

BENCHMARKS



THE MAGAZINE OF NORTH BENNET STREET SCHOOL SUMMER 2017

PLAIN LIVING AND HIGH THINKING

BY MIGUEL GÓMEZ-IBÁÑEZ CF '99
President of NBSS

I HAD THE OPPORTUNITY recently to read a book by David Shi called *The Simple Life: Plain Living and High Thinking in American Culture*. It is a scholarly survey of the history of this country which proposes that the ideal of living a simple and meaningful life is an underlying, enduring theme in American culture. Shi's narrative starts with the arrival of the first waves of immigrants to this country, the Puritans in 1620 and the Quakers in 1680, who came to start a new life for themselves in Plymouth Colony and Pennsylvania.

Both groups fled England intending to found a society that reflected their values, where material pursuits were subordinate to ethical and moral ideals. In 1630 John Winthrop described his vision to establish a "city upon a hill": a community which would serve as a beacon of plain living and virtue for all to emulate. William Penn's goals for Pennsylvania were similar, to found a Society of Friends based on self-reliance, honest work, social justice, and a rejection of needless luxury. Unfortunately, both visions proved too challenging for the colonists, as the economic opportunity provided by the New World created a wealthy citizenry that would reject those lofty constraints.

But Shi demonstrates that while one era may reject the ideal of plain living and high thinking, subsequent ones always emerge to make the movement their own. He traces this recurring American belief in the value of an intentional life through three centuries in the writings of generations of well-known practitioners and proponents, among them Thomas Jefferson, Henry David Thoreau, Jane Addams, Scott and Helen Nearing, and Jimmy Carter. Shi describes the transcendentalists in the 1830s, the Arts and Crafts movement in the 1880s, the founding of the Boy Scout movement in 1910,

and in our era the counterculture movement of the 1960s. Each time, the call to lead a simple and meaningful life is ultimately overwhelmed by the pursuit of another enduring theme in our culture, the American Dream of wealth and prosperity.

I like to think of the founding of this country as the founding of an intentional community by people who aspired to plain living and high thinking, and I believe that North Bennet Street School is an enduring reflection of that idealism. Our founder, Pauline Agassiz Shaw, felt that learning a trade and

earning a living were essential, but they were not goals unto themselves, they were a means to an end. Shaw believed in training the "whole person," not teaching "how to make a living" but "how to live."

While plain living and high thinking may be unattainable for a society, it remains an enduring aspiration and the underlying ethos of NBSS. Our students demonstrate their commitment to essential human values like service, perseverance, and self-reliance. They possess a high degree of respect for technical accomplishment, and they value the rewards of honest work. They have increasingly made these choices in the face of a society

that seems to have other priorities, and in the face of financial realities that would have deterred most of us.

You support their choices with your support for North Bennet Street School. Learn how NBSS is helping students offset the cost of their education with the *Lives and Livelihoods* campaign at nbss.edu/campaign.

LOOKING FOR SOME GREAT SUMMER READING?

Check out our hand-picked
list at nbss.edu/blog

The Cabinet & Furniture Making
program has a library of over
300 books (many of them rare)
available to students.



ANNUAL CELEBRATION OF CRAFT

Each year, NBSS hosts a series of events that supports the School's mission to train students for careers in traditional trades. Guests of our Preview Dinner enjoyed program demonstrations and speakers, while those at our Opening Reception had a fun evening with live music and great conversation. The centerpiece of these events, the Student & Alumni Exhibit,

featured over 100 pieces of work from our talented community.

All proceeds from the Annual Celebration of Craft go directly to supporting our next generation of makers.

For more great photos, visit facebook.com/NBSSboston.





TINY SCULPTURES, BIG IMPRESSIONS

BY R. SCOTT REEDY

NOT LONG AFTER earning her BFA in Sculpture from Otis College of Art and Design in Los Angeles in 2008, Miranda Harter JM '16 was back home in New York City and working at a jewelry store when she began to realize she wanted more.

"I was doing data entry so I got to unbag and unbox inventory and hold the jewelry, but only so I could enter it into the system. I wasn't feeling entirely satisfied with the work, but, fortunately, multiple things started to come together. My boss said I was creative and anal-retentive enough to be a great jeweler." And more encouragement soon followed.

"A college roommate of mine, Daniel Marquand BB '11, was applying to the School's Bookbinding program at the time, and he told me, 'You're a sculptor who likes to make really tiny things—you should check out NBSS.'" A few years later, Miranda took that advice, and today she is very happy that she did.

"One of the things that frustrated me in art school was the lack of emphasis on excellence and hand skills. The way I looked at it, before you became a painter you had to learn how to copy. At NBSS, you learn how to make jewelry in the way that hundreds of years of craftsmen have made it. I worked harder at NBSS than I ever have in my life. It was fantastic, though, and enormously rewarding."

A first-semester internship at e. scott originals in Somerville earned Miranda the respect of Emily Scott JM '07, and a recommendation that resulted in a full-time job.

"I'm a jewelry assistant and the bench jeweler for Jade Moran Jewelry, a longtime custom jeweler in Somerville making primarily wedding and engagement rings. I'm just a baby jeweler, but it's great because my boss asks me for my opinion. She is a master model maker—casting in wax—and a wax carver, and I do all the metal work for her."

A self-described "fan" of ancient Egyptian and medieval European jewelry, Miranda is proud to be carrying tradition forward.

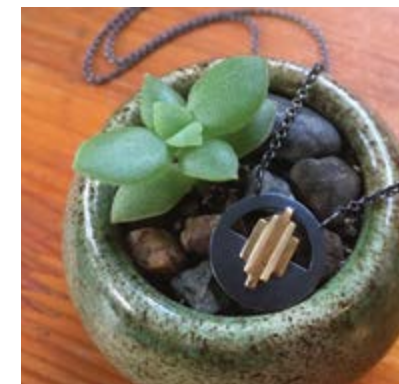
"One of the amazing things is just how many of us have a knee-jerk assumption that things are machine made. We walk into Tiffany & Co. and think that the rings and necklaces must have been made by robots. There is 3D CAD, of course, but the vast majority of design is still done by craftsmen, which is very gratifying. And each stone is hand-set, with all the polishing done by hand, too."

As Miranda sees it, that's a good thing, given the role jewelry plays in people's lives.

"Jewelry is an important way people signal status—like with engagement and wedding rings. Wearing it can become part of someone's identity. As a bench jeweler, I'm often re-forming old jewelry. We just did a piece for a man whose father had worn a pinky ring for his son's whole life. The son wanted to keep the piece, but he knew he would never wear it as a pinky ring so we turned it into a lapel pin. And, in the future, it may become something else again for another generation."

A Somerville resident, Miranda recognizes that she has come full circle in her career.

"In art school, I knew I wanted to make things that would catch your eye like gems. Jewelry making percolated through my mind for a long time as a way to make small pieces of art with large presence. I am very proud of what I do now and I get great satisfaction from it. I love my work, because I know that ring will sit on someone's finger for the rest of his or her life."



A NEW GENERATION OF CRAFTSPEOPLE

Why Skilled Trades are on the Rise

BY JESSICA JOHNSON

In a world of digital technology and prefabricated objects, traditional trades are often overlooked. Unfortunately, much of the modern world has forgotten how much detailed work and raw talent it takes to create even the most basic of handcrafted items. But there's a resurgence on the horizon. Perhaps due to a need for stability in an ever-changing economic and social climate, or perhaps due to a widespread nostalgia for a simpler way of life—interest in traditional craftsmanship and vocational trades is growing.

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WHAT ARE SKILLED TRADES?

Our country was built by the hands of tradesmen and artisans, from knowledge that was passed on through hundreds of generations. In the times of ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome, having the title of a craft worker was an honor. Children began learning hand skills at a young age depending on the family's trade. Apprenticeships often started around the age of 14, and from there, one would go on to become a journeyman. After nearly a lifetime of painstaking work, and upon acceptance to a guild, one would finally earn the title of a master craftsman. To this day, surnames like Carpenter, Smith, and Mason still echo the importance of traditional trades throughout history.

As time went on, new trades arose, and machinery gave us the ability to craft pieces of impeccable quality. Today, fine trades like jewelry making and finish carpentry harmonize traditional hand skills with modern technology. Craftsmanship is not just a necessity, but an art.

CRAFTSMANSHIP IN MODERN SOCIETY

It's easy for people to disregard the importance of traditional craftsmanship. We tend to be too focused on mastery of the digital universe these days, clamoring for faster computers and more reliable cellular networks. Even necessary skills that help fulfill our basic needs, like carpentry, get overlooked and taken for granted. The truth is, we wouldn't be here if it weren't for the handiwork of generations past. Recently, we received an enlightening email from a father whose 12-year-old son wanted to work with his hands:

"My son's teacher had all the children in the class tell all the other students what they wanted to be when they got older. When it was my son's turn, he said that he wanted to be a carpenter! But he then said, 'Dad...they all laughed at me...'

I went on to ask my son what these other children lived in? I told him someone had to build the houses they were living in, right? He felt much better after I explained things to him. I was so proud of him for saying that he wanted to be a carpenter! What a moment it was."

At NBSS, we teach students the time-honored skills and techniques of traditional trades and fine craftsmanship. Like the example of the father, we believe it's never too early to start teaching kids the patience, determination, and passion for working with their hands. For that matter, we also have retirees and career changers in all of our full-time programs... So, it's also never too late to get started on a career you love.

WHY GET AN EDUCATION IN CRAFTSMANSHIP?

Thankfully, the desire to learn traditional hand skills still burns within many of us. Whether because of modern technology or in spite of it, we're seeing a renewed interest in craftsmanship. The need for skilled tradesmen isn't going away anytime soon. In fact, interest in vocational trades is receiving greater attention than ever in recent years. There are several reasons for this:

Trade school programs offer a bigger, faster ROI. A bachelor's degree can cost upwards of \$100,000 and takes four years to complete (more if you're enrolled part-time). On average, degrees from trade schools take about two years or less, and cost half as much or less. Graduates leave school earlier and often end up making the same amount or more than those in other entry-level job fields.

The job outlook is steady and positive. Training in skilled trades has skipped a generation, likely due to the dawn of the internet. Because of this, millions of tradesmen will retire within the next decade—31 million to be precise. Add that to the

fact that hand skills simply cannot be outsourced (unlike most information and technology jobs), and you can see why trade occupations are growing substantially.

People feel more satisfied working with their hands. Perhaps it's a deep-seated trait—something that evolved in our DNA, or was hammered into our subconscious by generations before us—but we enjoy making things with our hands. It makes us feel productive and fulfilled. It gives us a feeling of meaning that's tangible and right in front of you. And that's a feeling you very rarely find in other lines of work.

Financial aid for trade schools is available. Accredited programs in the U.S. that offer degrees are eligible to receive federal funding for their programs, and a range of scholarships for trade schools are also available. In addition, veterans benefits like the Post-9/11 GI Bill can also be applied to tuition, and perhaps other costs at approved schools..

Technology may move us forward, but our history will always be rooted in the foundations our forefathers built, literally and figuratively. The best trade schools offer an education in invaluable skills and technical knowledge that can be passed on to future generations. Whether you, your parent, or your child wants to learn a traditional trade, it's never too early or too late to start.

Learn more about our Full-Time programs in traditional trades and fine craftsmanship at nbss.edu/education.



Join us in congratulating

THE CLASS OF 2017

The 136th commencement at North Bennet Street School was full of smiling faces, proud families, and a strong sense of accomplishment all around. These new graduates spent the last year or more in carpentry classes, jewelry making classes, locksmithing classes, bookbinding classes, and a host of other programs at one of the nation's top trade schools. And as one speaker shared, they should be "justifiably proud of a job well done."

View a highlights video and even more happy photos of graduation at nbss.edu/blog.





2017 DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARD

ERIC SCHANDALL PT '67 marked the 50th anniversary of his graduation with a celebration of his enduring connection to North Bennet Street School—delivering the commencement address and receiving the NBSS Distinguished Alumni Award, the first time one individual has received both honors, at the 2017 Graduation ceremony on June 2 at Old North Church.

“Eric is one of the most distinguished individuals in his profession. His considerable skills and expertise as a master piano technician help ensure that concert pianos throughout the world resonate with the beauty of their true sound. We’re delighted that Eric was with us this year to share his life experiences with our graduates,” said NBSS President Miguel Gómez-Ibáñez CF '99.

The Distinguished Alumni Award, given annually to an alumnus who has shown a history of skill at their craft, leadership in their field, and a continuing connection to the school, was presented by Alumni Association President Michael Wilson PT '11, PA '12.

“Eric has impressed the alumni community because he is humble, kind, generous with his time and knowledge, and eager to continue learning and improving his skills—even after 50 years of experience,” said Michael.

In his remarks, both accepting the Alumni honor and addressing graduates, Eric demonstrated that humility. “It was more than generous to ask me to come speak to you today, to be here with you, and receiving the Award in addition is a little overwhelming. I frankly do not get why I was singled out for this award, but I am touched to be remembered at the School, and by many friends.” Recalling his own relationship with the late Harold Marshman and the late Eddie Coughlin, former NBSS instructors, Eric encouraged the new graduates to forge similar bonds.

“I can tell you now that the time with your teachers doesn’t end when you leave school and set out on your own. They are still there, looking over your work and your life, and if you have high regard

for them as a student, it is only a fraction of the love and gratitude you have for them as you go through the decades to come.”

In his conclusion, Eric congratulated his now fellow alumni on what awaits them.

“Your lives are full to the brim with possibilities,” he said. “With the marvelous start you have at the School, your working lives are beckoning, urging you to move into the next part of the continuum of the unfolding of your lives. I will end by wishing you good luck, success, courage, strength, resilience, and good spirits.”

Following his remarks, Eric joined NBSS Chair of the Board of Directors Marc Margulies, President Gómez-Ibáñez, Provost Claire Fruitman CF '96, and faculty in congratulating the Class of 2017.

ABOVE Eric Schandall (center) poses with Alumni Association President Mike Wilson (left) and NBSS President Miguel Gómez-Ibáñez (right).

ALEX KRUTSKY CF '81 RETIRES

BY CLAIRE FRUITMAN CF '96
Provost

AFTER 32 PRODUCTIVE YEARS, Cabinet & Furniture Making Instructor Alex Krutsky recently retired from his position at the School. Alex began his lifelong relationship with NBSS as a student who hailed from Pennsylvania, where he had been woodworking and building houses. He studied under George Fullerton and Phil Lowe and after graduating joined Fort Point Cabinetmakers,

a cooperative woodworking shop that includes many of Alex’s fellow alumni. While there, he built what would become a successful furniture commission business for a varied clientele, both private and commercial. Alex began teaching part-time in the Cabinet & Furniture Making program in 1985, while still maintaining his business.

As an instructor, Alex was always supportive of students’ efforts, generous with his time and knowledge, and humble about his abilities. With his gentle guidance and quick wit, he ushered a multitude of students—this author included—through turning lessons, glue ups, and machine maintenance (who else remembers the many hours spent honing the straight knives on the old planer with him?).

As an instructor, Alex was always supportive of students’ efforts, generous with his time and knowledge, and humble about his abilities.

In his newly acquired spare time, Alex hopes to travel with his wife, Maggie, ride his bicycle throughout the Czech Republic, Germany, and Austria, and attend more baseball games than ever. He’ll continue to take on commissions in the shop, and has promised to occasionally substitute in the program where he was a fixture for decades.

Send your regards to Alex to info@nbss.edu and we’ll pass along your message.



Welcome to the Faculty!
Matt Wajda CF '01

We are proud to announce that long-time NBSS Continuing Education Instructor Matt Wajda will join the Cabinet & Furniture Making program faculty this September. He will be on site three days a week and takes over the role from Alex Krutsky CF '81, who recently retired.

Matt began teaching others while still a student, working as an Assistant in the School’s Continuing Education Department. He soon moved onto teaching short term woodworking courses at NBSS, and for the last few years has been among the pool of regular guest lecturers in the Cabinet & Furniture Making program.

In addition, Matt taught machine maintenance to the Preservation Carpentry and Carpentry students, machine safety to the Locksmithing & Security Technology students, and an Advanced Techniques course for students of the Furniture Design Certificate program. Matt has also served as an instructor at The Windsor Institute and Penland School of Craft.

Matt is active within both local and farther flung ventures. He’s a long-time member of the Guild of New Hampshire Woodworkers, and in 2015, Matt traveled to Guatemala to teach local woodworkers sustainable furniture making practices. In 2001, Matt founded River City Woodworking, which produces high-end furnishings and millwork for residential and commercial clients. He will continue overseeing this successful enterprise while in his new role at NBSS.



Continuing Education Snapshot 2016–17



most popular class

108

local middle school students enrolled in Book Arts and Woodworking classes



favorite CE weekend lunches: Tie between Tortas at Tenoch Mexican or jumbo slices at Ernesto's.

2016/17

750+

2015/16

600

students enrolled in CE courses



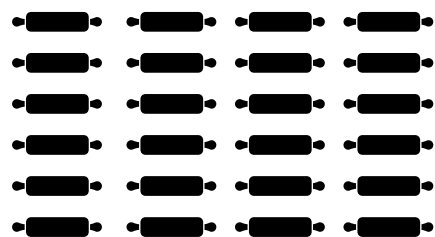
136

books made in Bookbinding 101*



50

Continuing Education instructors



24

average number of rolling pins made in each Rolling Pin & Cutting Board class

NUMBER OF CLASSES BY DISCIPLINE

- 77** Woodworking & Carpentry
- 42** Books Arts & Bookbinding
- 12** Jewelry
- 4** Musical Instruments

THE 101 ON 101s*

In 2016 we rolled out a whole new set of classes that we like to call The 101s. Offering an introduction to woodworking, bookbinding, or jewelry making, these fun, project-based classes help beginners learn the ropes and get to know the School. Students who sign up for our 101s are creative, enthusiastic, and relatively new to the craft—for many it's their first time working in a shop. The 101s are a welcoming environment where you can get a well-rounded overview and develop solid skills in a discipline of your choice. Plus, everyone goes home with a finished project in every class. What could be better than that?

*Check out our full offering of Continuing Education classes, including The 101s, at nbss.edu/ce.

AN ENDURING COMMITMENT

EVERY YEAR, DONORS of all stripes make direct, positive impact on our students' educational experience through the NBSS Annual Fund. Doing so not only provides financial support for those in need, but also helps advance the culture of craftsmanship at the School. Jay Lynch, Managing Director of Lynch & Lynch and a former member of both our Board of Directors and Board of Advisors, has made the choice to support the School again and again—now going on 15 years in a row.

Christine Murphy, Director of Development, recently chatted with Jay about the School, from his earliest experiences here, to why he feels compelled to give back year after year.

CM Thanks for your time, Jay. I know you've been a friend of NBSS for many years now. Could you tell me more about how you first became involved?

JL I think almost every woodworker knows of NBSS. I was trying without success to do some carving on a piece of furniture and heard of a Continuing Education course that was being offered at the School by Nora Hall.

I couldn't move my schedule enough to attend every minute though, so in the middle of class had to change into a suit in the men's room, run up to Suffolk Superior Court for a hearing and then return to class. Nora and the other students found that amusing, and invented a few lawyer jokes at my expense. All in good fun, of course.

CM I'll ask to hear those jokes later. And from attending that one class, you eventually went on to serve on our Board of Directors and later, Board of Advisors. How have you seen NBSS grow over the years?

JL The School has worked hard to preserve its mission while growing, moving, expanding, and becoming a more vibrant part of the community.

I worried the School may lose part of its identity when it moved to a new location in the North End, but Miguel orchestrated that transition in such a way that all stakeholders were involved.

CM When the time is right, we'll be here! In the meantime, you've continued to support NBSS for over 15 years. What compels you to continue to give back?

JL NBSS is one of the premier educational institutions in the U.S., committed to preserving and passing on the tradition of craftsmanship. At the School's core is the value of maintaining and challenging the intersection of craftsmanship and art, while providing its students with an opportunity for a future of meaningful, self-directed employment. It's amazing.

I'll add that the Board, staff, and faculty are as welcoming, motivated, and hardworking as the students. Having experienced that culture, who wouldn't feel compelled to give back?

Make your gift to the NBSS Annual Fund today at nbss.edu/donate.

Upcoming Events

All events take place at NBSS in Boston unless otherwise noted. For more details on these and other great events, visit nbss.edu/calendar.

Lecture: A Passion for Craft
Tuesday, July 18

Brent Hull PC '93 of the History Channel's *Lone Star Restoration* discusses his preservation work throughout the U.S.

Rally at the Alley: Student & Alumni Bowling Party
Thursday, September 21
Sacco's Bowl-Haven | Somerville, MA

22nd Annual New England Fine Furnishings Show
Friday, November 3 – Sunday, November 5
Pawtucket Armory | Pawtucket, RI

Designer Bookbinders Exhibit
Friday, November 3 – Friday, December 22

Lecture: Artistic Vision in Contemporary Bookbinding
Tuesday, November 14

Open House 2017
Friday and Saturday, November 17 & 18

Learn more about our programs, get an insider's look at our workspaces, and get to know our community of students, alumni, faculty, and friends. Free and open to the public.

CraftBoston Holiday
Friday, December 15 – Sunday, December 17
Hynes Convention Center | Boston, MA

2017 Holiday Party
Thursday, December 21



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Find us online

NBSS.EDU

@NBSSboston

OPEN HOUSE



**NOVEMBER
17 & 18, 2017**

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NBSS.EDU/OPENHOUSE

