

James Shearron (left) and Richard Bories with Baker Studio's Folio desk. See Resources.

# The Top 10 Writing Desks

Truth in Decorating: Architect Richard Bories and designer James Shearron assess these sleek, versatile essentials

Thanks to modern technology, the old-fashioned writing desk is more popular than ever. With svelte silhouettes and typically no more than a few trim drawers, they were originally intended only for keeping up with correspondence. But with today's streamlined computers storing all manner of files, writing desks are increasingly practical. "They are perfect for our paperless society," says James Shearron, a designer and co-founder of the New York City architectural firm Bories and Shearron. And their elegant look lends itself to other uses, including doubling as a console or a dressing table. In small spaces they can even be pressed into service for dining, says architect Richard Bories, Shearron's business partner, who frequently has meals at an antique American Empire mahogany writing desk in his Manhattan studio apartment. ▶



Text by Helen Yun · Photography by William A. Boyd Jr. · Produced by Parker Bowie and Elaine Wrightman

## writing desks



### 1 FOLIO DESK BY BAKER STUDIO

"The angular bronze legs are very Jean Prouvé," James Shearron raves, "and the classic shape goes with everything." He likes the exotic coconut-shell finish, the drawers' coral-painted interiors, and the subtle pendant pulls; he sees the desk in an urban apartment crowned with a pair of lamps. Height: 31"; width: 56"; depth: 26"; material: hardwood composite with coconut-shell veneer in wavy-coconut-shell finish, with steel base and pulls in antique-bronze finish; delivery: 4-6 weeks; price: \$2,832; bakerfurniture.com



### 2 MANNINGS DESK BY WILLIAMS-SONOMA HOME

"So chic," Richard Bories says of this French Deco-inspired model. "I love the silver studs and the leather-covered supports." He also praises its ample legroom and ergonomic rounded edges. Its no-frills design, he adds, would enable it to pinch-hit as an extra dining table when entertaining. Height: 30.25"; width: 62.5"; depth: 29.75"; material: walnut-veneer top in walnut finish with steel base sheathed in saddle leather; delivery: 2-4 weeks; price: \$2,650; wshome.com



### 3 AUSTEN WRITING TABLE BY MADELINE STUART COLLECTION FROM JERRY PAIR

"The luxe lacquer and brass hardware remind me of the library in Brooke Astor's Park Avenue apartment," Shearron says. A fan of the desk's delicate details and narrow form, he envisions it as a dressing table. Height: 30"; width: 54"; depth: 20"; material: linen-lacquered hardwood with brass hardware and inlay and ivory-moiré-lined drawers (also available with nickel hardware and inlay, in custom sizes and finishes, and in other materials); delivery: 14-16 weeks; price: \$15,765; madlinestuart.com



### 4 NAIROBI DESK BY ROCHE BOBOIS DESIGN STUDIO

"This has a strong architectural silhouette and is equally stunning from the side due to the bracketed legs," Bories states. He is fond of the carved cubbies that pull out like drawers, and says he would set off the rich rosewood finish with silver desk accessories. Height: 33.8"; width: 55"; depth: 29.5"; material: solid bubinga wood in rosewood stain and varnish finish with drawers in hand-sculpted African motif (other drawer motifs available); delivery: 12-16 weeks; price: \$2,660; roche-bobois.com



### 5 DESK BY B. FATTORINI & F. BETTONI FOR DDC

"A machine for living," remarks Shearron, admiring its industrial vibe. "The roomy surface, side drawers, and handy cord cutout telegraph 'let's get working.'" He imagines its pared-down aluminum frame and gleaming white surface in the living area of a modern loft topped with an iMac. Height: 29.5"; width: 63"; depth: 31.5"; material: matte Keramik top in white with polished-aluminum frame (also available without drawers and with satin-finished frame and other color tops); delivery: 12-16 weeks; price: \$7,724; ddcnyc.com



### 6 CAMBRIDGE DESK BY ARMANI/CASA

"A handsome example of a waterfall table," Shearron comments. "Its streamlined design will complement other contemporary furnishings, and the dark oak, which is so luxurious, hides dirt and smudges so you don't need a blotter." Because of its substantial proportions, Shearron would make this the centerpiece of a large entryway in a sleek glass space. Height: 29"; width: 55"; depth: 27.6"; material: brown oak (other materials available); delivery: 1 week; price: \$6,020; armanicasa.com



### 7 LADY'S DESK BY BARBARA BARRY REALIZED BY HENREDON

"The fluting across the front is very elegant, as are the lovely oval pulls," Bories says. Since two of the drawers include jewelry trays, it could also be used as a dressing table, he observes. Bories recommends placing it in a "simple setting so that it's sure to be the star." Height: 30"; width: 66.25"; depth: 21.8"; material: hardwood veneer in painted-ivory finish (other finishes available); delivery: 3-6 weeks; price: \$5,025; barbarabarrycompany.com



### 8 TANIS DESK BY PIERRE PAULIN FROM LIGNE ROSET

"The crisp aesthetic brings to mind the Bauhaus and De Stijl movements," Shearron says. Walnut-finished drawers give warmth to the durable black laminate, which, he points out, will mask pen marks. To call attention to its striking form, Shearron would place it in the center of a den. Height: 29"; width: 51.25"; depth: 23.75"; material: satin-finish black laminate top with black-lacquered-steel base and walnut-veneer drawers (also available in black Corian top); delivery: 12-14 weeks; price: \$2,670; ligne-roset-usa.com



### 9 PARSONS DESK BY WEST ELM

"Totally versatile," declares Bories, who has this same Parsons desk in his office. "It can go in any kind of environment because the glossy white finish fades into the background and the shape is so clean." It has the added benefit of providing "tons of legroom," he says, and the drawers are surprisingly spacious. Plus, it's "such a bargain." Height: 30"; width: 48"; depth: 24"; material: hardwood in polished-white-lacquer finish (also available in smaller size and in other finishes); delivery: 5-6 days; price: \$299; westelm.com



### 10 BASIS DESK BY ROOM & BOARD

Its minimalist stainless-steel base makes this desk "beautifully modern," Bories says, but the richly grained wood could work in a traditional interior as well. He applauds the convenient drawer, which folds down to accommodate a keyboard, and notes that with its lean profile it could also serve as a console in a small apartment. Height: 30"; width: 50"; depth: 22"; material: solid-walnut top in lacquer finish with stainless-steel base (other sizes and materials available); delivery: 2 weeks; price: \$1,099; roomandboard.com

GROOMING BY MAYSOON FARAJ

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