

## Art and Technology



I must admit I am still surprised when I see technical people dismiss art as useless. Art is not only a pleasant esthetic, it is often essential to design.

A recent online discussion about a pair of [antique “singing bird” pistol-shaped music boxes](#) [1] reminded me of the issue. These devices not only had insanely complex bellows-and-gears works to accomplish the “singing bird” part, but in addition the “pistols” were inlaid with just about every precious thing you could cut and glue to something. Diamonds, enamel, fine wood, gold, and other bling were meticulously placed with a level of fit and finish that would impress a MEMS designer. Unfortunately several in the discussion did not see the utility of something so blatantly useless.



The antique gadgets themselves are only a part of the picture, as the craft that went into them is the underappreciated aspect. Our most advanced technologies are kith and kin with those pistol-shaped music boxes. Precision machining and metalcraft skills (designing a device on a computer that you couldn't build with your hands is a recipe for disaster, a computer is a time-saving tool, nothing more) are still needed to conceptualize and design the next generation of tools to create the next generation components and devices to create the next generation of products.

Distain at pure art is disappointing, and aims to deny the value of that side of the creative mind. Art drives design as much if not more than technology. As for use and functionality, that iPad and those pistols have the exact same primary function, entertaining the hip well-to-do. As does that LED-driven sub-window color-addressable 3D LCD hanging on the wall with the 2-terabyte DVR and encrypted wireless broadband multimedia pipe.

Enjoy art for what it is, a message to the audience and a demonstration of skill. It

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inspires as well as demonstrates what man is capable of. The creator of these toys was not only a remarkably skilled artist and craftsman, he was also a great engineer, conceptualist, and designer. For all you know the artist made real guns as well, and I would certainly buy a weapon from a guy capable of crafting this.

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### **Links:**

[1] <http://www.everydaynodaysoff.com/2011/05/30/singing-bird-music-box-pistols/>