



THE  
COMMON

May 18, 2020

Dear Selection Committee:

I am writing this letter on behalf of Sam French, an exceptionally talented woodworker I have known for more than a year. I first met Sam after he custom-built a desk and a mail table for a friend of ours. I was immediately impressed with the quality of the pieces – the craftsmanship, attention to detail, and adherence to custom specifications.

In March 2019, my husband and I met with Sam to discuss the custom construction of a desk for my home office. What I wanted was complicated: an L-shaped desk with sets of closed, pullout drawers on each end, a keyboard tray on one side, a pencil tray on another, and a retractable printer station where the two sides of the “L” meet. Sam showed professionalism and a keen artist’s eye from the beginning. He came to the house to examine the space, made detailed measurements of my current set up, and showed me samples of his own work and those of other woodworkers to discuss the style. I wanted a classic look, but nothing heavy or overburdened. Sam designed a desk that has all the functionality I wanted while also maintaining an attractive, classic simplicity. As Sam made progress on the desk, he called to discuss specific decisions, and sent me photographs to see the pieces take shape. He was always pleasant, welcoming of discussion, and full of enthusiasm for the project. It has been a joy to watch this complex dream of a desk take shape. Sam has told me it is the most “in-depth piece of heart-work” he has never done, and he is right to be extremely proud of it. I should note that although I have seen multiple pictures of the desk from all angles, because of quarantine restrictions I haven’t seen it yet in person.

It would be a singular benefit for Smith to commission Sam for its library work with American elm. Sam is a natural collaborator, always eager to discuss ideas and never defensive or possessive. He also has an innate and finally honed connection with his material. He knows when to let the natural grain shine, and which kinds of wood and shapes to use for stylistic accents. After we had commissioned the desk, Sam showed us a hunk of petrified tree trunk that he aimed to fashion into a base for a coffee table. He had planed a portion of the trunk to support a flat piece of glass (which he found for us at a local antique shop). He ingeniously affixed the glass to the upright part of the trunk, which curls over the glass like an otter rising out of a pond. His wood-working savvy and natural inspiration would surely create a series of uniquely gorgeous pieces for Smith’s library.

I fully recommend him for this work. Please don’t hesitate to ask any further questions.

Sincerely,

  
Jennifer Acker

