

Benchmarks





Welcome to our latest edition of *Benchmarks* magazine. This issue celebrates personal and professional growth, something we see every day here at NBSS. As part of our mission, we are dedicated to helping students transform their passions into rewarding careers, and this past year has been a testament to that commitment.

First and foremost, as a School we extend our heartfelt congratulations to our recent graduates. On the pages that follow, you'll discover some highlights of this year's commencement, when more than 90 individuals successfully completed their programs and stepped into the world as skilled professionals ready to make their mark. Each of them has shown immense dedication and hard work, and we couldn't be prouder of their accomplishments.

Through *In Pursuit of Excellence*, we showcase five inspiring stories from our newest graduates. Their diverse backgrounds, ranging from a former cook to a scenic designer and a recent high school grad, highlight the unique journeys that led them to NBSS. Their stories underscore the support and encouragement they received from our community, which played a crucial role in their success.

A defining feature of NBSS is "education for employment." In *Building Futures*, you'll read how our Carpentry program got a head start on that important effort by engaging their employer network early in the school year. By doing so, students had the chance to work on real-life projects, gain invaluable professional experience, and learn the ins and outs of the industry. This innovative new program is already providing dividends, with nearly half of the cohort receiving job offers from their internships.

Our 2024 Exhibition: *Then & Now* exemplifies the growth of our community, and the School itself. On view through August 2024, this exhibition showcases the work of over 50 students and graduates, illustrating

the evolution of our craftspeople and our history as America's first trade school. It's a wonderful celebration of our community's creativity and dedication.

There's so much more on the pages that follow. Join us in exploring the journey of a set book in our Bookbinding program, which symbolizes the meticulous craftsmanship our students bring to their work. Learn about the many, varied field trips that provide students with learning outside of the benchroom, including broader industry insights and—dare I say it—some great fun besides. You can also get an "insider's view" of our school facility, discover our Open House & Winter Market, read about financial aid opportunities, and more, all in this tightly packed issue of our annual magazine.

As we look to the future, we remain committed to providing an educational experience that nurtures growth, cultivates skills, and prepares our students for successful careers. Together, we're building a future where personal and professional growth are at the heart of everything we do.

Warm regards,

SARAH TURNER, PRESIDENT





Graduation

Each year, our School community gathers to honor a new cohort of students embarking on their professional crafts and trades careers. Though a tradition, the atmosphere on Friday, May 31 was anything but mundane. Dozens of ecstatic new graduates and their supporters enjoyed an open house at the school to start the day. Afterwards, a vibrant parade with lively fife and drum music led the joyous crowd from NBSS through the neighborhood.

Inside the historic Old North Church, School leaders and distinguished guests celebrated the graduates' hard work and perseverance through a series of heartfelt speeches. President Sarah Turner shared her thoughts on productive collaboration, and the pursuit of common goals. Klare Shaw, our Commencement Speaker, delivered a moving address on building one's legacy through creativity, inclusion, and service. Rounding out the speakers, Provost Claire Fruitman CF '96 announced the individual graduates by name, before closing with some words of wisdom for the future. Applause and cheers rang out from every corner of the room.

Commencement day was truly a celebration of accomplishments and new beginnings. Surrounded by a supportive community, the smiles of our 2024 graduates radiated throughout the room as they celebrated their achievements and prepared to step confidently into their future careers. We eagerly anticipate all they will achieve in the coming years.



▶ View a recording of the full ceremony and all our speakers' remarks at nbss.edu/news

In Pursuit of Excellence

Discover the journeys of five of our newest graduates, showcasing their passion and dedication to their chosen fields.

Read more about these talented artisans and others at nbss.edu/alumni/profiles.



JULIANA HECK
AGE 36 | WALTHAM, MASSACHUSETTS
CABINET & FURNITURE MAKING '24

“Why not this life?”

After earning a bachelor's degree in art history at Saint Louis University, Juliana worked as a barista, bartender, and community organizer in Missouri. She loved to keep busy and was always on her feet. While working a rare sit-down gig at a public library, she started reading up on woodworking. Juliana thought, 'In another life, I would have been a woodworker.' Then she thought, 'Why not this life?'

Why NBSS? I started working construction jobs to get experience and noticed there were simple solutions they weren't reaching for because they didn't have the hand skills. We would order expensive specialty blades to do something a chisel could do. I realized that if I relied on on-the-job training, I would only get taught enough to be helpful in this business—which doesn't necessarily translate to the best education. Some things can be done faster, easier, and more simply with a hand tool. Knowing these skills now, I feel I've unlocked something huge.

How do you feel after a full day? It's the ideal frame of mind. Using the whole body to find solutions is important to my value system. Being a lifelong student and having a sense of curiosity is crucial to feeling good. The moment you think you know everything about the world, you only have space to judge it.

What's next? I am a Teaching Assistant for a summer NBSS woodworking class for conservators, and I'll be taking local commissions, like repairs and finish restorations. I also have my own design ideas. My wife and I have moved a handful of times and had to throw out and re-buy cheap furniture because it just doesn't hold up during a move. So I want to design solid, affordable pieces of furniture for small apartment living. When you ask yourself, 'Is this worth throwing in the U-Haul and trucking cross-country?' I want the answer to be, 'Yes.' Everybody deserves to come home to comfort, regardless of their financial situation.

“Take that chance and show my skills”

After moving to the U.S. from Vietnam four years ago, Cody studied accounting before deciding he wanted to follow in his father’s footsteps as a jewelry maker. When the father and son makers noticed Americans have a different style of making jewelry, Cody decided to enroll at NBSS to add to his skill set.

Why invest in this training? I invested in training at North Bennet to build my network, earn my diploma, and learn how to make jewelry in the American style. When we lived in Vietnam, jewelers mostly cut round stones and used a lot of 24K gold. In the U.S., my father and I noticed jewelers cut stones of all shapes—radiant, emerald, oval, round, etc.—and they preferred 14K and 18K gold. While studying at North Bennet, I went home every night and showed my father the new skills I was learning.

Favorite memory? English is my second language, so I am sometimes shy to speak in public. But at the School’s Open House event, I volunteered to show people my skills at the teacher’s bench. There were a lot of people in the room, and I was nervous. But I showed them how to do the star setting. I knew I had to take that chance to show my skills. I loved that moment.

What’s next? I received a full-time job offer to be a bench jeweler at Jared: The Galleria of Jewelry. I will be setting stones and doing repairs, which are the two skills I want to master. I want to say thank you to everyone at North Bennet. The School helped me reach the next step in my career.

THIEN (CODY) NGUYEN
AGE 25 | BRAINTREE, MASSACHUSETTS
JEWELRY MAKING & REPAIR '24



“My life’s purpose”

A self-taught pianist, Sydney graduated from Nova Southeastern University with a bachelor’s in theater and music in 2022. She was making a name for herself in the South Florida theater scene, but the more she learned about the NBSS Piano Technology program, the more it felt like the missing puzzle piece to her career.

What do you love about piano technology? Music saved my life growing up. There wasn’t one defining moment but it has changed me, and brought me my best friends. It is a way of connecting with people. The act of performing is this pinnacle of connection. With piano technology, I get to be a steward of connection and music. I consider it to be my life’s purpose—spreading music and changing people’s lives in a positive way.

Why invest in this training? I felt called to pursue it. I had a gut feeling that this was where the universe wanted me to go. As soon as I moved to Boston, I knew it was the right choice. I remember explaining to my dad that learning this trade also meant I could have health insurance, a steady income, and I can retire someday. I would have the freedom to make choices. And that is so important.

What’s next? I’m interning for a month with Sing for Hope, a New York City non-profit that paints donated pianos in brilliant colors, then places them around the city for people to play. They then donate the instruments to local public schools. I’ll be maintaining the pianos while also educating the public about the organization’s mission. After that, I’m moving to Philadelphia to work for Allied Piano. Their business is booming, and I will be working with an incredible technician. I am so full of gratitude.

SYDNEY BRUENEN
AGE 24 | MEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS
BASIC PIANO TECHNOLOGY '23
ADVANCED PIANO TECHNOLOGY '24





OMAR OCASIO
AGE 18 | DORCHESTER, MASSACHUSETTS
CARPENTRY '24

“The joy of it all drives me”

Omar graduated from the Facilities Management program at Boston's Madison Park Technical Vocational High School in 2023. He ultimately enrolled in the NBSS Summer Carpentry Intensive and then the full-time Carpentry program, but not before wrestling with another career path.

Why NBSS? I was torn between pursuing the Boston firefighter program or the NBSS Carpentry program. I asked all of my family members for advice. Finally, it was my younger sister (I'm the oldest of five) who helped me decide. I opened her door and said, 'I need your help. I have to choose between these two life paths.' She said, 'Ok, let's break it down. What do they both offer? Which one do you see bringing you joy? Which one do you see yourself teaching your future kids one day?' From that conversation, I realized that carpentry is the best place to show my knowledge and express who I am.

What do you love about carpentry?

The community. I believe in teamwork. I didn't picture myself doing solo work or in an office shuffling papers. I saw myself outdoors with a team, communicating and joking around. That saying about how if you love something, you'll never consider it work... that's exactly what I felt during my first weeks on the job site. Clocking in, I was excited to be learning something new. The joy of it all drives me.

Favorite NBSS memory? As a Carpentry class, over four months, we built two large runs of fine cabinetry, for the Preservation Carpentry and Bookbinding programs to house rare tool collections. Having made something that's going to stay in the School I graduated from is just a beautiful thought.

“They took me under their wings”

With dreams of owning his own cybersecurity business one day, Antonio started exploring career training programs while in high school. When he toured NBSS, he was excited to see both 'locksmithing' and 'technology' in the program title.

Why NBSS? A lot of the security industry now is about technology. So I decided that programming and technology was the route that I wanted to go. But it's easier to understand how to install an electronic lock if you already know how to install a mechanical lock. My dad, a union locksmith and security systems contractor, sees it every day with people he works with who jumped into doing access control and then have a hard time retrofitting an old lock because they don't understand the physical aspect of it or never took locksmithing courses.

What surprised you? Access control is my thing, but I was surprised by how much I've enjoyed learning other skills through the program. We took apart a lot of mortise locks—they're commercial locks; you see them everywhere. Inside of the lock, there isn't a single screw. The parts all fit perfectly together like a puzzle. People like to preserve those locks, so we learned to take them apart and put them back together without destroying them in the process.

How did you feel supported? The School was very helpful with financial aid and gave me a good scholarship. If you're worried it's too expensive, reach out, because they're very flexible. North Bennet wants people to come and do these programs. And the other students were very welcoming. I was a little intimidated coming in because I was the youngest in our class and everyone else was switching careers or coming to gain more knowledge. But they took me under their wings.

ANTONIO SYLVESTER
AGE 19 | STONEHAM, MASSACHUSETTS
LOCKSMITHING & SECURITY TECHNOLOGY '24



A Guide to Financial Aid & Scholarships

75%

of our students receive some kind of financial aid

\$1.1M

in NBSS gift funds provided to qualified students this year

\$10K

yearly average in NBSS gift funds per qualified student

With changes to the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid), you may have questions about funding your education. To apply for financial aid at NBSS, please complete the FAFSA that corresponds to your intended start date. There is no deadline to apply, but an early FAFSA submission will help with your decision making.

1

Complete the FAFSA application at studentaid.gov. Use NBSS code 015527.

2

Estimate your costs and financial award.

Our net price calculator is great for domestic or international students.

3

If a veteran, apply for your VA benefits.

Remember to send us your certificate of eligibility.

4

Review private and NBSS scholarships.

Your FAFSA is all you need for NBSS scholarship consideration.

5

Complete your Admissions requirements.

Once accepted, we will send your unique financial aid award package.

For a full overview, visit nbss.edu/aid. For any questions, please contact us at financialaid@nbss.edu or **617-227-0155**.



SAMPLE AWARD: LOCKSMITH

Here's an example of a financial aid package for a qualified student in our Locksmithing program. Note that this reflects one year of funding only, and that your individual aid package will vary based on a number of factors.

NBSS Scholarship	\$8,700
Federal Pell Grant	\$7,395
NBSS Mass Residency Grant	\$2,000
Federal Subsidized Direct Loan	\$3,500
Unsubsidized Loan	\$2,000
Total Aid	\$23,595

Current tuition for this program is \$22,200. Financial aid received beyond the cost of tuition can be used for housing, tools, transportation, or other expenses.

Distinguished Alumni Award



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.

Dan Faia CF '94 is a master craftsman whose professional journey began when he graduated from the NBSS Cabinet & Furniture Making program in 1994. He joined the NBSS faculty shortly afterward, first as an assistant in the short course program and then as an instructor in the workshop program. As the workshop program expanded, Dan helped create the Three-Month Furniture Making Intensive course. He became a full-time Instructor in Cabinet & Furniture Making in 2006, was promoted to Department Head in 2010, and resigned from his role in 2023 to pursue other professional opportunities. During his tenure, he refined the program's curriculum and devoted his attention to individual student progress and success.

For the last three decades, Dan honed his skills as a woodcarver, furniture maker, chairmaker, and educator. His work is displayed in both private and public collections. Dan currently operates a woodworking studio in Rollinsford, New Hampshire where he also teaches small group workshops. When he isn't teaching or working on period reproductions or custom commissions, Dan is usually busy in his shop pursuing his passion for traditional woodcarving.

In addition, Dan has taught at various schools throughout New England, including the Furniture Institute of Massachusetts and the Connecticut Valley School of Woodworking. He frequently writes articles and produces videos for *Fine Woodworking*, and is an active member of the New Hampshire Furniture Masters, the Guild of New Hampshire Woodworkers, and the Society of American Period Furniture Makers. He has presented and/or exhibited at organizations that include Colonial Williamsburg, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and Concord Museum.

In 2023, Dan was awarded the prestigious Cartouche Award by the Society of American Period Furniture Makers. The award honors those who have demonstrated a "lifetime of excellence in period furniture making" and who have inspired others. The hundreds of fortunate students Dan has taught and mentored have gained not only knowledge, but an inspiration for excellence and a passion for craftsmanship.

For more information about Dan, please visit danielfaia.com.

Building Futures



NBSS Carpentry Students
Gain Hands-On Experience
with Industry Leaders



The Field Practicum helps Carpentry students integrate knowledge and skills developed through their curriculum in a real-world setting. Here, three employers and their respective students share why the program is a win-win for them—and the industry as a whole.

Pride in craft and people with F.H. Perry Builder

It was a chilly Monday morning in November and **Johnny (Tewiwi) Vital CA '24** had just arrived at his first-ever construction job site. High-end custom home builder F.H. Perry Builder was installing cabinetry at a private residence in Cambridge. And Johnny, with two months in the Carpentry program under his belt, was here to work.

“I didn’t know what to expect,” shares Johnny, who served in the U.S. Army before enrolling at NBSS. “But everyone was so helpful, from tips on how to dress for the cold to showing me where the tools were. I had never been to Home Depot, so they even took me there, and to a lumberyard. The week inspired me to study construction

management after graduation. I am so thankful for this experience.”

Johnny was one of the 27 Carpentry program (CA) students who received hands-on training last fall through the Carpentry Field Practicum, running in its second year. Students were matched with one of 16 employers in the valued NBSS network for a paid, week-long experience. They polished resumes, practiced interviewing skills, and built crucial professional relationships. Nearly twenty percent of students continued working with their employer on off days, and almost half received job offers specifically from those employers as of graduation.

“It is a gift to be in a position to open a door for someone who wants to do what we do, in a world trying to make people choose other things,” says Allison Iantosca, President and CEO of F.H. Perry Builder.

“We talk a lot about where the next generation of tradespeople is going to come from, to maintain and grow this industry,” adds Wade Bergeron, Chief Operating Officer of F.H. Perry Builder.

It’s why F.H. Perry Builder enthusiastically participates in the Field Practicum—and is an NBSS Partner in Craft, which recognizes corporations and small businesses that support the School. “North Bennet is so critical,” Allison says. “It has to keep doing what it’s doing.”

For his practicum with F.H. Perry Builder, Omar Ocasio CA '24 installed sidewall shingles at a Hopkinton MA residence. “Everyone was open and welcoming,” shares Omar, who enrolled at NBSS after graduating from Madison Park Technical Vocational High School. “I showed them what I learned. And from there, they said, ‘Okay, here’s some improvements.’ I got lots of training on the table saw, which was incredibly helpful for the rest of the year. I appreciate them. They encouraged me to reach back out when I graduate.”

“We have tremendous pride in craft, as well as people,” Wade says. “For us, NBSS is a cultural fit.”

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WADE BERGERON, COO OF F.H. PERRY BUILDER



2024 PARTNERS IN CRAFT

Among the valued employers who participated in the Carpentry Field Practicum are several members of our Partners in Craft. This group of businesses and corporations—across industries—demonstrate excellence in their fields and provide critical support for our School’s mission of training the next generation of tradespeople. We celebrate these businesses for their ongoing commitment to NBSS, and appreciate all they do to help keep craft alive through their work.

PARTNER (\$10,000)

Holt & Bugbee

BUILDER (\$5,000)

**Adams + Beasley Associates
Feinmann, Inc.
Platt Builders**

ASSOCIATE (\$2,500)

**Columbia Contracting Corp.
F.H. Perry Builder**

SUPPORTER (\$1,000)

**Firestone & Parson Inc.
Inland Underwriters Insurance Agency
New England Design & Construction**

For more information on becoming a Partner in Craft, contact **Annie Hayes**, Director of Institutional Support at ahayes@nbss.edu.

Finding the right path with Northland Installations

“Growing a business is a rollercoaster, and you have to maintain quality as you grow,” says Nathan Hawkes, Owner of Northland Installations, a millwork and casework installation company, as well as Hawkes & Huberdeau, a custom architectural millwork workshop. “That’s why we established a relationship with the Carpentry program—graduates have a desire to learn, and that is the biggest key for success, I’ve found.”

“Day one of the internship, I showed up to install these gorgeous, stately white cabinets in a multi-million-dollar brownstone in Boston’s Back Bay,” recalls **Andrew Brown CA '24**, a U.S. Air Force veteran who worked in IT before NBSS. “There were several companies working on different tasks at the same time—it was like a beehive. I was nervous, but you get confident pretty fast.”

“The experience gave me a lot of clarity,” adds Andrew, who has decided to continue at NBSS in the Cabinet & Furniture Making program this fall. “Carpentry is such a wide river—there’s flooring, cabinetry, roofing, framing, and so on. For me, milling and installing cabinets comes with such a sense of satisfaction because they’re so aesthetically pleasing.”

Whether students stay with him or look elsewhere, Nathan is all about helping them find their right path: “Because of my years of experience in this field, I know every cabinet shop in the state. So even though I’m based in Amesbury, if a student says they’re on the South Shore, for example, I can still connect them with the right people.”



On the cutting edge of possibility with Thoughtforms

“We’ve focused on sustainability for 50-plus years—it’s part of our DNA,” says Henry Pott, Business Manager at Thoughtforms, a premier custom home builder with roots as a design-build firm. “We were building geothermal systems and thinking about very high insulation efficiency decades ago, and we’ve continued along that pathway.”

Today, Thoughtforms has three distinct arms: construction, service and maintenance, and the bespoke workshop. Henry says partnering with NBSS to offer a field practicum in the service arm made perfect sense.

“The experience was one of my favorite parts of the year because it showed me what was possible,” says **Angus McDougal CA '24**, who continued interning with Thoughtforms on Fridays. “One day you’re working on a modern concrete and glass

house, and the next day it’s a renovated 18th-century home.”

“Construction is a world fraught with bad actors, and we hold to the value that we’re only as good as the last piece of work we’ve done,” Henry says. “That’s what we saw with Angus and how he approaches the world—he comes from a sculpting background, he’s very artistic, and he’s run his own business. We hit it off.”

“I’m excited to share that I received a job offer with the Thoughtforms service team,” Angus says. “I will be exposed to the highest level of building standards, and they are far ahead of the curve on residential energy management. I’ll have a head start when these systems become accessible to more consumers in a decade. The Carpentry Field Practicum set me up for future success.”

Interested in welcoming NBSS students at your company?

We are expanding our network in New England and beyond. For Carpentry, contact instructor **Brock Leindecker PC '16** at bleindecker@nbss.edu, or contact info@nbss.edu for any other program.



Beyond the Bench

Our career training programs regularly take part in field trips, which extend learning beyond the benchroom and offer invaluable experiences in a variety of settings.

From historic sites like the **Paul Revere House** to contemporary facilities like the **Steinway & Sons** factory, these excursions provide hands-on insights and inspiration. Each visit deepens students' understanding of their craft, bridging classroom lessons with the dynamic environments where their skills will flourish.



BOOKBINDING

- New England Document Conservation Center *Andover, MA*
- Pergamena Tannery *Hudson Valley, NY*
- Harcourt Bindery *Charlestown, MA*
- Boston Athenaeum *Boston, MA*

CARPENTRY

- Guerney's Lumber *Brockton, MA*
- 253 Union Street *Hanover, MA*
- ◀ JLC Live Convention *Providence, RI*

CABINET & FURNITURE MAKING

- Skinner Auction House *Marlborough, MA*
- Starrett *Athol, MA*
- Old Schwamb Mill *Arlington, MA*
- Old State House *Boston, MA*
- Museum of Fine Arts *Boston, MA*
- Mark Richey Woodworking *Newburyport, MA*
- Matt Wajda's collaborative shop *NH*

JEWELRY MAKING & REPAIR

- ▶ Harvard's Mineralogical and Gemological Museum *Cambridge, MA*
- Museum of Fine Arts and the MFA Conservation Lab *Boston, MA*
- Jewelers Building *Boston, MA*
- Paul Revere House *Boston, MA*

COMMUNITY EDUCATION: THREE-MONTH FURNITURE MAKING INTENSIVE

- Museum of Fine Arts *Boston, MA*

VIOLIN MAKING & REPAIR

- Reuning & Sons *Brookline, MA*
- Skinner Auction House *Marlborough, MA*

LOCKSMITHING & SECURITY TECHNOLOGY

- State Street (formerly Beth Israel) *Boston, MA*
- Boston College High School *Boston, MA*
- Assa Abloy *New Haven, CT*



PIANO TECHNOLOGY (BASIC & ADVANCED)

- Steinway and Sons *New York, NY*
- Mason & Hamlin *Haverhill, MA*
- ◀ Absolute Piano *Lowell, MA*
- Allan Winkler Harpsichords *Medford, MA*
- Fisk Organ *Gloucester, MA*
- Symphony Hall *Boston, MA*



PRESERVATION CARPENTRY

- 1680 Paul Revere House *Boston, MA*
- 1796 Harrison Gray Otis House *Boston, MA*
- 1859 Gibson House *Boston, MA*
- NPS 1759 Vassall Craigie Longfellow House *Cambridge, MA*
- 1685 Hooper Lee Nichols House, HQ of Cambridge Historical Society *Cambridge, MA*
- 1780s Yin Yu Tang House at the Peabody Essex Museum *Salem, MA*
- 1684 John Ward House *Salem, MA*
- 1728 Crowninshield Bentley House *Salem, MA*
- 1805 Gardner Pingree House *Salem, MA*
- 1665 Gedney House *Salem, MA*
- Highland Hardwoods *Brentwood, NH*
- 1775 Folsom Tavern *Exeter, NH*
- 1721 Ladd-Gilman House *Exeter, NH*
- 1796 Lyman Estate *Waltham, MA*
- ▶ Sandwich House *Nantucket, MA*
- Lashway Lumber *Williamsburg, MA*



Showcasing the work of more than 50 students and graduates, *Then & Now* explores the many, varied backgrounds of our community members, the evolution of craftspeople as a whole, and our history as America's first trade School.

THEN / NOW



"I made a bookshelf in 2018 out of poplar, pine, and OSB scraps from a friend. I used our neighbor's very old jig saw that had a kinked blade to cut the sides, cinder blocks as sawhorses, and by knee for a clamp. The experience was thrilling enough for me to want to learn more, and terrifying enough for me to want to learn better." **Juliana Heck CF '24**



"Weaving was the first craft that I learned, and also when I realized I wanted to spend my life in craft. I had always wanted to work with wood but I didn't have the chance until I enrolled at NBSS. Now I can see the way weaving has found its way into my woodworking." **Aspen Golann CF '19**



"Before attending NBSS, I worked as a cake decorator. Although the setting was different, working with my hands at my bakery bench helped prepare me for my new profession." **Ariana Rutledge BB '22**





This Exhibition is made possible with generous support from the Massachusetts Cultural Council and our Partners in Craft. nbss.edu/pic

“As a Bookbinding student, I’m learning how to repair historic books. I’ve applied my new skills with my career in and passion for baking in restoring this cookbook.” **Suehade Soto BB ’25**



“One of my very first woodworking projects, from high school: a chess board and pieces.” **Nick Boston CF ’24**

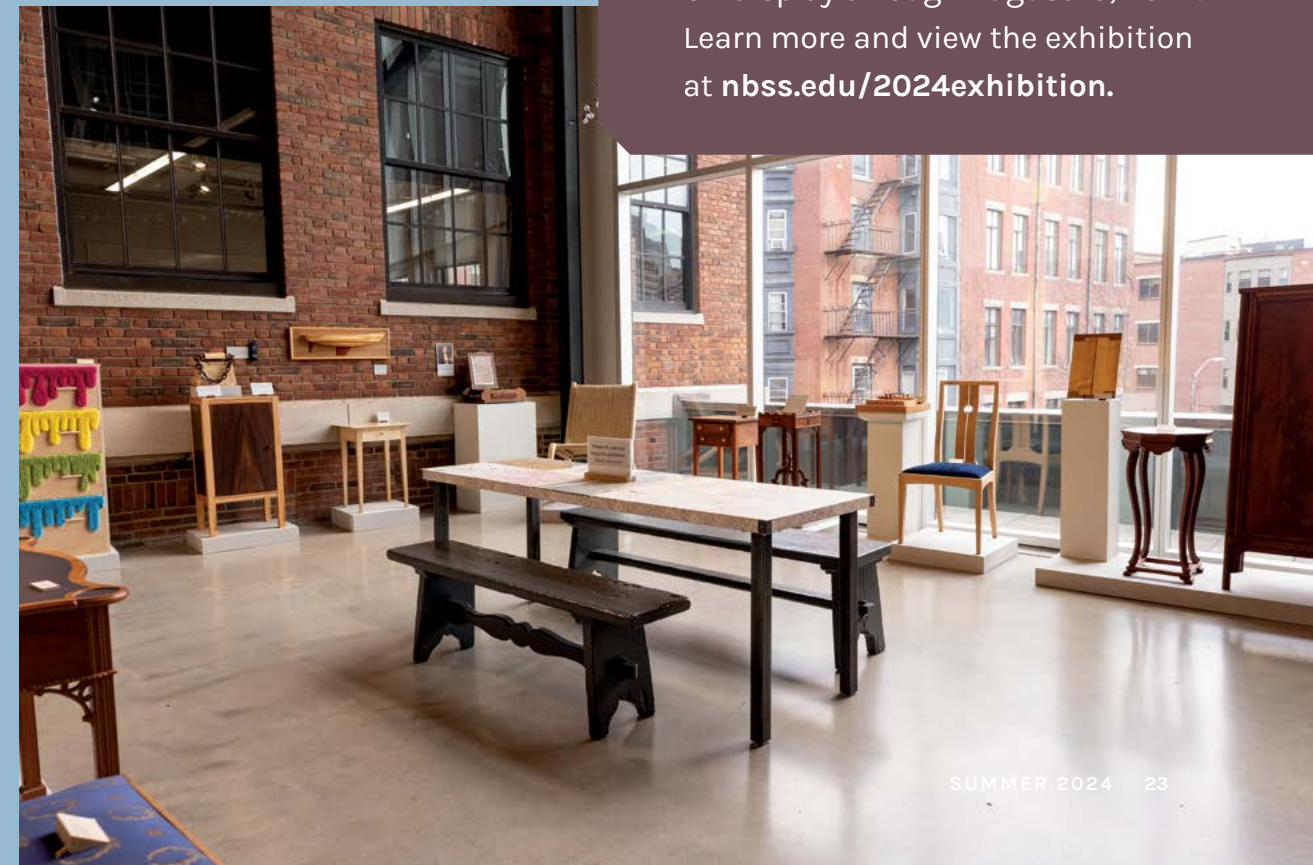


“There is nothing quite like discovering the first attempts at a new skill to remind you just how much failure, study, and practice got you to now. Think what the next set of failures, mindful study, and practice could teach.” **Willow Coronella JM ’20**



“The first thing I made, in 1983, in my New York City apartment. The duck is called a Bluebill or Scaup—pretty common duck. I built this chest for my son in 2010, modeled after a chest by Duncan Phyfe.” **Charlie Klein CF ’05**

On display through August 10, 2024. Learn more and view the exhibition at nbss.edu/2024exhibition.

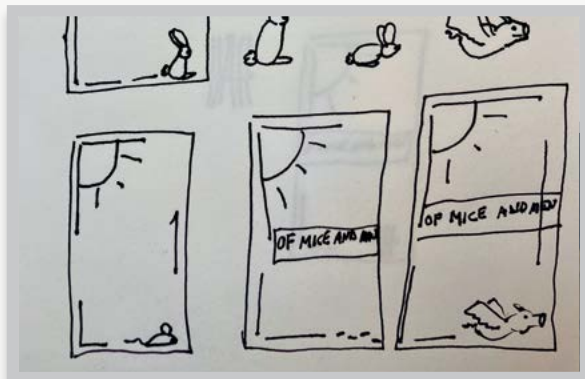


THE JOURNEY OF A

Set Book

The set book is a one-of-a-kind project for Bookbinding students that runs the span of several months. It requires each student to bring together not only skills they have developed during their time at the School, but also invites outside inspiration and encourages exploration.

An industry term, 'set book' refers to a chosen text block that's typically supplied to a bookbinder in order to create a custom decorative binding for an exhibition. For this project, students craft a full leather design binding. Over the course of the second year, they build confidence with leather by working with it in a myriad of ways. Production begins as soon as a final design is approved by the department head, Jeff Altepeter BB '99. A typical process is described below.

**1. Finalizing the Design**

The design should be fully realized (with room for last minute alterations) including materials, colors, and techniques. This acts as a blueprint for creating the binding, as some techniques need to be executed in a specific order.

2. Experiments

This can happen throughout the binding process, but can be helpful to do near the start to help determine the best way to execute a design or how the text block should be forwarded.

3. Preparing the Text Block

The endpapers are prepared at this stage and punched along with the signatures. Signatures are first sewn to stubs and then the stubs are sewn together over frayable tapes using a lap-link or all-along pattern or a combination of both.

4. Rounding and Backing

A compensation leaf is added at this stage to make room for a leather hinge that will be attached during one of the final steps. Hide glue is brushed on the spine, before quickly manipulating into a slight round. The book is then placed into a job backer where the spine is moved with a hammer to create shoulders on either side.

5. Edge, Spine, & Endbands

The spine of the text block is lined with several layers and sanded smooth before attaching a hollow in order to make sure no texture is visible once the leather is attached. Before attaching the lining, the edge(s) of the text block can be decorated with paint, graphite, or gold leaf, and endbands can be sewn to the head and tail of the spine.

6. Boards

The boards are laced on to the text block using the frayable tapes. The boards are shaped through sanding, lined, and shaped through sanding again. To create textures under the leather, additional layers may be cut and attached to the boards.

7. Pare Leather

The thickness of the leather needs to be reduced to around .6mm by feeding the material through a paring machine, which incrementally thins the leather. Additional paring occurs along the spine, at the turn-ins, endcaps, and edges through the use of a paring knife and/or spokeshave.

8. Covering

Covering an entire binding in leather can be nerve racking. All of the necessary tools should be in arm's reach for the moment they are required. Once the leather is placed on the book, the excess leather is then folded around the edges. This may seem simple, but finesse is required in shaping the endcaps with pointed ears, and skill is needed when cutting and pleating the corners to develop a near invisible seam. After covering, the book is put to rest inside a felt blanket under a bit of weight.

9. Design Work

This step can occur before and/or after covering: it all depends on the specific techniques required to execute the design. Techniques seen on the set book projects this year include leather onlays (Ascona, back-pared, cushioned, tooled, feathered, puckered), tooling in blind and with leaf (gold and palladium), hand-dyed leather, reliefs and embossing, embroidery, and inlaid mice feet, fur, and bead.

10. Final Touches

Once the exterior is complete, the interior needs to be finished with the attachment of a leather hinge at the joint. Then a piece of decorative paper is placed on either side of the hinge. Many students made custom marbled or paste papers for this portion, but a few selected handmade papers from Cave Paper.

THE FINISHED BOOKS

Of Mice and Men by John Steinbeck, an internationally acclaimed title, was chosen for the set book this year. Many of the students found inspiration in the Salinas Valley landscape so beautifully described in the book. It's embodied in their color palettes and by incorporating certain design elements. Concepts were also developed by students' prior experiences, their desires to experiment with unusual materials, and their approach to the use of contemporary techniques in new ways.

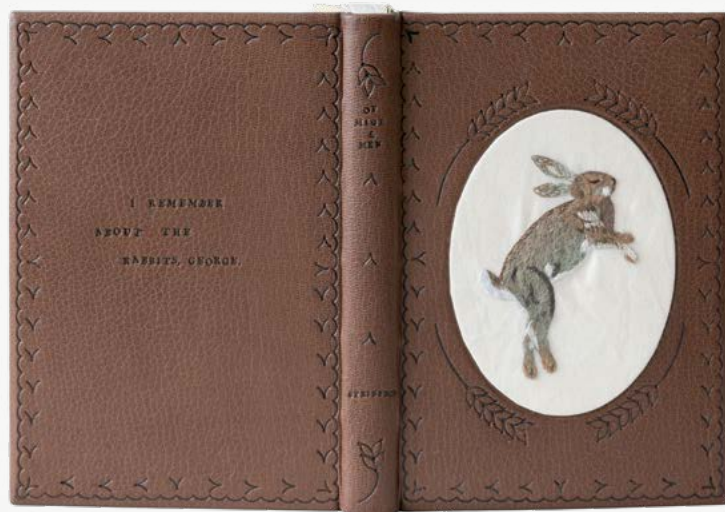
View the finished books in our 2024 Exhibition: *Then & Now*.



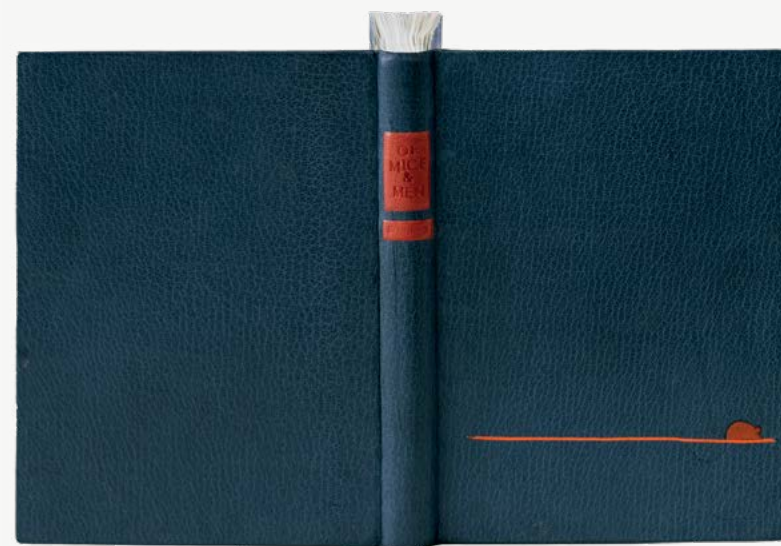
India Patel BB '24: Medium brown goatskin with hand-dyed goatskin onlays, title tooled in gold leaf.

Fox Maasch BB '24: Tan goatskin embellished with onlays in beige and pink goatskin, undyed calfskin, and puckered blue suede, inlaid mouse feet, blind tooling and palladium tooling for the eye and title.

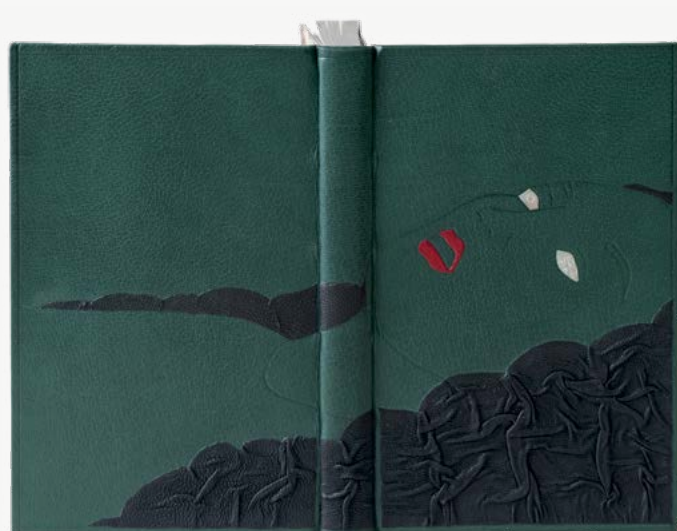
Emily Stanley BB '24: Brown goatskin with embroidered rabbit inset into the front cover, framed by carbon-tooled motifs along with title, author, and phrase from the book.



Louise Capizzo BB '24: Navy blue goatskin embellished with an orange Ascona onlay, terra cotta tooled onlay, blind tooling, and hand-tooled titling piece in terra cotta.



Spike Minogue BB '24: Bright orange goatskin embellished with teal and crimson feathered onlays. Author blind stamped.



Elizabeth Grab BB '24: Verdant green goatskin with blind tooling, tooled onlays in red and pale blue goatskin along with puckered black leather onlays and palladium tooling for the title.

Jacqueline Martin BB '24: Medium brown goatskin with textured and embossed reliefs, title and author tooled in gold leaf.

Jennifer Pyburn BB '24: Dark blue goatskin embellished with palladium and gold tooling, tooled onlays in light blue and undyed goatskin, and inlaid bead for the mouse's eye.

There's No Place Like Home



NBSS has called Boston's North End neighborhood its home since its founding in 1881, but the School has only been in its current 64,000 sf facility since 2013. Now, a decade in, three of our 2024 graduating students reflect on what makes the award-winning space key to a remarkable education.

Transforming skills with professional machinery

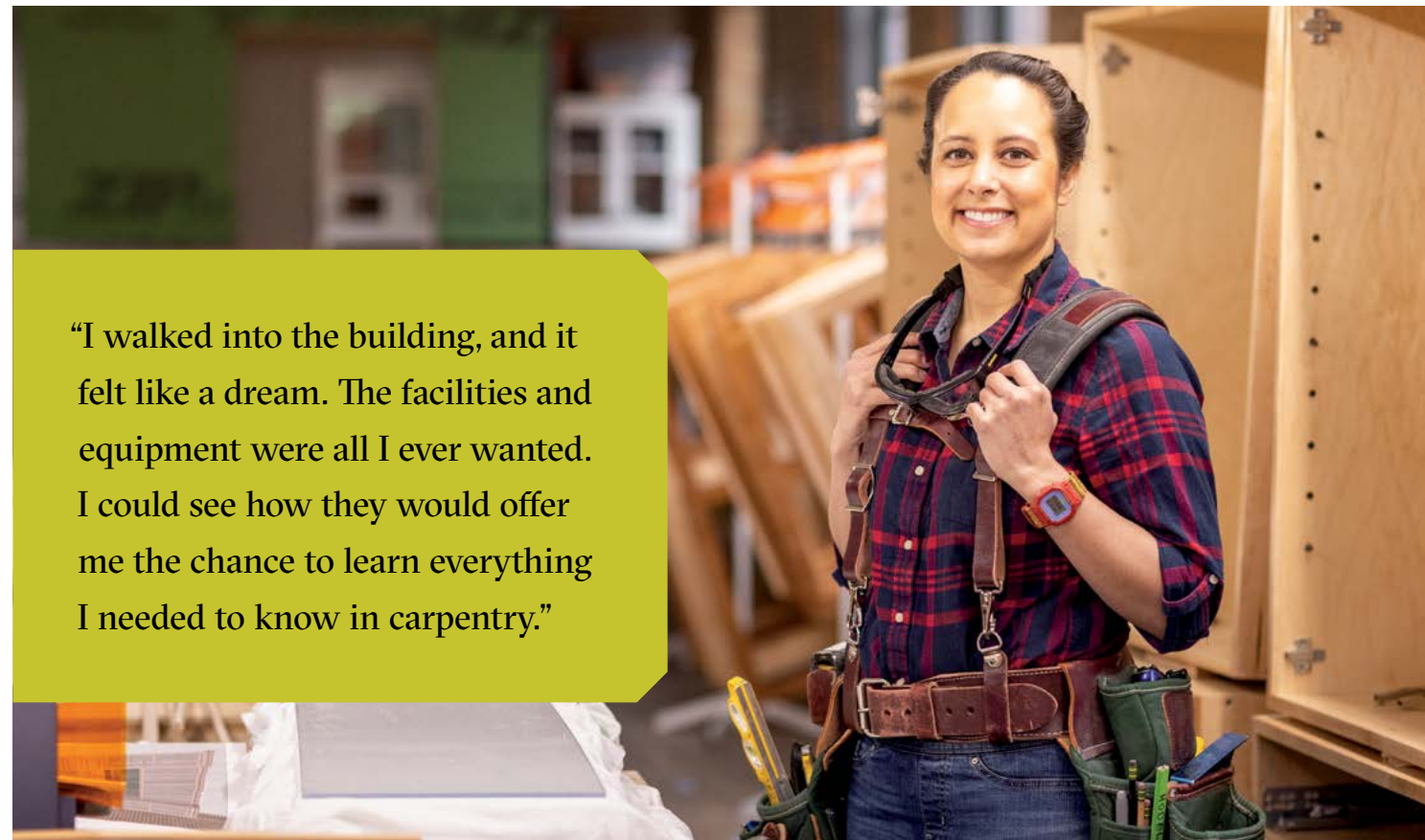
Christina Hodel CA '24 first visited NBSS as a prospective student after she maxed out on what she could make using YouTube woodworking tutorials. Within minutes into her tour, Christina knew that the school was the right place to achieve her goals—which included learning all the carpentry skills needed to construct a home.

Christina's gut instinct didn't disappoint her. "I've learned so much here in a very short time," she said right before her graduation. Pointing to the expansive machine room at the center of the program, Christina notes over the roar of the

equipment, "That's where we have all of our big machinery like the table saw, jointer, and the router tables. Access to, and safe operation of, this equipment is a critical part of the Carpentry curriculum. So is being able to use it on real job sites too."

"I loved learning how to set up and manage a professional workspace here and then being able to take that experience to our class project in Hanover [Massachusetts]," she shares. "It's such a great part of our training."

"I walked into the building, and it felt like a dream. The facilities and equipment were all I ever wanted. I could see how they would offer me the chance to learn everything I needed to know in carpentry."





“Our shop at NBSS is the mirror image of what you would find in the field. And some equipment is top of the line, which you only see in high-grade jewelry manufacturing and fabrication shops.”



Facilities that mirror what you'll find in the field

Down the light-filled hall, in Jewelry Making & Repair (JM), it's a quieter but no less focused environment. Each student has their head bent over their work, as is needed to develop intricate, ornate pieces—one clasp, setting, and gemstone at a time. Like every program at the School, JM provides them a dedicated bench where they can focus on their craft. This is unlike other schools, many of which have a shared bench system that requires packing up and storing work between classes.

Speaking to the professional workspace, **Zach Westelman JM '24** says, "Our shop at NBSS is the mirror image of what you would find in the field. And some equipment is top of the line, which you only see in high-grade jewelry manufacturing and fabrication shops."

Zach came to NBSS after completing his first career in the military and then teaching himself blacksmithing. He chose the JM program after experimenting with forging steel and other alloy jewelry at home. "It felt like blacksmithing but on a smaller, finer scale," he says. He was hooked.

In particular, Zach has enjoyed operating the laser welder, which he explains is "a magical machine that sends a crazy amount of electricity through a laser beam to weld together alloys." At NBSS, he had the chance to practice using the laser welder with precious metals—a technique he has since used in his new job at Melanie Casey, a nationally known luxury brand that specializes in handcrafted gold and diamond jewelry. "The safety and professionalism at NBSS are right on the same page as Melanie Casey," he reflects. "That made for a seamless transition from school to employment."

“This idea of being able to make assessments of a space, how it should run and be maintained, and how the objects inside of it should be displayed is fascinating. It’s something that I’ll be thinking about a lot when I run my own studio in the future.”



Considering space in the studio

India Patel BB '24 was wowed by NBSS on her first visit. "I was struck by the size of the school and seeing the relationship between the departments. Each of them has distinct spaces, but together, it feels like a community," she says. Walking into the bindery and observing the shelves of books and the equipment required to craft them, India "felt a rush of excitement" about everything she could learn in the space.

Later, as a student worker who helped maintain the School, she had special access to every program. This gave her more insight about how everyone works and utilizes the facility. "You become aware not only of everything being made but also the intensive processes behind each weirdly fabulous treasure or object coming into existence," India explains. "You also see behind the scenes how the building runs. For example, I got to see [NBSS Retail & Exhibit Manager] Kristen Odle setting up an exhibition and arranging objects to sit in a display case."

These experiences made a lasting impression on India, and she's determined to learn more as a result. "This idea of being able to make assessments of a space, how it should run and be maintained, and how the objects inside of it should be displayed is fascinating," she says. "It's something that I'll be thinking about a lot when I run my own studio in the future."



Tom Eldridge PC '21, a Teaching Assistant in our Preservation Carpentry program, shares an in-progress building column with Open House guests, December 2023.

See our facility
in person at our annual
Open House!

Friday, December 6 +
Saturday, December 7, 2024

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Open House & Winter Market

Our annual Open House offers a behind-the-scenes look at America's first trade school.

Explore nine career training programs, discover dozens of community classes, tour our expansive facility, connect with students and faculty, and more! As part of Open House, join us for the third edition of our artisan holiday market, featuring work by NBSS community members, refreshments, and a festive spirit too.

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