap mass retailing never did push traditional handicrafts to the brink of extinction. The English-speaking world caught on more recently. Labour and Wait set up shop in a former pub in the hip Shoreditch area of London back in 2000 and continues to sell hefty English-made watering cans and enamelled pie dishes. New York-based online-only retailer Kaufmann Mercantile followed in 2009 with a relatively masculine take on quality gear – including plenty of sharp things (hand drills, folding knives, Champagne sabres) and leather (tool rolls, bicycle saddles, camp stools).

In establishing Old Faithful Shop, Manning and Savannah Olsen (Manning's partner in business and life, or "partner squared," as he puts it) were inspired by Manning's family history. His grandparents on both sides owned general stores in Newfoundland. Manning spent his childhood summers in his paternal grandfather's store in Cape St. Mary's, and the reliable service the senior Manning provided to his outpost community was the inspiration for Old Faithful Shop's name, Manning says. The people of Cape St. Mary's "trusted what he had," Manning says of the goods his grandfather carried.

This 'old-fashioned' expectation of quality is part of what's driving the slow-goods movement, but aesthetics play a key role, too. Take the wares at Mjolk, the successful shop that opened in Toronto's Junction neighbourhood in 2009. Named after the Swedish work for milk, its collection offers minimalist beauty for everyday

gin; most dots on the map are in North America, Europe and Japan.



BRUSHES WITH GREATNESS?
This hand duster (\$21 through www.kaufmann-mercantile.com), made by a fourth-generation family business in rural Vermont, is composed of recycled poplar wood and premium-quality wool remnants from a nearby carpet factory.

materials used.)

The willingness to splurge on high-quality housewares is also about a reverence for "the ritualistic quality of the object," as Baker puts it. He acknowledges that it's only worth spending a lot on a well-crafted item – say, a \$50 porcelain Oji Masanori tea mug fired in Japan's 350-year-old Touetsugama kiln as opposed to a mass-produced one – if it "elevates your daily routines."

At Old Faithful Shop, Manning says, customers are motivated by the products' narratives, and so, like the owners of Kaufmann Mercantile, "we try to [provide] a story for every product, whether who's making it or where it's coming from," he says. No story, no shelf space is the rule. If a shopper stops by and picks up a twine ball or a maple bread board, she'll likely hear about its backstory from a salesperson – although not to the point of being annoying, Manning hopes.

Compelling stories notwithstanding, no one suggests the average Canadian shopper is prepared to spend \$35 on a German-made brush and dustpan. However, these and other slow goods are competitive with housewares that are anonymously mass-manufactured overseas but priced as luxury items on the strength of a famous brand. Manning says the best hope for growth for slow-goods retailers could be consumer attitudes shifting in favour of craftsmanship over logos. Sweatshop-made goods could even become a sign of poor taste.

For their part, the objects themselves promise to stick around for a long time. They'll remain useful whether they stay on trend or not.



The CRAFT and the MAKERS

An object crafted with passion and dedication is unlike any other. The subtle skills that have been developed over generations are felt in its faintest details, in its design, in the high-quality materials used, and in the time-consuming process necessary to achieve such pieces.

The Craft and the Makers showcases those driving craftsmanship's comeback and a return to the authentic. These are artisans who have mastered a product over several decades and gained an impressive heritage, men and women who display innovative approaches to their traditional methods. They are entrepreneurs who strive to sustain the spirit of craft in a world where mass production prevails. Brimming with lavish photography, this book reveals the craftspeople's strong personalities, creative processes, and finished products—ranging from furniture, leather goods, and woodworking, to jewelry, watches, and motorcycles. *The Craft and the Makers* offers a behind-the-scenes look into the workshops of the most savvy businesses to explore their fabrics and tools, and above all, celebrate their attitude.

gestalten

ISBN 978-3-89955-548-6



9 783899 555486