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The Shopkeepers: Storefront Businesses And The Future Of Retail



Synopsis

Good stores still exist. In fact, their numbers are growing. Well-designed specialty shops that are inspired by the small manufacturers and mom-and-pop operations of the past are now sprouting up. These outlets are defying e-commerce and anonymous online shopping with outstanding products, original interior design, innovative concepts, and, first and foremost, friendly and competent customer service. *The Shopkeepers* explores this new store culture through examples such as barbershops, fish smokeries, tailors, and milliners, as well as retail spaces specializing in stationery, hardware, buttons, home décor, or coffeemakers. They can be found off the beaten track as well as in the hearts of major cities from Berlin to Beirut. The book makes it clear that they are all driven by the passion that their founders and operators have for their business ideas and products, whether vintage eyeglasses, textiles from India or China, specialty books, soaps, olive oils, or tropical fish. While some shops are based on innovative ideas, others are reinterpretations of traditional family businesses. *The Shopkeepers* also introduces some of the personalities behind these exciting retail concepts. Many have been running their shops for years but are only now being recognized by a new generation of consumers for their acumen, integrity, and knowledge — from shoemakers who truly understand their craft to culinary experts who can differentiate between 200 types of chocolate or cheese with their eyes closed. Some are such interesting characters that the chance to interact with them is reason enough to attract potential customers. In the stores featured in *The Shopkeepers*, the customer is again king and can find a personal, quality retail experience that the internet simply cannot provide. The book reminds us all of the value of exceptional service and of meticulously selected products which are built to last and on which one can depend. If they didn't exist already, they do now.

Book Information

Hardcover: 256 pages

Publisher: Gestalten (November 10, 2015)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 3899555902

ISBN-13: 978-3899555905

Product Dimensions: 9.8 x 1.1 x 12 inches

Shipping Weight: 3.9 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.5 out of 5 stars 2 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #563,305 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #134 in Books > Arts &

Photography > Photography & Video > Lifestyle & Events > Lifestyle #508 inÂ Books > Arts & Photography > Photography & Video > Architectural #656 inÂ Books > Arts & Photography > Photography & Video > Portraits

Customer Reviews

The global research in finding these small, unique stores, some less than 200 sq feet, is amazing. I didn't know about 95% of these businesses. The photography is top notch. The subject is all about small shops selling unique, high quality, low run products. One shoe manufacture in Europe has been making exactly 300 pairs of shoes per year for about 100 years. I'm inspired by the dedication to quality, even for such small runs of product. But the publisher of this book apparently is not inspired by quality on a small scale. The print and design quality of this small run book is terrible. The printing was done on a laser printer. A very nice laser printer, but you can tell the toner is sitting on top of the page, not part of the page like ink used in an offset press. The reflectivity changes where the toner is vs the paper. And the paper isn't the nice coated paper you would expect in a \$60 coffee table book - toner doesn't stick to that kind of paper. On demand toner based printers are good for junk mail, not books like this. Obviously this is a low run book - but China offers real offset printing and excellent quality at economical prices now. Even worse than the printing is the layout. It's perhaps the worst I've ever seen in a book at any price. Most free things are far better designed. There is no grid. Every page is freeform, but not in a good way. Margins, gutters, everything seems different on every page. Even within the same page widths and spaces seem arbitrary. There are as many as 9 different font sizes and fonts on a page. Body text ranges from larger than Reader's Digest blind-as-a-bat size (32 pts maybe) to microscopic, 7 pts perhaps - all on the same page! 32 point body text alone would be weird - but sitting next to other body text on the same page that's nearly microscopic is mind bending. In the first section every single page has "...continued from page X" in massive letters at the top of the page - even though virtually every page is continued from the previous page. The contrast between the clean architecture, logos and store layouts in most photographs, and the disheveled layout of the book is stunning. Every designer has to start somewhere - and that's ok. New designers should not assume owning InDesign makes you a designer. To still produce a book that has design worth full coffee-table book prices the designer could have emulated a book with good layout. Or ask a more experienced designer to review their work. I see no evidence that this happened. Unless you're really interested in this topic please don't reward this publisher with a sale - they don't deserve this much money for so little quality.

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