



# Benchmarks

As I write, our School has just launched new graduates into the world, ready with their training to bring talents to communities locally and across the country. Walking together from NBSS to Old North Church on a summer morning, it was evident that it takes all of us to support the success of our students. Many points of view, individual approaches, unique abilities, and diverse experiences all work together to build our strong, passionate, and resilient community.

This has been a recurring theme of the last year: connection. Though we each have different vantage points, we join our specialized skills in shared interest, trusting that we can build, grow, and reach.

This was true in the fall, when we joined MassArt and SMFA at Tufts in a **Radical Jewelry Makeover**—bringing our technical knowledge to the artistic and creative approaches of art-students (and heaps of jewelry from the community). What started as a tiny piece in one's dresser drawer, ended in remade jewelry and new understandings of the environment, and our interconnection with mined materials and the earth's resources.

Collaboration between and among our career training programs is nothing new. But a rising cohort of students is bridging disciplines with dual diplomas. **Viet Phan** and **Plamen Jetchev** built their skills and confidence in locksmithing, and then followed up on their interest to learn how to build homes—locks, doors, frames, and all—in our Carpentry program. In many ways, they exemplify our philosophy of hands, hearts, and minds working in concert together.

We also see connections in our **2022 Exhibition: Making Matters**. Here, a well-tuned string helps to perform a symphony. A carefully crafted window will be opened and enjoyed over a life-time. A repaired book can preserve generations of knowledge. In it, we can look closely at these small details and also take a step back, marveling at their shared impact.

On that summer graduation day in June, recognizing the work of our students and faculty gave me hope. In a world struggling for respect and empathy, it is work at a human-scale that will make an impact. As you read our stories from the year, I hope you'll reflect on the connections in your own life and work, and how these can be meaningful to individual lives, broader communities, or our culture as a whole.



SARAH TURNER, PRESIDENT



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# Graduation 2022

On Friday, June 10, our assembled faculty and staff—along with family, friends, and supporters—celebrated the joyous graduation of 83 students at the historic Old North Church.

We were honored to have **Boston Mayor Michelle Wu** deliver an inspired commencement address, and also delighted to hear our Distinguished Alumni Award winner **Kurt Fieldhouse CA '93** share his insights in a rousing speech to graduates.

Finishing the requirements for graduation at North Bennet Street School takes hard work, commitment, and dedication at the best of times. Our 2022 graduating class demonstrated these qualities and more, staying the course through the significant challenges of the last two years. We couldn't be more proud of all that they have accomplished.

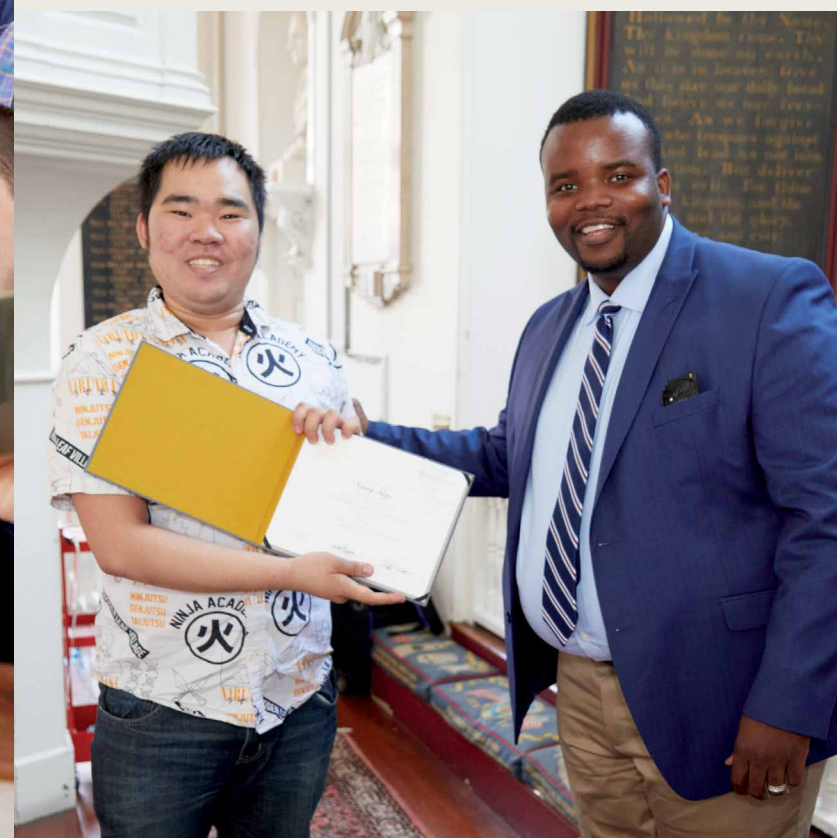


View a recording of the full ceremony and read all of the speakers' remarks at [nbss.edu/news](https://nbss.edu/news)



“This school is a place of such intention—such choice. Now, as you leave, I'd like to ask you to bring that intention with you. Continue to build and mend and weave here, in our neighborhoods and communities, where there is so much building and mending to be done.”

— BOSTON MAYOR MICHELLE WU



# Distinguished Alumni Award

Kurt Fieldhouse CA '93



We are pleased to announce that **Kurt Fieldhouse**, a 1993 graduate of the Carpentry program, is the recipient of the 2022 Distinguished Alumni Award.

Kurt, founder and owner of C2MG Builders in Topsfield MA, is always looking for ways to give back to North Bennet Street School and to support Carpentry students. He has been a Carpentry Program Advisory Committee member for over 10 years, in which he works with faculty to ensure that the program and curriculum always has student success in mind.

Over the years, Kurt has hired countless NBSS alumni to work at C2MG. He also graciously allows our current students to collaborate on relevant C2MG construction projects, so that students can get the skills and mentorship they need in the field. Recent projects include remodeling a ranch house during the fall and winter of 2019 and building a timber frame pool house with a screen porch during the spring and summer of 2021. He even allowed the Carpentry class to use his pool at the end of last July for an end of the year picnic!

We're proud to claim Kurt as an NBSS alumnus and to recognize his work in the field.

"Kurt is always going above and beyond in a selfless manner that is seldom seen and worth recognizing. Kurt understands that to work with students you must be accommodating, patient, and willing to sacrifice to ensure that the students receive an education, not just perform a task."

— PETER SMITH PC '04, CARPENTRY DEPARTMENT HEAD

This award is presented each year based on one's professional accomplishments, one's contributions to industries, and one's work with schools and organizations to promote excellence in craft.

## Connecting

Trying to arrange shop/studio visits whenever I'm away somewhere!

— EVAN COURT CF '14

I'll be doing a 2 week internship at Boston University Tanglewood Institute, then a short vacation on Monhegan Island, ME.

— CAROLL ARBOGAST PT '22

Connecting with a couple '22 Piano Tech grads working at the Aspen Music Festival!

— CHRISTINA SCROGGINS PT '16

I'm going to see my friends and family again, and tune all their pianos.

— ISABEL RODRIGUEZ PT '22

I am going to learn how to make brushes up in Maine and reinforce many of the skills I have learned this past year.

— BEN KOTIS CF '23

NBSS COMMUNITY:

### What are your summer plans?

Taking my infant son hiking every week.

— BRENNAN SIMPSON CF '18

I'm starting a small craft-centered library for my community!

— MCKENNA PERKINS CF '20

I will unplug in my garden and on the ocean with a fishing rod in hand.

— JOHN LOEFSTEDT CF '22

Building an earthen oven, in hopes of starting a bread baking community in my little hilltown.

— CLAUDIA WAITE, CE

## Unplugging

I will be traveling to San Francisco with my fiancée for some needed time off, and hoping to learn how construction is done on the west coast.

— VIET PHAN LK '21, CA '22

# A Second Chance to Shine

NBSS linked up  
with other schools  
for Radical Jewelry  
Makeover: Boston

**Ja'Hari Ortega JM '23** bent over a table that was covered in vintage clip-on earrings, methodically sorting imitation pearls, lime green rhinestones, and decorative fig leaves into piles.

Each of the donated pieces had been worn by someone else, cherished or forgotten, tucked away and then offered up by more than 70 generous individuals for repurposing by Radical Jewelry Makeover: Boston (RJM).

"What is radical about that?" Ja'Hari asked herself about the project's title as she thought through the process that lay ahead. "Access is a huge word," she concluded, thinking about who wore the original jewelry, and who would (or would not) be able to afford the new pieces. To others, the "radical" aspect of RJM, was the call to re-design the jewelry making industry to be free of exploitation and waste.

A 2021 Massachusetts College of Art & Design (MassArt) graduate, Ja'Hari was a teaching assistant for RJM, which is how she reconnected with **Melissa Gallin**, who had known her as a young artist and is now Director of Institutional Support at NBSS. The two met up and spoke more about Ja'Hari's goals and the NBSS Jewelry Making & Repair program. She ultimately applied and was accepted. "Add in the technical skills I'm picking up at North Bennet and I'm going to be unstoppable," Ja'Hari said from her bench in the jewelry making workshop.

"When people dropped off a piece of jewelry, they also dropped off stories," said **Tanya Crane**, Professor of the Practice at School of the Museum of Fine Arts at Tufts University (SMFA at Tufts), who co-taught a semester-long RJM course with **Emily Cobb**, assistant professor in jewelry and metalsmithing at MassArt.

After several years of disconnect related to Covid-19, the partnership sparked reconnection among its participants—one clasp, bead, and chain link at a time.

Founded in 2007, RJM is an international program hosted by different cities around the world to encourage responsible jewelry making practices.

That includes bringing awareness to how gemstones, metals, and costume jewelry can be recycled and whether they were sourced and produced ethically originally. Donations are accepted, sorted, and taken apart to create new jewelry pieces to be exhibited and sold back within the community.

The Boston installment was a creative collaboration between NBSS, SMFA at Tufts, and MassArt. The project took place over the Fall 2021 semester, culminating in an exhibition on display in the NBSS Gallery & Store through January 2022.





Over at NBSS, where the Jewelry Making & Repair program students log over 50 practical projects during their two-year journey, Department Head **Ann Cahoon JM '02** and several of her students determined that they could be most helpful by lending their technical expertise as bench jewelers.

Their skills complemented the passion for design that students from the other two schools brought to the project.

Ann said, “We really dug deep and offered support in identifying materials.” Those elements included metals and gemstones. But she also advised on the safety measures related to working with pieces containing lead, a potentially hazardous metal, and presented lectures on identification of jewelry hallmarks (a numeric or alphabetical mark on fine jewelry specifying purity), and other related topics.

After the sorting stage, boxes marked “For inspection by NBSS” began arriving from SMFA at Tufts. “They have expertise in analysis of material and source material,” Tanya explained.

“NBSS students could really put things under the microscope and analyze what kind of stone we were dealing with.”

And though some (literal) diamonds in the rough were discovered in the gleaming mountain of costume jewelry, Ann was quick to clarify that “a strand of plastic beads that belonged to someone’s grandmother is no less precious or important than the three-carat solitaire. What makes jewelry precious is not necessarily its content.”

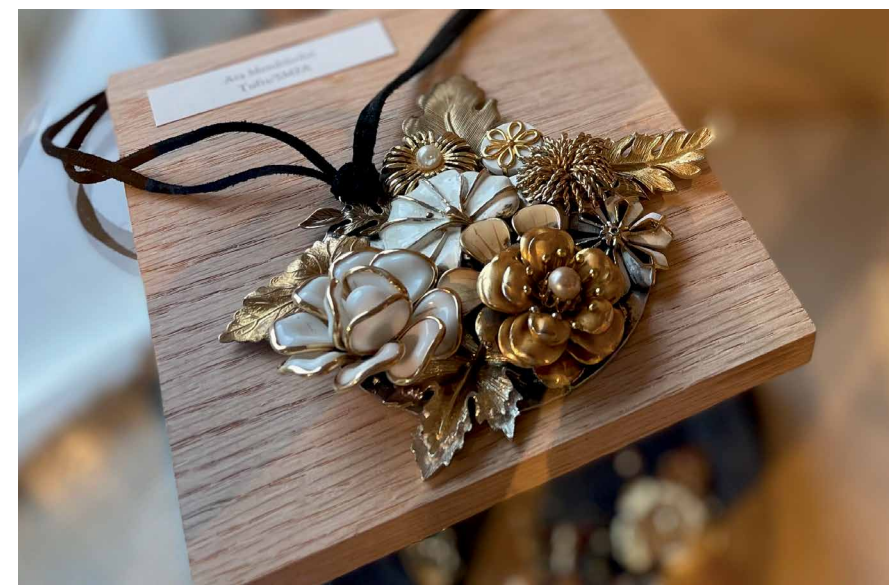
Ja’Hari enjoyed seeing students overcome their hesitation about breaking down older pieces and getting the creative ball rolling. “Watching those things evolve was pretty awesome,” she says.

Rings, brooches, and several striking necklaces incorporating elements of human hair, beading, rope, butterfly, and other animal motifs, made for contemplative viewing as well as reflection on fast fashion, what is wasted, and what is treasured.

Ann appreciated that the jewelry was “sophisticated in inception and execution,” and that getting to showcase them at NBSS provided a nice moment for her students to see the value of “the craft side of the house” where handwork is purposefully made to be sold for a profit.

It also provided a launchpad to discuss methods of preserving, handling, and recycling materials and objects. And across town at SMFA at Tufts, Tanya notices that as a result of the project, “The students now think about the amount of waste that objects in general create, all the waste that comes from mining and every material that we use.”

Meanwhile, the impact of RJM continues to ripple out into the wider community. The jewelry piece that Ja’Hari made was purchased by an artist living and working in Roxbury, her own neighborhood in Boston.



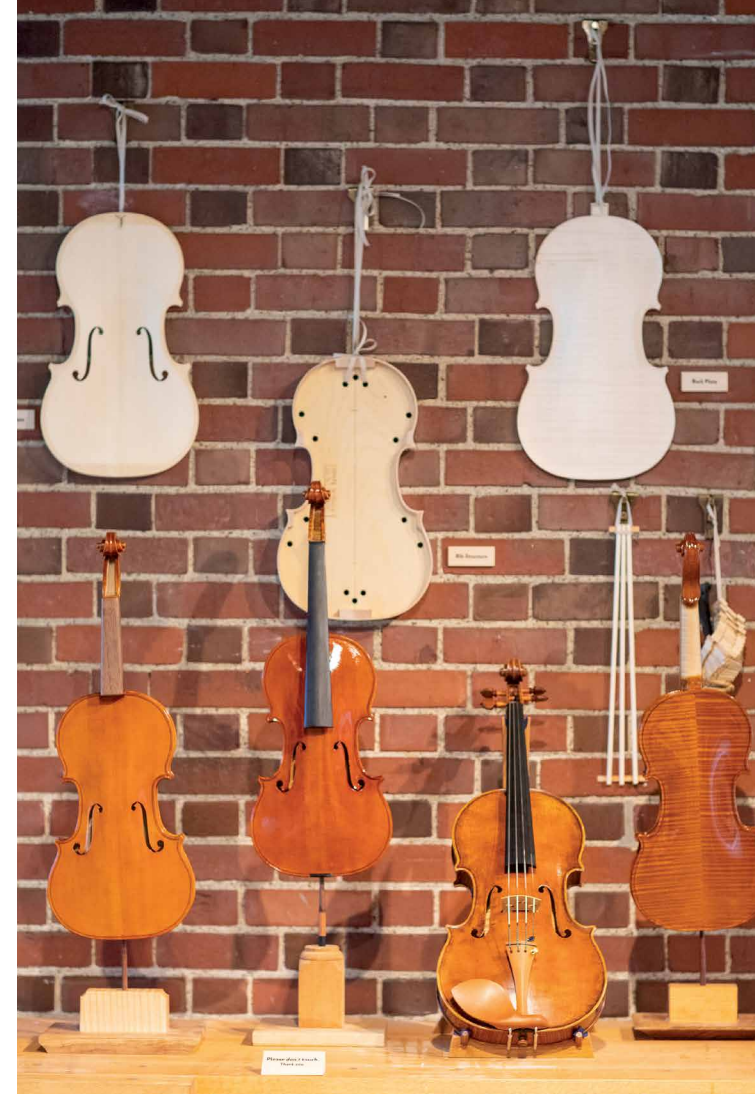
Work by Ava Mendelsohn, SMFA at Tufts

“A strand of plastic beads that belonged to someone’s grandmother is no less precious or important than the three-carat solitaire. What makes jewelry precious is not necessarily its content.”

— ANN CAHOON JM '02, NBSS DEPARTMENT HEAD



# Making Matters



Featuring displays of typical objects, tools, and materials from our career-training programs, our **2022 Exhibition: Making Matters** is a behind-the-scenes look at the craft and care of making.

While many of the works on display could represent almost any era in the history of our School—a deconstructed piano, hand carved brackets, jewelers' tools, finely bound books—they also reflect the heads-down and hands-on focus of the last two years.

Part science exhibit and part gallery show, the displays offer insight on how craft- and tradespeople create objects that last—be it a chair, a necklace, a book, a lock, a building, or an instrument. With attention and care as a recurring theme, our 2022 Exhibition reveals how the act of making matters in our everyday lives.



EXHIBITIONS



On display through August 26, 2022

Learn more and view the exhibition at [nbss.edu/2022exhibition](https://nbss.edu/2022exhibition)

# A Violin Architect



Peering inside a violin, **Nathan Abbe VM '20** can't help but see a miniature building. "They look sort of like cathedrals," Nathan smiles. "There are walls, which are the ribs, and a lining attached to the ribs, which gives the plate more of a surface to glue to. It's like having a column, beam, and floor structure."

Today, Nathan is a Teaching Assistant in Violin Making & Repair (VM), the same three-year program he completed in 2020. He is a skilled maker of these mini, musical "buildings." But more than a decade ago, his focus was on designing actual buildings—earning a bachelor's in architecture from Pratt Institute.

At Pratt, Nathan gravitated to sculptural courses, mastering how to use computer-aided design (CAD), laser cutting, and 3D printing to create fabricated models. Every chance to work with his hands was incredibly "refreshing." By graduation in 2011, he realized he didn't actually want to be an architect. Instead, he landed a Brooklyn, New York-based job as Fabrication Manager for high-profile contemporary artist Daniel Arsham.

"I found myself making sculptures and learning a ton of new skills, like silicone mold-making, plaster casting, and working with resins," Nathan recalls. Whether molding and casting the thousands of sports balls that formed a glowing purple cavern in Daniel's "Circa 2345" exhibition, or fabricating pieces for multimedia

collaborations with celebrities like musician Pharrell Williams or actor Juliette Lewis, Nathan says his five years with the blue-chip artist taught him how to plan, execute, and push boundaries as a maker. But eventually, he felt ready for a change. "I came across North Bennet Street School and thought, 'That's it.'"

"I still get to incorporate all the things that I loved from these previous lives," Nathan says. "Violin making is so sculptural. There's such a freedom in movement for certain aspects of the process. But it's also extremely precise. We make things to within a tenth of a millimeter. And if you're doing restoration, you have to have a robust ability to plan."

**Roman Barnas**, Violin Making & Repair Department Head, says Nathan's architectural eye for shape combined with his exceptional technology and communication skills have made him not only "well primed" for the program, but also a cutting-edge Teaching Assistant.

Roman isn't alone in his praise. In addition to the numerous merit awards Nathan won as a student, he recently received the *NBSS Violin Making Award for Excellence in Craftsmanship*. This award and its accompanying prize recognize the skill and care that Nathan put into his instruments, and is juried by a panel of leaders within the field. Notably, the Award's panel was also unanimously impressed with Nate's drawings, and a written paper he produced as well.

Through NBSS, Nathan says he's found a lifelong career as a luthier. "This is a life of passion, of something that we choose to do for ourselves... doing quality work that we can be proud of," he says.

**"Violin making is so sculptural. There's such a freedom in movement for certain aspects of the process. But it's also extremely precise."**



Thanks to a grant from the Massachusetts Charitable Mechanic Association, and the expertise of Teaching Assistant Nathan Abbe, the Violin Making & Repair program has a powerful new tool—a Glowforge Pro laser cutter, which uses a hair-width beam of light to cut materials.

The Glowforge lets students and instructors quickly and precisely test out shapes and templates so they can focus on the hand work involved in traditional violin making. Previously, students would spend days arduously filing plastic or metal templates before they could even begin wood shaping. Now, they can swiftly laser cut and test a template. "Within five minutes we make an adjustment and print it out again," says Nathan, an expert in the technology given his background in architecture and fabrication.

The tool is also useful for making templates of the violin's intricate scroll or its f-holes, which help project sound. And it allows students to try out shapes inspired by violins of the 17th- and 18th-century Italian masters, using tracings or CT scans of these revered instruments.

# Two of a Kind

How two graduates are forging new careers with dual diplomas in Locksmithing & Security Technology and Carpentry

When Viet Phan and Plamen Jetchev were students in the Locksmithing & Security Technology (LK) program, their interest grew from the mechanical components of their trade to the broader application of their work in buildings. After graduating as locksmiths in 2021, both were excited to re-enroll at NBSS, this time in the nine-month Carpentry (CA) program. Viet and Plamen look back on their journeys and share what they've learned from the School—and what's next.

**“The School served as a U-turn for me. It shaped and changed my life.”**

PLAMEN JETCHEV LK '21, CA '22

## Changing Directions

Plamen first became interested in the trades as a young boy growing up in Bulgaria. His grandfather was a self-taught carpenter who “could build something out of just raw wood,” Plamen says. “I’ve always wanted to be able to do that.” But at six years old, Plamen showed aptitude for the piano and was placed in a music program at Bulgarian National Conservatory. When it came time for college, he traveled to the U.S. under a scholarship to study at Berklee College of Music.

Ultimately, the lifestyle of a musician was not for him however, and he took some time off to consider his options. NBSS had long been on his radar, and he knew locksmiths were in demand. “I like mechanics and puzzles,” he shares, and so the LK program was a clear choice. Once there, like Viet, Plamen mastered how to service, repair, and install an array of residential and commercial locks.

Over time, he realized that “locksmithing and carpentry can really complement each other.” Plamen enrolled in the CA program, where he especially loved learning about the history of local New England styles, along with building and insulation techniques. For the CA program’s final build, Plamen and his classmates constructed horse sheds on-site in Upton, Massachusetts. He felt happy seeing the project come together. Like in music, he recalls, “all those little moments grow into the grand finale.”



VIET PHAN LK '21, CA '22

## Becoming a Tradesperson

Following service in the U.S. Marine Corps, Viet worked in security for 13 years at Harvard University while bartending on the side. When a better-paying locksmith job at Harvard caught his attention, Viet quickly began his search for training, and discovered the nine-month program at NBSS.

“I was going in really green,” Viet recalls. But the LK program quickly improved his confidence with hand tools as well as his overall mechanical aptitude. Reflecting this, in his second semester Viet received the Gladys Brooks Foundation Scholarship in recognition of his technical skill and leadership potential.

After graduating from the LK program, Viet began working with Smith & Awudo Construction Inc. That’s when he realized how helpful it would be to combine locksmithing skills with carpentry. “I wanted to not only be able to fix and install locks, but also fix doors if a customer needed me to.”

Now that he’s completed the Carpentry program, Viet shares just how much his confidence and skills have grown. “I always thought that I didn’t have what it takes to be a tradesperson,” he reflects. “Now, you can put me in a house, give me the plans, and I’ll get it done.”

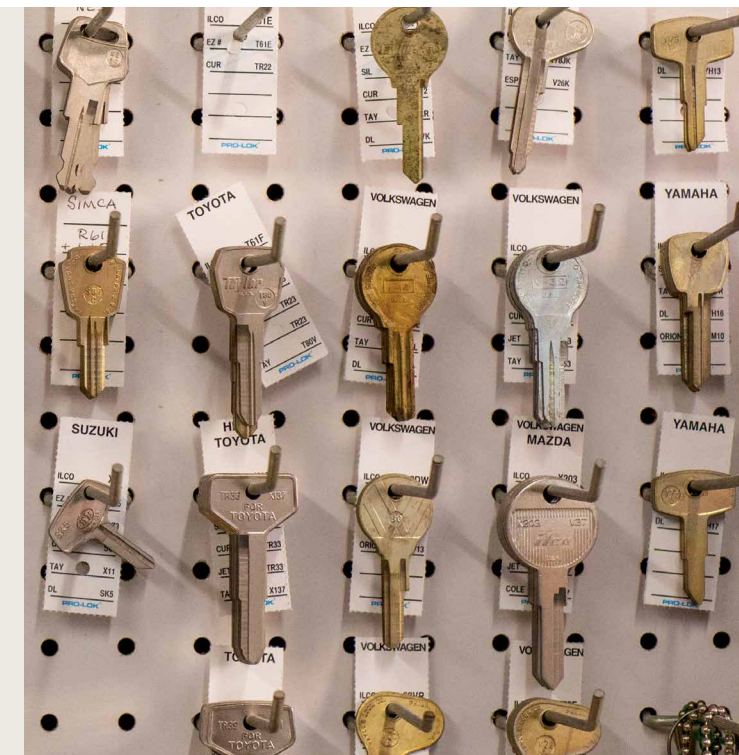


**“I use the word ‘confidence’ a lot, but I’m serious... the School gave me that. I feel like I have control of my life. I can move anywhere I want in the world and be able to sustain myself.”**

**In June, Viet and Plamen graduated from NBSS, for the second time. We asked them what’s next for their journeys.**

Viet continues to be both a carpenter and the go-to locksmith at at Smith & Awudo, where his new skills have earned him a significant pay increase. He dreams of one day owning his own construction company.

Plamen is currently interviewing and knows the importance of picking the right building crew and atmosphere. Of his time at NBSS, he shares, “the fact that I could take part over two years in two different disciplines... I feel lucky.”



# Together in Craft

Meet three students who gained new-found skills and community through **Continuing Education (CE)** classes at NBSS.

## Cecilia Gerard Woodworking 101

**“The instructors succeeded in showing us what was possible while meeting us where we were in our abilities. I came out of it confident to get started on my own small projects.”**

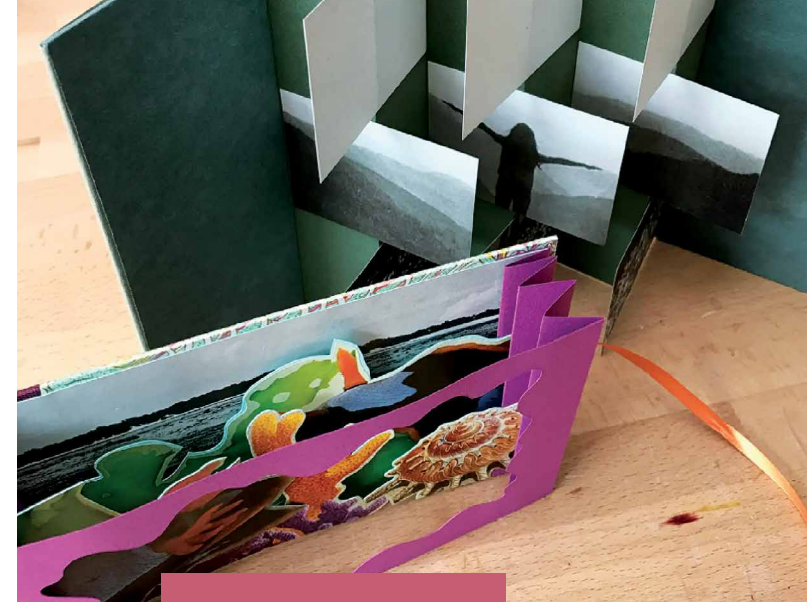
The idea started while hunting for a wooden Montessori play shelf for her son. The cabinet looked simple enough. “I thought, ‘I can do this,’” Cecilia says. “And after two years of Covid, I needed to get out of my bubble... I missed learning new things.” A woodworking beginner, she felt like a “kid in a candy shop” when she discovered the CE courses.

Over one weekend at NBSS, she made a box with rabbit joints while learning everything from the science of wood to how to safely use a chisel and table or miter saw. The two instructors masterfully “made the complex simple,” and the ten-person class felt very welcoming and fun, Cecilia says. Her new dream is to help repair her back deck, alongside an experienced carpenter. She’s already signed up for a more intensive woodworking course at NBSS.

### SHORT CLASSES



Check out in-person and online classes, and sign up at [nbss.edu/ce](https://nbss.edu/ce)



### VIRTUAL CLASSES

## Jean Wallick Artist’s Books: Online

“Our Instructor Erin [Fletcher, an NBSS grad] has absolutely mastered online programs,” Jean shares from her home workshop wearing her favorite NBSS apron. “She is meticulous, and has the wonderful capacity to get inside the brain of a student.”

Over the years, Jean has taken more than 25 bookbinding courses through CE. The classes have been a source of joy for Jean, who operated a busy used-books shop for many years and often repaired the well-read inventory. “I’ve always loved books,” Jean says. “I love that within two covers are somebody’s ideas. You get to hold it, learn from it, and experience it.” Now retired and living in Western Massachusetts, Jean is thrilled she can continue taking NBSS courses, online.

**“The wonderful thing about a Zoom program is that you are on top of what’s going on. You get to see what the instructor’s hands are doing, how much pressure is going down—all really important things in bookbinding.”**

## Jeff Hanley CA ’21 Three-Month Furniture Making Intensive

**“Don’t hesitate, and sign up early because classes fill up fast! It’s definitely worth it. Just believe in yourself. The instructors will take care of the rest.”**

“The best thing was the quality of the instruction, which led to the high quality of work that I’m able to produce,” Jeff says. One of his favorite pieces to build was a cabinet made of African mahogany wood. “It’s beautiful, and a great way to house my tools.”

A 2021 graduate of the School’s Carpentry program, he’s gearing up to start the Cabinet & Furniture Making program this fall. Jeff feels great having this intensive primer under his belt, and he’s already put his newfound skills to good use at his carpentry job. Plus, family requests keep coming in, laughs Jeff, who’s been busy with home cabinetry and furniture projects.

### INTENSIVES



# Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

## Initiatives & Programs

Since its founding as a settlement house for immigrants in 1881, NBSS has trained individuals of all backgrounds and across gender, age, race, ethnicity, religion, political class, and citizenship status. Today, our history informs how we can improve the ways we welcome, support, and celebrate broader diversity at NBSS.

As a craft and trade school, we believe that teaching people meaningful and useful skills empowers them with their own agency. This work transcends discipline and gets to the heart of our educational philosophy. We are actively engaged in making an impact—at all levels of our School, in ways large and small, and with the optimism and conviction that are the hallmarks of our community.

[nbss.edu/dei](https://nbss.edu/dei)



### Teaching Assistant Program

*a new initiative to value diversity in mentorship*

### High School Programs

*to encourage youth interested in the trades*

### Public Programs

*to connect with new voices and perspectives*

### Student Wellness

*to provide necessary and meaningful resources*

### Hiring Practices

*to deepen our pool of talent*

### Community Partnerships

*to promote and advance our shared missions*

### Workforce Development Scholarships

*to support our local community*

This specialized funding provides need-based, full tuition and tool funding for qualified applicants with high economic need who are residents of the City of Boston, Greater Boston, or who are graduates of Boston Public Schools. This Scholarship is available for all Full-Time programs and is intended to increase access for people who face high economic barriers.

### Impact Scholarships

*to bring diversity to our fields*

**NEW!**

These recently established scholarships provided need-based funding for qualified applicants who are from a range of diverse backgrounds, and who will further our work to increase diverse representation in our craft and trade fields.



Want to help make an impact? Connect with us at [development@nbss.edu](mailto:development@nbss.edu)

# Work With The Best

Connect with our talented community! We train students to produce the highest quality of work, and to commit to excellence in their craft. Here are two great ways to access our expertise for your next project or role:



## Jobs & Commissions Board

Whether you want to repair a cherished heirloom, tackle a renovation project, or hire directly for a job, our students and graduates are here to help. We receive hundreds of requests each year from the public, and promote these within our talented community.

- Employ someone full- or part-time
- Create, repair, or restore furniture, books, jewelry, musical instruments, and more
- Construct a garage, renovate a space, or add to a home
- Preserve a historic structure
- Tune, repair, or restore a piano

## Alumni Business Directory

Our community of 3,000 alumni live and work around the globe. This showcase offers just a few of the skilled tradespeople you can connect with for their expertise and care. The Directory represents dozens of small businesses across:

8

Craft and Trade  
Disciplines

30

Locations  
Across the U.S.

Connect now at [nbss.edu/alumni-business](https://nbss.edu/alumni-business)



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FREE & OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

# Open House

Connect  
with NBSS!  
2022

This once-a-year event is the best opportunity to get a behind the scenes look at America's first trade school.

Learn more about our programs in traditional trades, engage with a like-minded community of craftspeople, enjoy live demonstrations and tours of our building, and more.

**Join us in-person or virtually. Stay tuned for details.**

[nbss.edu/openhouse](https://nbss.edu/openhouse)

