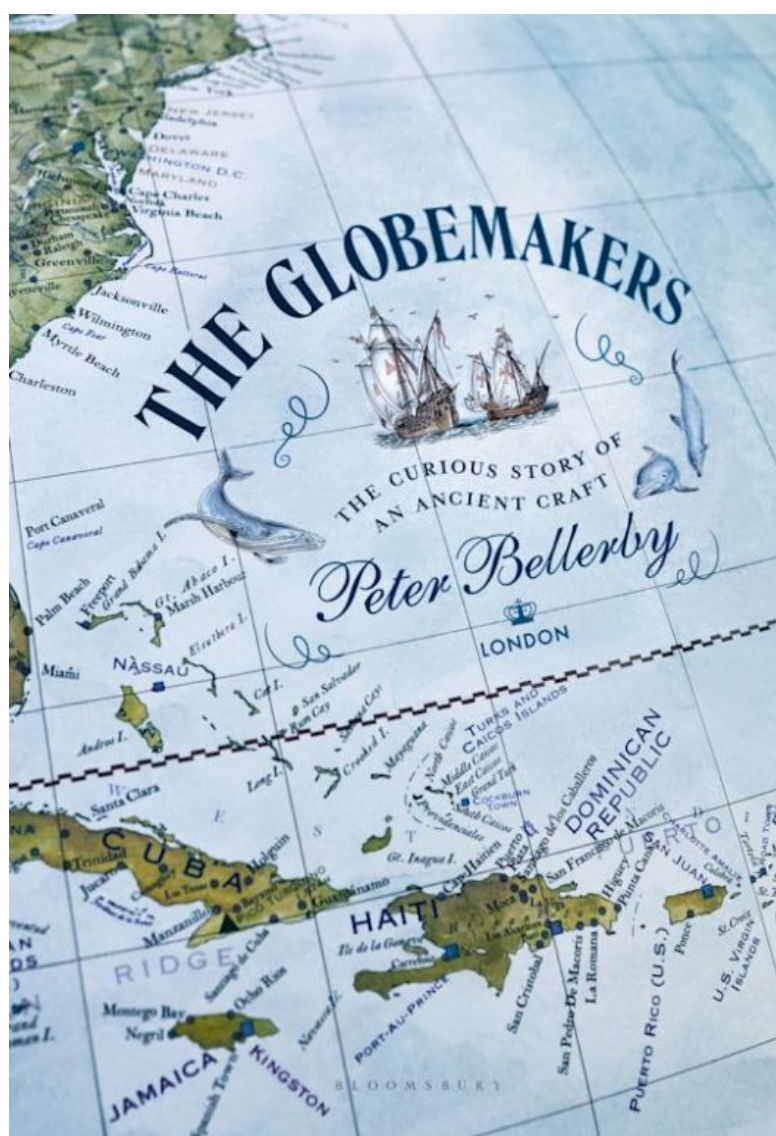




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Book review: The Globemakers: the Curious Story of an Ancient Craft

reviewed by Sierra Laddusaw



Bellerby, Peter. *The Globemakers: the Curious Story of an Ancient Craft*. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2023. 217 p. \$30.00 ISBN: 978-1-63973-156-5



In a beautifully illustrated book, Peter Bellerby describes the journey he took from looking for a globe to starting his own bespoke globe manufacturing company. Arranged into 10 chapters, Bellerby's story flows somewhat chronologically and is told in a conversational tone. The author intersperses facts about our planet, the labor of globe production, and famous globe makers through his story, utilizing clever design to call out these bits of history. While the overall design of the book borrows from classic textbook layouts – double column text, pull quotes, and call out boxes – illustrations, photographs, and literal splashes of color enhances the reading experience.

The book opens with a short preface on the organization of the book and an illustrated glossary of map, globe, and geography related terms the reader will encounter before moving into the story of he launched a globe making enterprise. Bellerby first began searching for a globe in 2008 as a gift for his father's 80th birthday – in his search he visited shops in London, auction houses, online stores, and even looked while on a trip to India, Egypt, and Morocco. Unable to find a globe that was functional, well-made, up-to-date, and esthetically pleasing, he decided to make his own globe from scratch. Before launching into the tale of creating his globe, Bellerby provides a brief history of cartography.

As the book progresses, Bellerby's attempts and failures to make a globe are joyfully described. These chapters comprise the majority of the book and highlight the skills and labor required to produce a well-made globe. I appreciated how the author discussed the craftspeople he worked with to produce spherical molds, identify the best paper and ink for printing gores, cast the metal components, and hand lay and paint the gores. It is clear the creation of a globe takes place in steps which involve multiple artisans and that it was, again, a trial and error process for Bellerby to find the collaborators that could produce his vision.

Chapter four of the book addresses the practicalities of creating the map that becomes the gores of the globe. The complex issues of copyright and political boundaries are each given a section in the chapter. While both of these topics are informally discussed, it was interesting insight into how a company addresses these concerns. At the start of his quest to create a globe, Bellerby licensed a map and made edits. Today, Bellerby & Co. Globemakers employs cartographers who create and update the company's maps, no longer licensing the imagery from another source. When it comes to, what the book calls, "The Politics of Globemaking," Bellerby chose to create versions of their globes for buyers based on their country of residence, ensuring that they can distribute their product globally. These



versioned globes are designed to reflect boundaries as the “population, democratically elected politicians, monarchy... or dictator saw fit” (p. 72).

In addition to the process to craft a globe, the book shares small bits of information about how the Bellerby & Co. Globemakers operate, from where some early funding came from (Bellerby selling his Aston Martin on eBay), to the studio moving from one space to another, to hiring employees, and even some of the earliest orders placed for globes. The first order came from a library! Ultimately, Bellerby was able to present his father with a globe from his studio – though a few years late.

Overall, the book is charming and a quick read. It does not replace scholarly works on cartography and globes, nor is it an instruction manual on how to make a globe. However, it would make a nice addition to a leisure/popular reading collection and with its eye-catching cover design will feature nicely in book displays.

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