

May 17, 2020

Smith College
College Hall
Northampton, Massachusetts 01063

To whom it may concern:

It is with pleasure that we write in support of Sam French's proposal and candidacy for the design and crafting of woodwork in Smith's new Neilson Library. We are absolutely certain that Mr. French's talent, vision, and willingness to collaborate will culminate in truly wonderful additions, including distinctive tables, benches, and furnishings to lodge current and future students in their academic labor and social discourse. Please allow us to share just a few notes that speak to Sam's unparalleled custom work.

We became acquainted with Sam and his work through a close friend, whose local non-profit, social entrepreneurial organization had commissioned him to design a conference table. We had just moved to Northampton and were in search of furniture to match the modern aesthetics of our new home. We took an initial drive up to Sam's workshop in Gill, MA, where he gave us a tour of his workshop and explained in detail his woodworking methods, and introduced us to a variety of live trees and portioned samples of wood. We felt Sam's dedication and passion immediately, and the three of us collaborated within that first hour, with Sam sketching beginning mockups of a dining table.

Sam next visited our home to register the dimensions of the condo and to consider the landscape and lighting of the space. We decided upon a cherry wood top with a matte gloss finish and ash for the trestle base, fastened together by mortise and tenon. Sam remained in regular communication with us by email, and over the course of several weeks, he sent us a series of digital images that documented his progress on the table. Throughout the process, Sam cited specific options and provided detailed responses to our queries. The overall experience was enlivening, and Sam delivered the table in a timely fashion shortly after we moved into our new home.

With a growing sense of appreciation for Sam's talent as a woodworker, his professionalism, and discerning eye, we commissioned three more pieces over the course of the next three years: a pair of stools to sit at our kitchen peninsula, a fawn-like mail table to occupy the landing of our second floor, and a large desk that sits in Tariq's office at Amherst College.

The cherry stools, which we sit on at breakfast, are among Sam's most elegant pieces. To narrow our focus, he shared a number of stylistic variations and categories of three-legged seating; we were keen on a more Scandinavian form, and though quite different in style from the first table, the stools were as impressive and have become staple pieces from which we begin our days. The bottom of each stool contains black walnut split wedges and straight tapered legs, and many visitors have complimented the comfort of the grooved seat. Our third project was a piece we had long desired, but other furniture took precedent. When we finally asked Sam to create our mail table, its detail and

unique execution were even more impressive: it holds three cubbies on either side, which sit centered on a pub table-height fixture, erected by legs that are simultaneously whimsical and sturdy. Finally, the large trestle desk that Sam fashioned out of spalted maple and cherry for the base is yet another of his masterpieces. Sam even added a shorter, corresponding side table which stands across the room, for when students attend office hours or a colleague drops by for a chat.

It has been an absolute pleasure to work with Sam, and we continue to be inspired by his artistry and in awe of his skills. We are positive that Sam, whose business is so deeply rooted in Western Massachusetts, will shape an inclusive and adaptive space for the Smith College community. And we are positive that you will be proud to have Sam's work contribute to Smith College's legacy. Should you have any questions, please feel free to write to us at tjaffer@amherst.edu and angelabernadette@gmail.com.

Your sincerely,

Tariq Jaffer, Associate Professor
Angela D'Souza (SC, MAT 2018)