

# BENCHMARKS



THE MAGAZINE OF NORTH BENNET STREET SCHOOL **WINTER 2017**

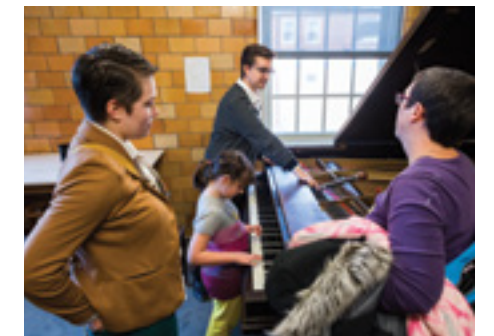




## 2016 OPEN HOUSE

Over 800 people joined us this past November for an insider's look at our unique community.

[View these and other great event photos on our Facebook page!](#)





# ENGAGING THE NEXT GENERATION

BY MIGUEL GÓMEZ-IBÁÑEZ CF '99  
President of NBSS

**DEVELOPING AND NURTURING** the next generation of makers and craft artists is central to the mission of North Bennet Street School. This past October it was the subject of a panel on craft education that I was privileged to moderate at an American Craft Council conference in Omaha, Nebraska.

On the panel were representatives from Rhode Island School of Design and Haystack Mountain School of Crafts, as well as a studio potter and a studio glass artist who learned their craft in lengthy apprenticeships. The panel focused on the need to open craft schools—and the field itself—to a wider audience. One that better reflects the diverse world in which we live.

The cost of a craft education, combined with modest salary expectations upon graduation, are among the most significant barriers to access for many. To address this challenge, we at NBSS recently launched a \$20M campaign to fund student scholarships. It's an ambitious goal, but one that we're passionate about pursuing.

Affordability is not the only factor limiting access to the field, however. Many young people are simply not aware of the opportunities and rewards vocational training offers. They've grown up in an educational environment where success is measured by standardized tests and college acceptance rates. They've never been exposed to shop class, or even arts and crafts for that matter. This issue came into focus as part of the conference.

"It's not simple," said panel member Mark Shapiro, a studio potter. "It's one thing to offer scholarships or to have low costs, and it's another thing to get people to imagine, coming from other places... that this field is for them."

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Motivated by this challenge, in 2010 NBSS resumed a manual arts training program for students of the nearby [John Eliot K-8 School](#). These are classes we originally offered to the Boston Public Schools (BPS) in 1885, and then as today, were intended to expose the next generation to hand skill-oriented careers.

This program has been resounding success, and we're now in the process of bringing it to older students. This past summer, a pilot program provided a pre-vocational course to students

from [Boston's Madison Park Technical Vocational High School](#).

A second and more extensive program is proposed for the Jeremiah E. Burke High School, which serves some of Boston's most promising youth from Dorchester's Grove Hall neighborhood. The goal is to provide students with a project-based curriculum that has meaning for them, one that responds to their unique needs and goals.

"We believe that we will create the conditions to innovate by partnering with North Bennet Street School," says Burke Principal Dr. Lindsa McIntyre. "Our students need a trajectory to success that makes sense to their lived experiences. Building vocational capacity that leads to employment in real time does just that."

By working with public schools, NBSS is bringing manual arts training to a younger and wider audience—true to our origins as the nation's first trade school. The value of working at a craft is far from obvious for many, but the early results of these efforts have been heartening. And as the stories in this issue of *Benchmarks* suggest, the experience of working with one's hands builds not only a variety of creative skills, but also patience, integrity, and character. I can't think of a more important pursuit than to share this rewarding path with young lives everyday.






WE'RE ONLY AS GOOD AS THE EQUIPMENT WE USE.  
WE RECENTLY ASKED THE NBSS COMMUNITY:

## WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE TOOL?



### KEN HULKE JR. JM '04

My grandfather's Jewelers saw frame, that (we believe) he used when he studied at NBSS in the 50s and that I used from 2002 – 2004.



### MARY LOUISE SULLIVAN

Whether paring leather for a binding or carving a linoleum block, a horse butt strop will keep any blade razor sharp.



### NICOLE CAMPANA BB '16

This was a piece of cow bone Jim Croft gave me which I shaped into its current form. Undoubtedly my most used tool. Hurrah for bone folders!



### PATRICK G. TIGHE LK '17

Here's my favorite locksmith hand tool.... HPC brand "J" pick. Great for picking, probing, and a million other things.



### JOE DIOMEDE CF '18

Working with @petergalbert has given me the chance to use new tools like these spokeshaves. Sharpening them to 30,000 grit was pretty fun.



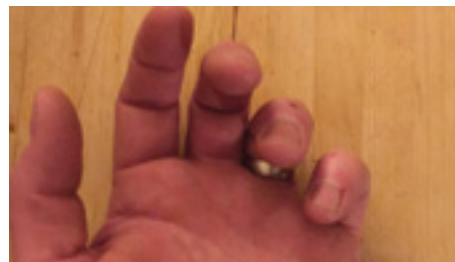
### SPENCER JACOBSEN

My favorite hand tool, the modified stabila.



### SERGIO JARAMILLO JM '16

Mildly customized Friedrich Dick escapement file. Polished safe edges for work around stones and polished back because #shiny.



### EVAN S KISTLER PC '15

I use my hands to guide saws, planes, pencils, and beautifully bound books. Without my hands I wouldn't be able to do what I love.



### KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING!

Share your favorite #handtooltuesday photos with @NBSSboston on Instagram or Twitter!

# HANDMADE BOOKS, JEWELRY, BOWLS, FURNITURE, AND MORE.

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**NBSS SHOWROOM & STORE**  
*Online store coming soon!*

Open Monday through Friday  
9:00 am to 3:00 pm, or by appointment





# MARINE CORPS TO MAKER SCHOOL

BY GRANT BURGER CF '17

*Time's better currency than money  
for some cash-strapped woodworkers.*

**WITH MOST THINGS IN LIFE**, you either pay with your time or your money. Say you want to build a box using 3/4 black walnut. You have three options: Buy boards milled to final thickness from a lumberyard (least time, most money); purchase rough-sawn 4/4 boards to mill yourself (more time, less money); or fell a walnut tree, have a sawyer cut it into flitches, wait years for the wood to dry and mill it to your final dimensions (least money, most time).

This time:money ratio came to mind recently when I was asked about my decision to attend North Bennet Street School (NBSS) as a **Cabinet & Furniture Making** student. I'd been aware of the School, established in the North End of Boston in 1881, since I began making furniture and seeking out woodworking wisdom—and as a veteran of the United States Marine Corps, I paid for the opportunity to attend with my time. After years spent serving in the military, I am fortunate to have earned education benefits that allow me to explore my woodworking passion. Living and training in Boston can be a financial challenge, but VA benefits allow students like myself to focus solely on studying.

Upon arrival, I was surprised to learn the School's current veteran attendance is **at its highest since the post-Vietnam era**. As of this writing, one in five of the students is a veteran, and that number is expected to rise in coming years.

But why are so many veterans attracted to the craft? I can only figure that, as craftsmen and craftswomen, we train in pursuit of that high we get from making something with our hands, stepping back and admiring it.

Beyond this primal thrill, though, I've found many lessons taught in the military parallel the values of fine crafts and trades. Both in the Marines and school, I've grappled with a need to succeed the first time and the necessity of precision. I daily consider the value of hard work, a thorough plan and an ability to anticipate possible failures.

In the military, these lessons are burned deep into a soldier's subconscious—failure to learn them can have deadly effects. In the world of woodworking and fine craftsmanship, it's your product, your reputation and your fingers that hang in the balance.

But some military lessons just don't apply to the world of craft. Instructing a budding woodworker to build his or her project "by any means necessary" isn't the best advice. Neither is the concept of achievement through brute force particularly helpful.

I tried to note a distinguishing factor of veteran NBSS students but realized that, similar backgrounds aside, we're really identical to other students. Most, if not all, of us will

tell you without hesitation that the first day of school marked a new chapter in our lives. Walking through the halls and machine rooms, stepping around students' benches, looking at freshly varnished furniture—the only way to tell a veteran student from others is to ask.

Woodworkers arrive at school with a singular mind, just as we all felt the same inner tickle with our first step into a woodshop. And the belief that led us veterans into recruiting stations also pushed many toward woodworking programs: the belief we can create something greater than ourselves.

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Grant serves as public affairs director for the North Bennet Street School's Student Veteran Organization. He's a former screen printer, cage fighter, and carpenter. Reprinted with permission from Popular Woodworking Magazine's "End Grain" series, February 2017.



# FRAME TO FINISH

BY R. SCOTT REEDY

## IF THE SHERBORN-BASED SEQUOIA CUSTOM BUILDERS, INC.

is any indication, the NBSS tradition of alumni hiring students as interns and employees is alive and well.

The current team at **Sequoia** is comprised of five Carpentry alumni employed full-time as carpenters and assistant carpenters. Owner and operator Patrick O'Shaugnessy CA '06 believes hiring NBSS graduates just makes good sense.

"I don't feel that hiring alums is a way of giving back. I feel lucky as a business owner to be hiring formally trained tradesmen. The fundamentals that they learned in the classroom make them more adaptable and better able to continue learning in the field. What I look for in an employee is that North Bennet mentality to love what you do."

Pat says that he developed that understanding himself during his time as a teacher.

"I taught at NBSS for five years (2009–2014). It is a special community. The skills I learned gave me the ability not only to make a living but to fulfill a passion. And when I was a new graduate, first working on my own, I missed

that shared passion, so going back to teach really re-inspired me in my craft as well as my commitment to pass along those incredibly valuable skills. Since we're all NBSS graduates, we focus on staying true to the traditions of the School in bringing fine craftsmanship to every project we take on."

Now an assistant carpenter at Sequoia, Jayquan Richardson CA '16 first began developing his own carpentry skills when he was just a young teenager.

"I had a friend who owned a house and, when I was about 14, I helped him build a cabinet and do some small carpentry projects," recalls Jayquan. "He liked my work and recommended North Bennet Street School to me. When I first arrived, I had no idea exactly what I was getting into, but I knew right away that it was what I wanted. I knew I could never work in an office. It would just be too boring. I like doing something different every day. That's what I like about hands-on carpentry," explains the 2015 graduate of Lowell High School.

"All the skills I have, I learned at NBSS, including patience. I also learned about resilience and a lot about teamwork, too." After completing the program, Jayquan set out to find employment. One of his first stops was an NBSS alumni event, where he met Pat.

"Jayquan made a great impression. He was assertive in meeting me at an alumni function, and he was diligent in his follow-up," remembers Pat. "He was honest in his conversations and really knew what he was seeking for employment. He wanted to do an array of carpentry tasks from frame to finish. He wanted mentors, too, and fortunately we were able to offer him the right environment to cultivate his craft. It has been great to see him excel on our team."

Grateful for the opportunity to do things the NBSS way and happy to have earned Pat's respect, Jayquan is also pleased with the support the boss shows the entire team.

"Pat wants us to be set up for success, too, so if a tool is broken he wants to be told so he can repair or replace it. He always makes sure we have a uniform. I have maybe 30 different Sequoia shirts – long sleeve, short sleeve, some with and some without collars. If you get something on a shirt and it doesn't come out, Pat gets you a new one."

Pat's attention to detail and professionalism are traits shared by Jayquan, who plans one day to open his own carpentry business.

"I approach all my work with determination," he says. "I want to get it done efficiently and correctly."



# PEANUT BUTTER JELLY TIME

BY KEVIN DERRICK

**IT'S THURSDAY AT LUNCHTIME**, and North Bennet Street School students crowd both sides of three long folding tables in the expansive Windgate Gallery. They've been summoned to the space over the School's loudspeaker just moments ago, and before them are a mouth-watering array of fixings:

Bananas, oranges, and apples. White and wheat breads. Peanut butters of the creamy, crunchy, and "natural" varieties. Jams, jellies, and preserves. Nutella and Fluff, for those with a sweet(er) tooth.

The students may have entirely different backgrounds, hand skills, and career goals. But when it comes to lunch, everyone agrees PB&J Thursdays are hard to beat.

"Chunky peanut butter with raspberry preserves is the best combo," Kate Levy BB '17 is quick to point out, as she draws the sweet spread across a slice of bread. A friend chimes in, "Six parts peanut butter to one part jam. Eat, and follow up with second sandwich." A winning formula.

"My go-to is an open face PB & Fluff," said Tessa Wood PT '17, in between bites. "I always kick myself afterwards because I'm gluten free... but it's worth it."

A conversation with the School administration reveals the lunch's origins. "It started during that terrible winter we had a couple years back, and was really just a way to help students from having to go outside in the weather," Provost Claire Fruitman CF '96 shares. "It turned out to be wildly popular, so much so that we decided to make it permanent event."

PB&J Thursdays were extended through May that year, and are now enjoyed weekly during the nine-month academic calendar.

While avoiding weather is a sometimes-blessing, the gathering has a number of other benefits besides: students get a well-deserved break from their projects, they can interact with others outside of their program, and they save a bit of money too.

"It's so much better than an expensive lunch in the North End" cites Brooke Esplin VM '19.

National PB&J Day is fast approaching on Sunday, April 2, and ideas on how best to celebrate it are already circulating. Suggestions range from adding crackers to the fixings, to bringing a grill in for Elvis-styled sandwiches (peanut butter and banana, toasted).

Though the festivities around that day may be anyone's guess, what's not in question is the future of PB&J Thursdays at NBSS. Thanks to the generosity of an anonymous donor, the enormously popular weekly favorite will be fully funded, from fresh fruit and breads to a broader selection of a favorite, Teddie All Natural Peanut Butter. Wholesome foods means happier, harder-working students, after all.

As for one of the less healthy options, Brendan Sullivan CF '18 exclaims, "Midwesterners already took a vote... no Fluff! What is that stuff anyway?"



## Board Updates

**MELBA ABREU** leads fiscal and administrative operations at Jobs for the Future. She previously served as both a Senior Financial Officer at Harvard University and Director of Finance and Technology at Harvard's David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies. Melba received her degree in accounting and finance at the Instituto de Economia in Matanzas, Cuba, and has completed extensive coursework in computer science, information technology, and financial management at Harvard University.

**BRAD CALLOWAY** is an Executive Vice President and Tax Credits Manager at First NBC Bank. Through this position, he leads the tax credit programs, which includes origination and structuring investments in new markets, and historic and low-income housing tax credits. Brad completed a Bachelor of Professional Accountancy degree from Mississippi State University and completed the CPA certification process in Mississippi.

**CHARLES KLINE CF '05** is a Partner and Managing Director of Century Capital Partners and member of the Board of Management at Century Capital Management a public and private equity funds management business. In addition to his role on the NBSS Board, Charlie serves on the boards of directors of Digital Risk, LLC; Integro, Ltd., Thomco Enterprises, Torrent Technologies and Advisors Excel. A proud graduate of the Cabinet & Furniture Making program, Charlie lives near Boston with his wife Charlotte and three children.

**TOM PIEMONTE** serves as the Head of Interventional Cardiology at Lahey Clinic and also as Chairman of Project Pacer International, a nonprofit charitable organization that delivers free care to indigent patients worldwide. He has had a long-standing love for woodworking: his property development company, North Liberty LLC, works on historic homes throughout Nantucket, and he took part in the Sloyd Society lecture series offered by NBSS. Tom appreciates the honor of serving the School in the years ahead.

**GISSELLE STERLING** serves her fellow veterans as the Commissioner of the Office of Veterans' Service for the City of Boston. As the first woman and Latina to hold the title of Commissioner, she connects Boston's homeless and low-income veterans and their families with the services they have earned. Giselle was trained as a Field Radio Operator for the United States Marine Corps, and is a graduate of UMass Lowell with a Bachelor's degree in English (writing) and a Minor in studio art. She is currently an MFA student of creative writing at Sierra Nevada College.

**ZAKIYA THOMAS** is the former Director of Education and Community Initiatives for the Boston Ballet where she oversaw the organization's nationally-acclaimed education programs Citydance, Taking Steps, and Adaptive Dance. Zakiya is a classically trained violinist. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Journalism from the University of Texas at Austin and a graduate degree in Arts Administration from Boston University. Zakiya is currently pursuing a second graduate degree in Education Policy and Management at Harvard University.

**GENIE THORNDIKE CF '16** graduated from the Cabinet & Furniture Making program and now makes furniture in a shop at Charlestown Furniture Makers. A former English teacher, she also teaches middle school woodworking to the 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students who visit NBSS from two schools in the North End. Of all the schools she has attended, taught in, or visited, including those her own children attended, NBSS is by far her favorite. She has never seen happier students.

*Joining our new Board members are several new members of our Committee of Overseers:*

Jacob Albert  
David Ambler CF '11  
Sylvia Bertrand  
Gaurish Chandrasheldar  
Nicholas Deane  
Rebekah Lord-Gardiner  
Avital Manor-Peleg  
Patrick Muecke CF '97



## Continuing Education

Enjoy a creative break from your every day. With small class sizes, expert instructors, and well-equipped facilities, NBSS offers a fantastic learning environment for students of all ages and abilities.

### Jewelry I: Essential Skills

Thursdays, March 30 to June 1  
*Leslie Hartwell JM '06*

### Jewelry II: Soldering Intensive

Tuesdays, March 28 to May 30  
*Leslie Hartwell JM '06*

### Windsor Chairs

Monday, April 10 to Saturday, April 15  
*Peter Galbert*

### Open Shop: Bowl Turning

Saturday, April 15  
*Taima Krayem CF '16*

### Introduction to Shellac

Saturday, April 22 & Sunday, April 23  
*Brian McQuay CF '04*

### Fundamentals of Bookbinding I

Monday, April 24 to Friday, April 28  
*Erin Fletcher BB '12*

### Introduction to Spindle Turning

Saturday, April 29 & Sunday, April 30  
*Brian McQuay CF '04*

### Secret Belgian Binding

Saturday, May 6 & Sunday, May 7  
*Erin Fletcher BB '12*

### Introduction to the Skew Chisel

Saturday, May 13 & Sunday, May 14  
*Alan Lacer*

### Spoon Carving

Saturday, May 13 & Sunday, May 14  
*Tim Manney*

### Introduction to Paper Conservation

Saturday, May 13 & Sunday, May 14  
*James Reid-Cunningham BB '90*

### Shaker Boxes

Tuesday & Thursday, May 16 & 18  
*Judith Hanson CF '95*

### Make Your Own Punching Cradle

Saturday, May 20  
*Erin Fletcher BB '12*

### Clasps and Closures

Saturday, May 20 & Sunday, May 21  
*Leslie Hartwell JM '06*

### Turned Lidded Boxes

Saturday, May 20 & Sunday, May 21  
*Alan Lacer*

For more details and a full listing of upcoming classes, visit [www.nbss.edu/ce](http://www.nbss.edu/ce).



## Upcoming Events

### MakeSpeak Lecture Series

Thursday, April 6

### Boston Design Week Tour

Friday, April 7

### B/A/D/ Talks: New Homes in Older Settings

Tuesday, April 4

### Annual Celebration of Craft Student & Alumni Exhibit

Tuesday, May 16 – Wednesday, May 31

### Preview Dinner

Thursday, May 11

### Opening Reception

Thursday, May 18

### Commencement 2017

Friday, June 3

### Open-Set | Bookbinding Competition & Exhibition

Thursday, June 18 – Wednesday, July 19

### Brent Hull PC '93 | Lone Star Restoration Lecture

Thursday, July 20

All events take place at NBSS. For more details on these and other events, visit [www.nbss.edu/calendar](http://www.nbss.edu/calendar)

*Welcome!*

**Louis del Bene**

PT '06, PA '07

*Beginner and Advanced  
Piano Technology Instructor*

**AFTER GRADUATING FROM** the two NBSS **Piano Technology programs**, Louis returned to the School this past fall as an Instructor in both. Louis has worked in a number of piano rebuilding shops, including Mosaic Piano Service in Greensboro, NC where he was an Operations Manager. In 2012, Louis moved to Santa Rosa, CA to launch his own business, Brevet Piano Service. There, he worked on home instruments, concert stages, recording studios, antique keyboard instruments, and more. Louis is a Registered Piano Technician with the Piano Technicians Guild (PTG). He served as President & Vice President in the Central North Carolina chapter and later, as Vice President for the San Francisco chapter. In addition, Louis is a lifelong learner, and continues to grow his knowledge of the tools, materials, and processes associated with the field.



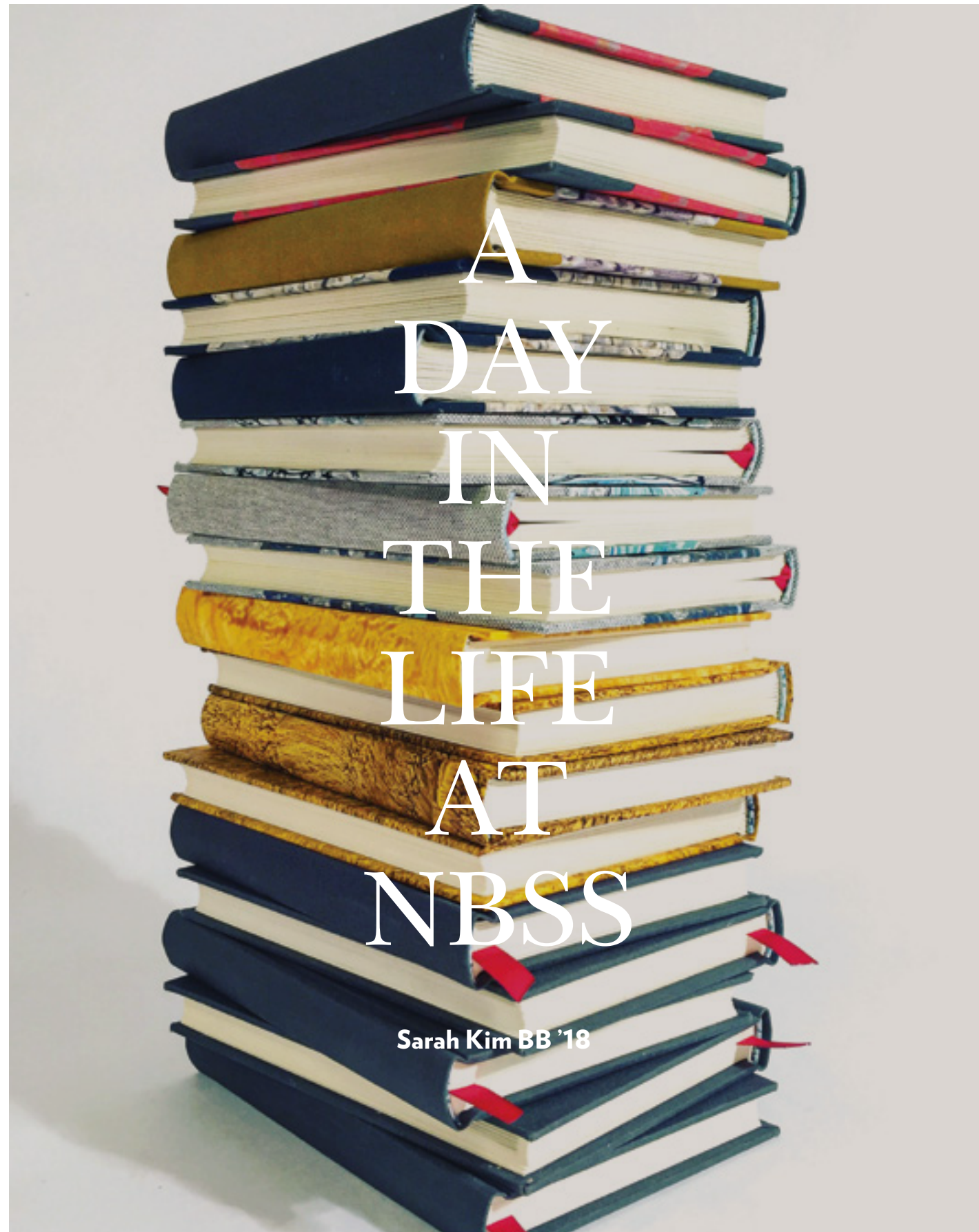


Photo of all the books I've made so far. What do you think?



a



b



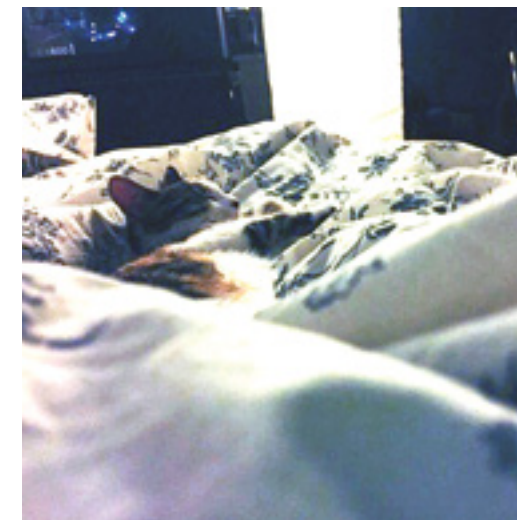
c



d



e



f

Bookbinding student Sarah Kim BB '18 recently [started classes](#) at NBSS this past fall. Moving here from Syracuse, NY took some adjusting, but she's loving her new home and all that Boston has to offer. Here Sarah shares a typical day in her life, from morning commute and bench work to a few of her favorite things.

Follow Sarah on Instagram [@s.kimply](#)

- a Good morning, Boston! I can't believe this my view every day when I get off the train.
- b Getting to work. I'm the happiest when I'm here.
- c Time to round and back this book.
- d Bricco's, a sandwich goldmine tucked away in a hidden Boston alley.
- e Closing shift at Tatte. I LOVE that my job allows me the opportunity to learn more about different crafts. First, #coffee and now #bread.
- f Nothing like coming home to bed at the end of a busy day.

For more great photos of Boston and the North End, visit us on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#)!



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MAY 16 – 31, 2017

For exhibition hours and other info, visit [NBSS.EDU/ACC2017](http://NBSS.EDU/ACC2017)