



The Lost Carving: A Journey to the Heart of Making

David Esterly

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“A beautiful, intricate meditation on creativity and discovery, on fire and rebirth.” —Elizabeth Gilbert

Awestruck at the sight of a Grinling Gibbons carving in a London church, David Esterly chose to dedicate his life to woodcarving—its physical rhythms, intricate beauty, and intellectual demands. Forty years later, he is the foremost practitioner of Gibbons’s forgotten technique, which revolutionized ornamental sculpture in the late 1600s with its spectacular cascades of flowers, fruits, and foliage.

After a disastrous fire at Henry VIII’s Hampton Court Palace, Esterly was asked to replace the Gibbons masterpiece destroyed by the flames. It turned out to be the most challenging year in Esterly’s life, forcing him to question his abilities and delve deeply into what it means to make a thing well. Written with a philosopher’s intellect and a poet’s grace, *The Lost Carving* explores the connection between creativity and physical work and illuminates the passionate pursuit of a vocation that unites head and hand and heart.

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