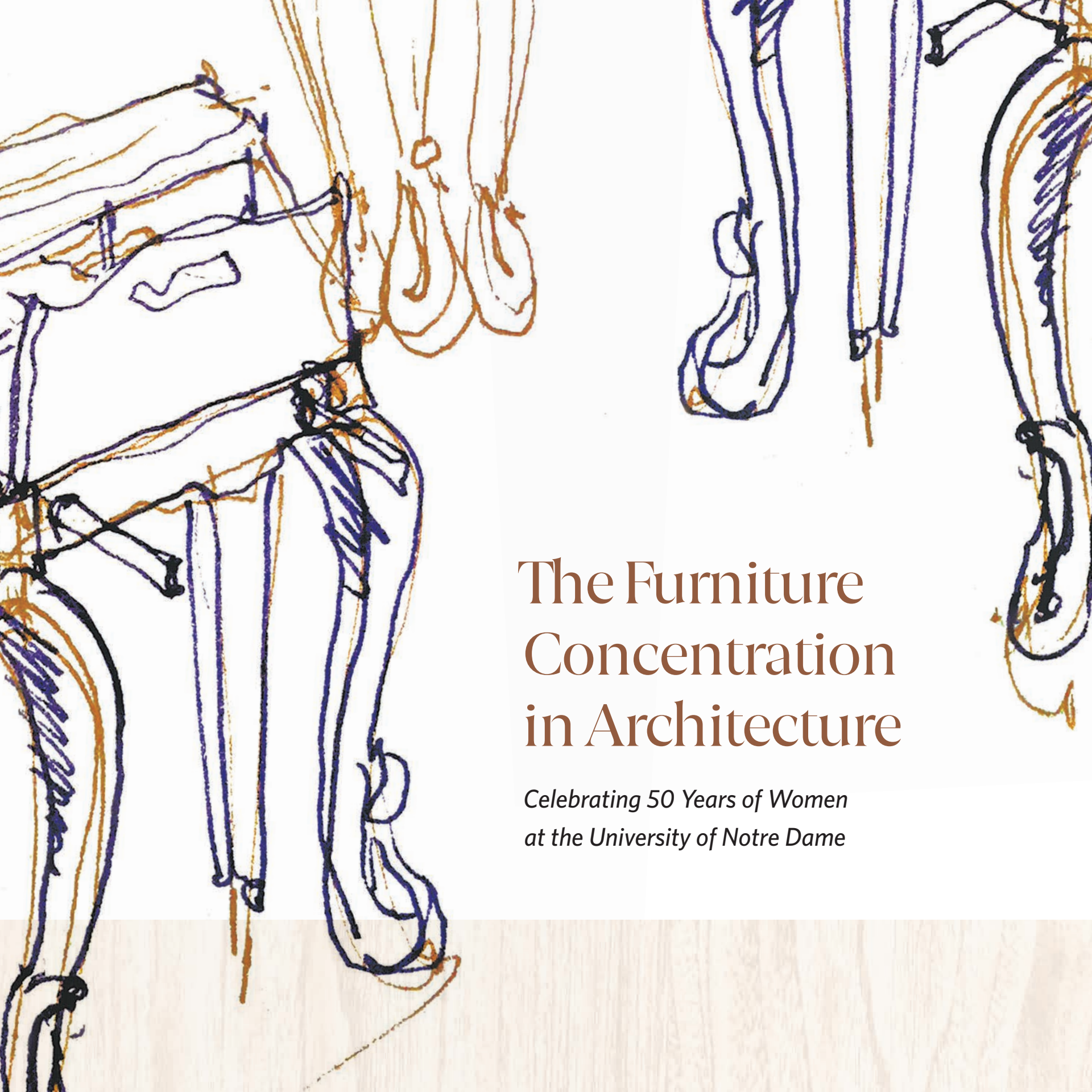


An abstract, hand-drawn sketch of furniture legs, possibly a chair or stool, rendered in blue and orange ink. The lines are expressive and somewhat sketchy, capturing the essence of the form rather than providing a detailed technical drawing. The legs are positioned in a way that suggests a three-dimensional object. The background is white, and the overall style is artistic and conceptual.

The Furniture Concentration in Architecture

*Celebrating 50 Years of Women
at the University of Notre Dame*

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From the Dean

The decision to admit women to Notre Dame fifty years ago was perhaps the most transformative one made by the University in its long history. Fully engaging women at the University cured a long-term injustice and, in the process, has bettered the lives of individuals, families, and our country in innumerable ways, even as much work remains to be done.

Over the years, the positive consequences of this bold decision have accrued to the betterment of our academic community. Campus social life has been normalized, the brightest and best male and female students have found a home here, and academic and professional prospects for our graduates have become exceptional for all.

Since 1972 women have been attracted in large numbers to study at the School of Architecture. In recent years their numbers have exceeded those of male students. The number of female faculty members is also steadily increasing. Women students have made lasting contributions to the evolution of our distinctive pedagogy, our presence in Rome during the third year of study, the advancement of our academic standards, and the overall quality of our design studio production. After graduation, they have excelled as practicing architects, landscape architects, urbanists, academics, and civic and business leaders in the unique Notre Dame mode of being of service to the world. Their accomplishments are a source of special pride to us.

This publication features the considerable achievements of a select number of female graduates of our furniture design concentration. Their work stands out for its conceptual wholeness, material choice, and technical execution. The excellence exhibited in the following pages hints to the ability of these graduates to extend their mastery of furniture design and construction to the design of rooms, buildings, and the city as a whole.

We mark this fiftieth anniversary of the admission of the first female students to our School of Architecture with faith and hope that their continuing commitment to the ideals, virtues, and ideas associated with our program will guide its positive evolution and prominence into the future.

STEFANOS POLYZOIDES

Professor and Dean

The University of Notre Dame School of Architecture

Building Notre Dame's Furniture Design Concentration

Robert J. Brandt

Director of the Furniture Design Program, the University of Notre Dame School of Architecture

In 1991, Thomas Gordon Smith, then-chair of the architecture program at the University of Notre Dame, started advertising for a new position within the School. Thomas' vision was to offer furniture design courses as electives with hopes that one day furniture design would become a thriving part of the School of Architecture.

He understood the rich traditions and parallels between the practice of architecture and furniture design so he felt it essential that the two should be offered in tandem. After a couple of interviews and a few letters back and forth, I was fortunate to be offered the opportunity to start our furniture design program. Arrangements were made, paperwork was filed, and I arrived on campus in the spring of 1992. By 1997 the furniture program had proven its worth and was recognized by the University as an official concentration, a four-semester sequence of courses designed to help students develop specialized skills.

From the very beginning I've maintained that it is necessary for architecture students to experience the act of designing an original object and then building that object. This enhances their ability think three-dimensionally while drawing two-dimensionally. The lessons and concepts that are stressed in the furniture design concentration share common goals with (and support) the mission of the School of Architecture. Our curriculum reinforces the exploration of design theory and challenges students to solve the dilemmas associated with utilitarian

aesthetics. As with successful works of architecture, furniture design addresses human scale, functional parameters, ergonomics, material, the construction process, and elements of composition. All of these considerations must be developed and coordinated to result in a harmonious object of the highest integrity which meets a prescribed function.

This year, 2022, marks the thirtieth anniversary of furniture design at Notre Dame. The work of many dedicated students has built the concentration into a top-tier program worthy of our new home in The Ryan Companies Furniture Design Studio. All alumni and current students should take pride in what they have accomplished. They are the ones who made the extra effort, took on the rigorous schedules, and succeeded in realizing special memories, improving themselves and those around them, ultimately creating a unique institution with far-reaching contributions. As everything seems to change with time, it's comforting to know that some things remain the same. Just like the early days, students in today's furniture design program prioritize exploration and improvement as they move forward with each design and each built object.



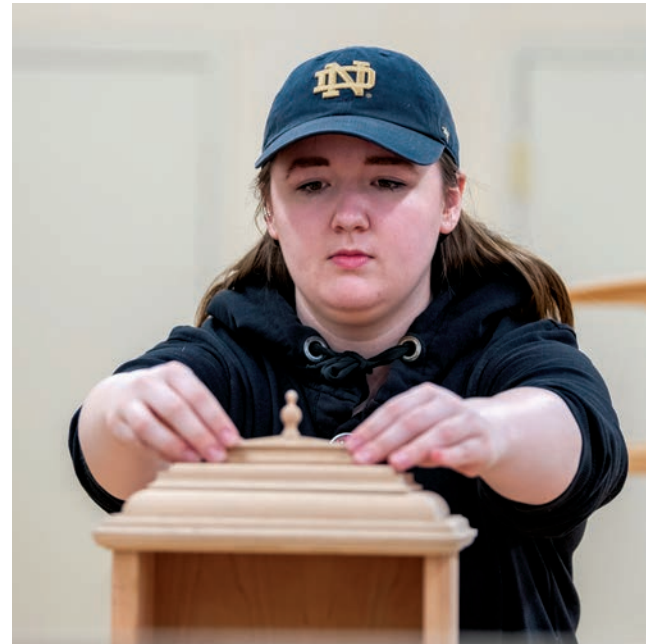




The Concentration

Officially recognized in 1997, after furniture design had been taught at the School for nearly a decade, the furniture design concentration exposes architecture students to an ethic in craft. It trains them to think three-dimensionally while designing two-dimensionally. Available to students starting their fourth year of studies, the concentration allows students a unique opportunity to study furniture design in an architectural context.

Fully equipped with an assortment of both power and hand tools, students construct furniture of original design and a high level of craftsmanship. In the Ryan Companies Furniture Studio, students gain valuable knowledge about the properties of materials, process, three-dimensional design, and the importance of craftsmanship.



12

CREDIT HOURS

*to complete the
concentration in
furniture design*

4

COURSES

*that compound
students' knowledge
year-over-year*







Required Courses

to complete the Furniture Design Concentration

The two-year concentration consists of four furniture studio classes. Like the School's overall focus, these courses expose students to classical and traditional architectural detail and ornament.

ARCH 41811

Beginning Furniture (3 credit hours)

Students gain an understanding of scale, proportion, and construction of furniture. Lectures and demonstrations expose students to the history of furniture, properties of wood, and the use of woodworking equipment.

ARCH 41821

Advanced Furniture (3 credit hours)

Students construct furniture of original design. They learn to understand furniture's relationship to architectural context. (Prerequisite: ARCH 41811)

ARCH 57811

Special Projects in Furniture I (3 credit hours)

Students pursue specific interests in design and construction of furniture. (Prerequisite: ARCH 41821)

ARCH 57821

Special Studies in Furniture Design II (3 credit hours)

Continuation of Architecture 57811.



The Studio

Furniture design courses in the Walsh Family Hall School of Architecture are taught in the Ryan Companies Furniture Studio.

The space is divided into a bench room (for hand work, sanding, final assembly, and finish) and a machine room (for planing, jointing, cutting, power sanding, and turning materials). Each student is assigned an individual work area in the bench room for the duration of the semester. The two spaces are equipped with all of the necessary power equipment and hand tools required to take a project from rough sawn wood to a finished piece of work.

3,467

SQUARE FEET

*of studio space
in the Ryan
Companies
Furniture Studio*

29

MACHINES

*available for
planing, jointing,
cutting, sanding,
and turning*









Safety

The main emphasis of the furniture courses' academic content is composition with fundamental, expressive functional design. Once the design work is completed and process is explained, safety training begins. The top priority is always the safety and welfare of our students. The Furniture Studio is audited annually by the University's Office of Risk Management to make certain everything adheres to their strict standards. Students are then instructed on the safe and proper use of the equipment and hand tools they will be using throughout the course. The remainder of the semester involves developing an understanding of how to use equipment and hand tools to manipulate the material and realize the initial design as a three-dimensional object.

155

GRADUATES

*have completed
the furniture
concentration*

100

STUDIO HOURS

*on average to
complete one
piece of furniture*

The Review Process

At the end of the semester, each student presents their drawings and built furniture piece at a public review attended by both students and faculty. Each student has their own individual review, and it's the culmination of their semester's work: an opportunity to showcase their piece, explain what they have learned, and receive critical feedback about their design, process, and final product. The review is a learning environment meant to engage students at the intellectual and academic level. To that end, faculty comment on the work and discuss the merits of each design. Discussion often includes issues of precedent, design process, fabrication, and finishing. These discussions then inform the students' work moving forward within the concentration.

5

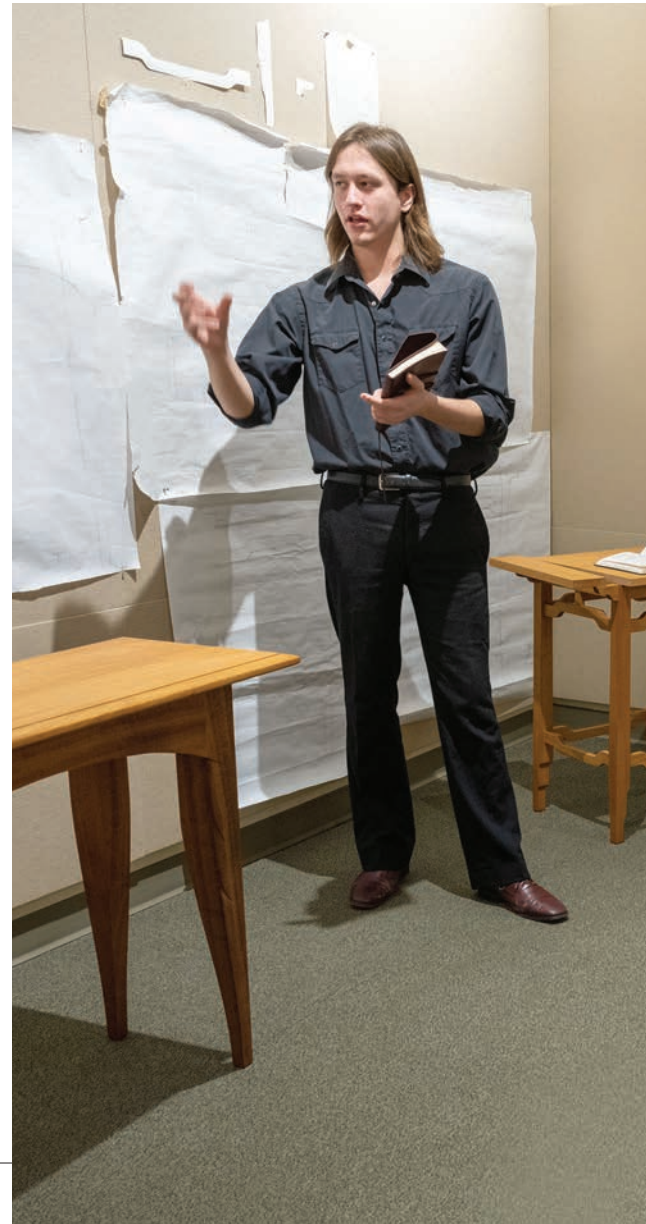
INSTRUCTORS

*involved in the
review process
each semester*

110

REVIEWS

*conducted
over the last
30 years*







Formation by Furniture

Kate Chambers

Master of Architecture '18, Adjunct Assistant Professor of the Practice

Over its life, a piece of furniture has many acts. A bed might become a ship on the high seas, a dining room table might become an art studio, a side table might become a shrine. These snapshots speak to the innate versatility and functionality that furniture requires in our daily lives.

It can be said that furniture design sits at the intersection of art and architecture. Drawing on both, furniture design has the capacity to fulfill ergonomic and practical requirements while also elevating the objects to the level of art. The ubiquity of furniture, and the limited number of uses typically performed by the objects, often belies the incredible breadth that exists in the realm of furniture design. Furniture, like architecture, has a range of hierarchical expressions. Furniture can tell a story through iconographic or formal references; however, it may also be vernacular in character. Each expression must be functional, catered to the intricacies of the human form. In many ways furniture design is a microcosm within the larger world of design. It is often derived from and related to larger design movements.

Historically, furniture design has drawn on architectural design. Starting in the fifteenth century, craftsmen drew on architectural renderings for their precedent. This became common practice and led to the creation of pattern books that described furniture designs which were derived from past architectural movements. These

pattern books were ways of passing on tradition through time and space. Many pattern books from Europe were brought to the Americas, becoming the basis for our furniture and architectural heritage. The pattern books, along with architecture, often delve into our fascination with the past. The nineteenth century witnessed the rise of the architect and craftsman as furniture designer; the definition of furniture and its relationship to its environment and users was redefined. However, it was not until Gerrit Rietveld designed his Red Blue Chair that furniture design became more forward-looking. Furniture designers began to engage in modern art and architectural movements; at times their designs became the impetus for new movements themselves. Throughout the twentieth century, the discipline of furniture design was elevated from craft to art form, with architects like Frank Lloyd Wright, Greene and Greene, and Mies van der Rohe designing furniture to accompany their architectural designs.

The role of furniture design in architecture is critical; it is almost impossible to think about architecture divorced



from furniture design and placement. Furniture, like most of the objects we interact with in buildings (hardware, cabinetry, doors, windows) is scaled to our unique human form and designed around the limitations of our bodies. Furniture design inherently must address the issues of scale, ergonomics, tactile sensation, and aesthetics. Furniture is our response to the human condition, to the ways in which our bodies interact with the natural and built environments, and with each other. Each design is one designer's idea of the way that things should be, their interpretation of the functional and aesthetic requirements for humans in this world.

I heard an anecdote very early in my time at Notre Dame that the architect Bob Adam had said, "If you can design a chair, you can design a house." This idea, that learning to design at the scale of the micro was just as important as learning to design at the scale of the



"Furniture is our response to the human condition, to the ways in which our bodies interact with the natural and built environments, and with each other."

macro, influenced how I approach design. Looking back on my time in the furniture design program, I think those words could not be truer. Learning, hands on, about proportion, materiality, human form, and construction impacts the way you work as an architectural designer. It forces you to address the human form in the most intimate way, understanding how we exist and move in the world. You become hyper-aware of the dimensions of your body and the way that your body interacts with spaces and objects, which in turn allows you to make critical observations about



the spaces and objects in the world around you. These observations will forever inform your work as an architect. You will always have a sensitivity to proportion and space that relates to your own human form.

Something else that the furniture program prepared me for, that I had not expected, was to feel confident on a job site. It helped me to understand craft and construction in a way that made me qualified to discuss it. The real-world application of something that had previously been purely academic gave me a new appreciation for the discipline and helped me to relate to the craftspeople I was working with. Understanding the strengths and constraints of different materials and tools helps

you to design and problem solve in ways that are both rational and strategic. Studying furniture design not only made me a better designer, but also a better collaborator and colleague.

Through the design and construction of relatively small objects I was able to glean important lessons of scale, proportion, precedent, and fabrication that I apply regularly in my practice of architecture. However, the greatest lesson I learned in the woodshop is that every mistake is an opportunity to adapt, to evolve. This lesson is one not easily learned, but it's one that every furniture design student takes forward and which enhances both their practice of architecture and their life.

From left: Cherry bench with mortise and tenon joinery, 2017. Maple butcher block top island, painted pine base with turned legs, shelf, and drawers, 2017. Pair of cherry, Egyptian-revival-inspired side tables, 2018. Mid-century-inspired cherry hall table with Vermont marble top and floating shelf, 2016.



An Enduring Education

Seven standout alumnae reflect back on their time learning furniture design at Notre Dame, the value of the concentration, and the lessons they have carried forward into their careers and lives.

Calla Chang

BACHELOR OF ARCHITECTURE '16

ND: What made you decide to pursue a concentration in furniture design?

CC: I've always loved making things by hand, so I couldn't pass up the opportunity to get into the furniture studio.

ND: Did your experience in furniture design change your approach to architecture and design?

CC: Taking furniture design challenged me to think about scale, detail, and process in a way that I hadn't before. So much of our time in school and at work is spent designing things on paper. Physically creating something makes scale real in a way that paper doesn't capture; anything too large or small risks throwing off the composition. Each detail in how you shape the wood and join the pieces together tells a story about the cultural and historic influences on your design. Refining rough-sawn wood into a finished piece requires you to know the material and the tools available, think through each cut, joint, and angle, and, finally, be dedicated enough to get through endless days of sanding to complete the piece.

ND: What were the important lessons that you learned from this concentration?

CC: Furniture design emphasized work ethic, dedication, and creative problem solving. There were no shortcuts to getting the work done, and sometimes there were surprises along the way. Environmental factors like humidity or even the grain of the wood itself could cause cracking or warping. We had to adapt in those moments and control what we could—which means measure twice (or three times), cut once!

“Taking furniture design challenged me to think about scale, detail, and process in a way that I hadn't before. So much of our time in school and at work is spent designing things on paper. Physically creating something makes scale real in a way that paper doesn't capture; anything too large or small risks throwing off the composition.”



Above: Walnut settee with velvet upholstery.
Influenced by early twentieth-century Viennese
and Sheraton designs; upholstered by maker. 2016.



Above: Cherry drafting table with pivoting & folding tabletop (30" x 42" folded, 60" x 42" unfolded), influenced by Biedermeier and Sheraton designs. 2015.
Right: Matching cherry chair with satin upholstery, influenced by Biedermeier and Sheraton designs. Upholstered by maker. 2016.

ND: Describe the impact of studying furniture design on your personal and professional life.

CC: Taking furniture design has been an invaluable experience in my professional life, helping me to understand details and the construction process. It has also brought me a lot of personal happiness and pride, as I am able to use the pieces I made on a daily basis.

ND: Why do you think this curriculum is important to have at the Notre Dame School of Architecture?

CC: The furniture concentration teaches design and problem-solving skills that complement the architectural curriculum perfectly. It is a lens through which students can more fully understand history, style, and construction. As the School of Architecture advocates for traditional architecture and the allied arts, it's important to offer such practical classes. I think former students would also say that Bob Brandt's teaching and artistry is a highlight among a very talented faculty and that every student should have the chance to learn from him.



Jennifer Heller

BACHELOR OF ARCHITECTURE '08

ND: What made you decide to pursue a concentration in furniture design?

JH: My father had been a hobbyist furniture maker for almost twenty years by the time I got to Notre Dame. Though I had shown a brief interest at home, it was during my time at ND that I realized I wanted to know more. I almost didn't apply because I thought I should leave a spot for someone who wouldn't have otherwise had exposure, but I am grateful my classmates encouraged me to reconsider and pursue the concentration.

ND: Did your experience in furniture design change your approach to architecture and design?

JH: Success in furniture design often comes down to understanding intersections, and I think in that way it has a lot in common with architecture more broadly. Understanding how materials relate, interact, and then visually convey my idea is critical to how I choose to approach architecture. Furniture design forced me to study joinery on a micro level, which scales up well to my work today.

ND: What was the greatest challenge in studying furniture design?

JH: A challenge for me was the open-endedness of what we could create. Narrowing down the possibilities was difficult, as I am very indecisive when I'm my own client.

ND: Describe the impact of studying furniture design on your personal and professional life.

JH: I love working with my hands and learning about materials in a tactile way, so the concentration was a great introduction to the idea-to-construction process and troubleshooting-to-finished piece in real time. Professionally, having a thorough understanding of wood as a material and its full potential allows me to design thoughtfully in a way that produces the best outcome for the client.

Personally, my experience with the concentration was a fulfilling way to connect with my classmates and younger students as a teaching assistant. In my family, I am proud to be able to share my furniture pieces with my children, and introduce them to the idea that we can all be makers —my son is already a pro in my dad's woodshop.

“The hands-on skill and knowledge I gained in the concentration unquestionably made me a better architect.”

ND: What were the important lessons that you learned from this concentration?

JH: Not to use the tablesaw if you're tired! But in all seriousness, measure twice, measure again, think about it, and then cut. I also learned some important lessons about scale, ergonomics, and designing for actual space (with immediate feedback if things were off!). Having to work around the parameters of the clock movement in particular, my second-semester project, was an introduction to designing around extremely specific spatial requirements—something I also do in my architectural work every day.

ND: Why do you think this curriculum is important to have at the Notre Dame School of Architecture?

JH: My time in the woodshop was invaluable to me. The process of actually building a design—needing to consider the form fully in 3D, and then working through the limitations of construction—was so illuminating to me as a student, and it continues to impact me as a professional. The hands-on skill and knowledge I gained in the concentration unquestionably made me a better architect.



Above: Walnut mantle clock with brass mechanical movement and mulberry paper screen. The motifs are inspired by Chinese lattice work and traditional furniture. 2007.



Mahogany desk with leather writing insert and mahogany chair with silk upholstery. The art nouveau lines of the piece were influenced by a visit to the Musée D'Orsay's furniture collection during Heller's year of studies in Rome. Chair: 2007; Desk: 2008. Awarded Best in Show at the 2008 Washington, DC, Woodworkers Guild exhibition.



Stephanie Jazmines

BACHELOR OF ARCHITECTURE '11

ND: What made you decide to pursue a concentration in furniture design?

JH: Honestly, I thought the idea of designing and making something with your own hands had to be one of the coolest things someone could do. I still think so. We had spent so much time in architecture school drawing, and I felt compelled to make. Architectural drawing is notorious for being a representative art form—that is, you make drawings with the idea that they will eventually be used as a reference to construct a building. But buildings take years and teams of people. With furniture, we made drawings too, but we also made the finished piece. It was so integrated, so fulfilling to do something in a fraction of a time it would take to get a building made, and to be able to make it with your own hands.

ND: Describe the impact of studying furniture design on your personal and professional life.

SJ: Bob Brandt may be one of the most influential professors I've ever had. I've been trained in a few woodshops since Bob's, and I always say that I'm

grateful I trained with Bob first. He taught me to be careful, considerate, and focused when I make things (and when I undertake any task, really), but he also taught me that perfection doesn't necessarily come from making the perfect drawing. It's not enough to achieve theoretical perfection because those ideas get tested when you come to fabrication. Wood reacts. It swells and it bends and there is a level of unanticipated error that you have to be able to accommodate. It isn't enough to have a perfect 3D model or rendering or an exact CAD drawing. You have to be able to adapt and understand your medium. I remember times when we'd have to fit doors or hinged surfaces and Bob would always have us measure the thing we built first before we cut the piece to fit into it. We couldn't rely on our drawings, but we could rely on the thing itself. I think about this almost every day.

On another note, the furniture concentration had a huge impact on my career trajectory. Because I developed a passion for furniture making and wood-working at Notre Dame, I applied for a masters of furniture design at RISD and was actually accepted. Unfortunately, I couldn't afford it. I ended up at Yale for my Master of Architecture. I tried to take



Walnut elephant stool with maple details.
Hand-carved seat and trunk. 2010.



“The furniture curriculum shows the value of drawing for the end goal of making, and it also shows the value of craftsmanship in the details.”



Arts and Crafts side table. Mahogany with walnut details. 2009.

the furniture elective there but couldn't get in. I still craved that woodwork, that craft. That feeling led me to apply for a Fulbright scholarship to spend a year in the wood program at Aalto University in Finland. It was an incredible experience. At my current job, I'm still making, but not to the level of craftsmanship that I crave, so I'm still looking for more avenues to keep wood and furniture in my life.

ND: Did your experience in furniture design change your approach to architecture and design?

SJ: Absolutely. It is always so important to understand things in real, physical, dimensional space. Architects cannot just exist in drawings or in 3D computer models. Those things are representational and can be finessed and manipulated to achieve a final look. It is harder when something is right in front of you in physical space, when it's something you can touch and move and turn and study. This is why, even though I mainly sketch and draw for work, I also build physical models and full-scale mockups. Furniture design made me unafraid to create physical objects.

ND: Why do you think this curriculum is important to have at the Notre Dame School of Architecture?

SJ: As the School of Architecture sits in the Beaux-Arts tradition, it relies heavily on the act and art of drawing. The furniture curriculum is a valuable complement because it shows the value of drawing for the end goal of making, and it also shows the value of craftsmanship in the details. Classicism is so much about detail and this idea of part to whole. This curriculum makes you zoom in to a 1:1 scale that architecture students

so rarely use. It is the most human scale we can get. If you want architects to have a clear understanding of human scale, you need to show them what that really means. That's what Bob teaches.

One other important thing I learned from Bob and the furniture concentration is how to appreciate something regardless of style. Bob was open to any style of furniture we wanted to pursue, as long as it was executed and crafted well. While I value the classical architectural education I got, it was refreshing to also understand early on that aesthetics and craft must work together for anything to be considered "good."

ND: What were the important lessons that you learned from this concentration?

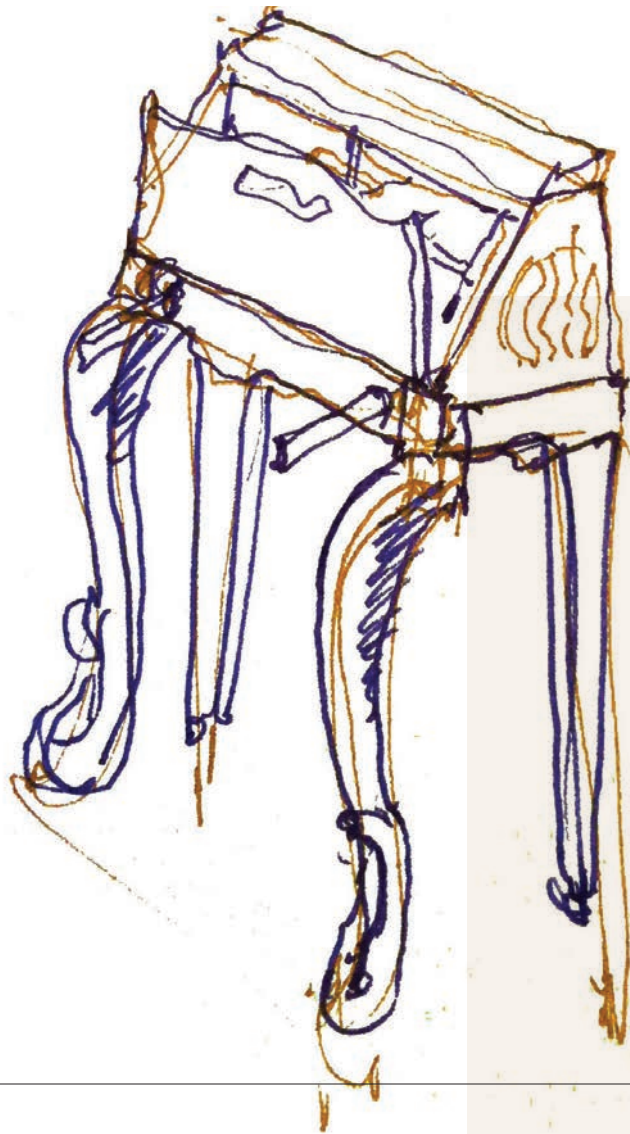
SJ: Being able to adapt, understanding your medium, understanding how drawings translate to physical space and into physical objects. Also: precision matters, but there's always room for human error. And we measure to 32nds of an inch!

ND: What was the greatest challenge in studying furniture design?

SJ: I'd never been around power tools or planes or table saws, so I needed to overcome a level of fear—if you don't have the confidence to hold the materials and make the cuts, you can get hurt or mess up your piece. It's kind of like skateboarding. If you try to ride the board and your footing isn't solid, you'll fall.



Above: Tentacle writing table, Cherry with carved cabriole legs turned tentacle and a natural knot central cabinet. 2011. Right: Closed view of the writing table.



legibility
of the lines



Danielle Murphy

BACHELOR OF ARCHITECTURE '13

ND: What made you decide to pursue a concentration in furniture design?

JH: For as long as I can remember I wanted to be an architect, an aspiration that eventually led me to the uniquely traditional program at the University of Notre Dame. It was at ND that I was first introduced to furniture design. My parents thoughtfully advised that the concentration in historic preservation might be more broadly applicable to my chosen career path, but I was drawn to furniture design. I couldn't think of anything more compelling than using the design skills I had fostered in architecture school to design and *build* furniture pieces. The ability to learn by *making* rather than reading, writing, or even drawing was incredibly appealing to me. Not only was it a creative outlet, but it also challenged me in many unexpected ways.

ND: What were the important lessons that you learned from this concentration?

DM: We learned traditional woodworking methods and joinery using both hand tools and machinery,

and about the properties and characteristics of different woods, which would prove useful while detailing custom millwork, interiors, and occasionally furniture in my career in high-end residential architecture. The knowledge I gained in the concentration gave me confidence and credibility with the design team and on the job site. The woodshop quickly became my favorite place, and in my fifth year I was a teaching assistant for the fourth-year class. Mentoring younger students enriched my own learning and provided teaching experience that later informed how I would approach teaching watercolor classes for the Institute of Classical Architecture & Art.

Learning to design at a different scale was initially a challenge. I was accustomed to designing profiles that were meant to be viewed from a different perspective—looking up. I was now designing human-scaled objects meant to be viewed mostly from above. Professor Brandt tactfully pointed out during preliminary design reviews that the details I had drawn underneath my tabletop would rarely be seen, and I learned to consider perspective rather than being guided by convention while designing.



Curly maple vanity table. Hand-painted gilding; brass ring pulls. 2012. Curly maple vanity chair. Upholstery by others. 2012.



Furniture design posed more practical challenges as well. I learned to be extremely thorough and careful when operating machinery. I learned to calculate how much raw material I would need for each project based on my design and to develop a strategy for execution, tweaking the design as needed along the way. The ability to react and adjust course was an instrumental lesson in good design. Architecture projects were all theoretical, never put to the test of actual feasibility of construction. The ability to build my designs was proof of concept, something I wouldn't otherwise get to experience until my professional career in architecture.

ND: Describe the impact of studying furniture design on your personal and professional life.

DM: My experience in furniture design allowed me to foster my own personal design aesthetic. By transitioning my focus from architecture to furniture, I was able to address the design problem at a smaller and more intimate scale, allowing me to design *and make*. While some architects become specialists, I have always been interested in the entire process from design through construction—understanding how something goes together from start to finish. Exploring studio furniture allowed me to apply that curiosity by making my own pieces, a tactile endeavor that brought me much joy and satisfaction.

By March of 2020, like many others I had transitioned to remote work. I found myself transforming the vanity set I had designed and built into my new desk and office space. I was so proud of this piece of furniture that now had an outsized role in my daily life. The change of pace during this time allowed

more time for reflection, and I began taking wood-working classes again at a local woodshop in order to get back to *making*.

As a deeply practical person, I am able to harness my creativity through designing spaces and objects with utility, the challenge being to address both form and function simultaneously. In my career in residential architecture, I am better able to understand how furniture must be situated within its surroundings, and how it can in turn inform and influence its environment. My goal is to create spaces and objects of beauty, comfort, and individual character.

ND: Why do you think this curriculum is important to have at the Notre Dame School of Architecture?

DM: Having students learn firsthand how two-dimensional designs transform into three dimensions makes for well-rounded architects. We were forced to think through how each part connected and integrated into a cohesive finished piece, addressing both structural and aesthetic considerations. Individuals learn in many different ways, and the furniture design curriculum provided a uniquely tactile learning experience that was and continues to be instrumental to my development as an architect and, more importantly, as a designer.

In addition to the curriculum, Professor Brandt is a generous teacher and mentor who made learning fun, and who continues to offer support and guidance post-graduation. My furniture design classmates and I are all grateful that we were able to share such an extraordinary experience together.



Opposite page: Curly maple looking glass. Hand-painted gilding. 2013. This page: Walnut side table. 2011.

Lisa Schumaker

BACHELOR OF ARCHITECTURE '15

ND: What made you decide to pursue a concentration in furniture design?

LS: I decided to pursue a concentration in furniture design because I wanted to make things. I enjoy the process of taking raw material and crafting it into something beautiful or useful, ideally both. It is the same reason why I pursued architecture to begin with. Furniture design seemed like a natural extension of the major on a more human scale. Most of what we did in school was work on designs for theoretical projects, so I appreciated the opportunity to see furniture designs through from conceptual drawings to finished pieces that can be passed down for generations.

ND: Describe the impact of studying furniture design on your personal and professional life.

LS: Before studying furniture design, I never paid much attention to interior design or furnishings. After going through the furniture design concentration, I've grown to appreciate quality design and craftsmanship and how it can enhance the experience of a space. The practical knowledge gained in the

woodshop was also invaluable. It has been beneficial on countless occasions, from personal home renovation projects to detailing cabinetry and joinery for professional designs. Studying furniture and woodwork helped to enhance my understanding of how things are put together, both at the object scale and the building scale.



“Studying furniture and woodwork helped to enhance my understanding of how things are put together, both at the object scale and the building scale.”



Morris style reclining chair and ottoman. Cherry wood with mortise and tenon joinery. Reclines using a series of pegs along the arms; design process involved 3D modeling. 2015.



Above: Walnut side table with mortise and tenon joinery. Curved skirting inspired by an open book; carving of turned legs inspired by the tulips of West Michigan. Design process involved hand-drafting. 2013. Right: Cherry drafting stool. Mortise and tenon joinery; built to own measurements to maximize comfort. Design process involved AutoCAD. 2014.

ND: What was the greatest challenge in studying furniture design?

LS: The greatest challenge of studying furniture design was to balance function and aesthetics. Ensuring all the lines were working together from every angle while still producing a piece that was comfortable to use took extensive planning. Working with or fighting against the natural imperfections in the raw lumber to extract your design from it was another fascinating challenge. Professor Brandt helped provide us with the knowledge of how to craft the joinery to execute our designs, but the material did not always cooperate as planned. In the end, it made the finished product even more meaningful.

ND: Why do you think this curriculum is important to have at the Notre Dame School of Architecture?

LS: The curriculum provides an excellent creative outlet for students to explore alternative areas of design. It creates an opportunity to design at the human scale and contributes to a well-rounded design education. It was such an amazing experience for me, as I'm sure it has been for anyone who has participated in the program. The knowledge and experiences gained through the furniture design concentration are priceless. Many of my favorite memories from college are from my time in the woodshop. The Notre Dame School of Architecture would not be the same without it.



Becky Sigman

BACHELOR OF ARCHITECTURE '09

ND: What made you decide to pursue a concentration in furniture design?

RS: I love being able to work with my hands to create something, but I'd never had the opportunity to do any woodworking. I understood and liked the mix of artistry, technical nuance, and physicality. Also, I really wanted to work with Professor Brandt; I had a lot of respect for his knowledge, the work he inspired, and the way he taught his class.

ND: Did your experience in furniture design change your approach to architecture and design?

RS: The concentration in furniture design added depth to my understanding of the built environment. It allowed me to focus on essentials of furniture, scale and usability, at the same time I was working to create something beautiful. That concept could then be applied at any design opportunity, from furniture to buildings to urban planning. Also, the ability to design and execute a furniture piece within a manageable timeframe really helped illuminate the concept of the design lifecycle for me.

ND: Why do you think this curriculum is important to have at the Notre Dame School of Architecture?

RS: For all the reasons above—and because the furniture design concentration helps build respect for craftsmanship and artistry in the built environment, both creating and preserving it. This is an essential part of the industry, and one that is not often recognized or valued. Having the opportunity to develop skills myself has helped me to recognize and value these skills all the more in design and practice. I think furniture design and the study of furniture precedents also helped refine my design “eye,” my concept of scale and understanding of what makes things beautiful.

ND: Describe the impact of studying furniture design on your personal and professional life.

RS: Furniture design gave me the confidence in myself and my design skills that I needed personally and professionally. It helped me get a better grasp on scale and develop my creativity in a broader sense as it allowed me to explore and visualize better in three dimensions. It also gave me confidence to work



Maple table with a birdseye maple top and a figured veneer inlay, 2007.



Above: Carved walnut chair with silk upholstery. The carving reflects the patterns in the silk fabric. 2008. Right: Mahogany desk with a ribboned mahogany top, 2008.

with (and have a healthy respect for) power tools, which historically women don't often get exposed to. Knowing that I was able to design and build a piece of furniture gave me confidence when I entered the AEC industry [architecture, engineering, and construction] and later on when I walked onto many construction sites to work with contractors. Being able to quietly break barriers doing something I love is amazing. I'm so grateful I had the opportunity!

ND: What was the greatest challenge in studying furniture design?

RS: The greatest challenge studying furniture design for me was not to fear the power tools but to respect them and have the confidence to use them.

ND: What were the important lessons that you learned from this concentration?

RS: It helped me understand how things were put together so I could logically analyze the technical aspects of how a building goes together, whether I'm looking at it on paper or on a construction site working with contractors. It helped me visualize the three dimensional aspects of something—how it takes up space and how it impacts the space around it. It also helped me understand the structural aspect of how things go together. That confidence and knowledge helped me feel right at home working in the industry. Another lesson I learned was that I may have a particular direction when I'm designing, but I can continue to refine the design during execution. It gave me the confidence to trust my vision and to then make that vision a reality.



“The concentration allowed me to focus on the essentials of furniture, scale and usability, at the same time I was working to create something beautiful.”

Angela Spykerman-Wahlquist

BACHELOR OF ARCHITECTURE '01

ND: Did your experience in furniture design change your approach to architecture and design?

ASW: I believe it did. My experience in furniture design elevated my desires to see my designs move from the paper into the built environment. Having learned about different ways to join wood pieces together, about the characteristics of natural materials, and what goes into making shapes come into being likely helps me to design more realistic spaces or pieces, and to have realistic expectations of how certain natural materials will behave.

ND: Describe the impact of studying furniture design on your personal and professional life.

ASW: It has proven useful in so many ways! In my first architectural role after school I used my knowledge of woodworking to design elaborate wainscoting millwork and other details for higher-end homes in the Chicagoland area. My next move was an easy fit, as a portion of the firm's work was designing library furniture. One of the firm's principal architects saw the furniture design concentration on my resume and knew

I was the woman for the job. I designed library furniture and interior design finishes and used my knowledge of different wood species to design custom end panels for the stacks that incorporated the natural beauty of purpleheart and rosewood into the design.

I later managed construction projects for single family residences, and I was able to use my furniture design experience to gain the respect of the tradesmen on site and to communicate my millwork expectations.

Currently, my husband and I own and operate a design-build renovation business. The experience of fully building out and finishing the spaces and pieces that I design reinforces what drew me to furniture design in the first place.

ND: What made you decide to pursue a concentration in furniture design?

ASW: I remember seeing some of the furniture pieces built by fourth- and fifth-year students during my sophomore year and being so impressed with their work. I knew I would be looking into pursuing furniture design once I returned from the year in Rome.



White oak mission-style armchair and ottoman with custom cushions. Mortise and tenon joinery, 2001.

“Having learned about different ways to join wood pieces together, about the characteristics of natural materials, and what goes into making shapes come into being likely helps me to design more realistic spaces or pieces, and to have realistic expectations of how certain natural materials will behave.”

My decision was also influenced by having a father who built custom homes and created many pieces of custom millwork for those homes—some of which I assisted in sanding as a young girl. Being in the shop was like bringing a piece of home to school.

Finally, while much of architecture school involves precedent, theory, and design, I thought furniture studio would allow me to experience the completion of the design-build process. It would allow me to create the built reality of my imagined design; it would give a tangible, useful purpose to the practice of designing. (It would also give me power tool skills to impress my father.)

ND: What was the greatest challenge in studying furniture design?

ASW: Simply the fact that it ends. The lack of access to such a superb shop after graduation challenges the opportunity to continue crafting beautiful pieces of furniture for yourself or others.

ND: What were the important lessons that you learned from this concentration?

ASW: Here are a few: building quality furniture takes a lot of time, focus, and care. When you think you are finished sanding, keep sanding, and then sand some more. Woodworking really dries out your hands. Wood glue is stronger than the wood itself. Be careful using power tools—they can send a piece of wood across the room or inflict a wound if you aren’t cautious. Fortunately our class avoided any serious injuries despite what could have been some close calls. Be careful with sharp hand tools as well. (I may have a small scar that will always remind me of my favorite class. . .). Oh, and Professor Bob Brandt has the patience of a saint!

ND: Why do you think this curriculum is important to have at the Notre Dame School of Architecture?

ASW: The furniture design concentration teaches the importance of considering how parts and pieces of a design connect in reality. This skill helps architects to provide realistic and buildable designs, and helps them in their ability to communicate expectations for construction to any craftsperson. The program allows designers to complete the design process by actually constructing an object they designed. The hands-on experience of this program is a way to gain the respect from trades in the field you may find yourself working with.

As we learn in our classical training, the word *Arkhitekton* is Greek for “Master Builder,” and the profession originally included both the design and the building phases. This program allows students to experience that role on a small scale before they step into the professional world.



White oak mission-style foyer wall mirror with 1/4" mirrored glass and white oak coat pegs. Mortise and tenon joinery. 2000.



Selected Student Work

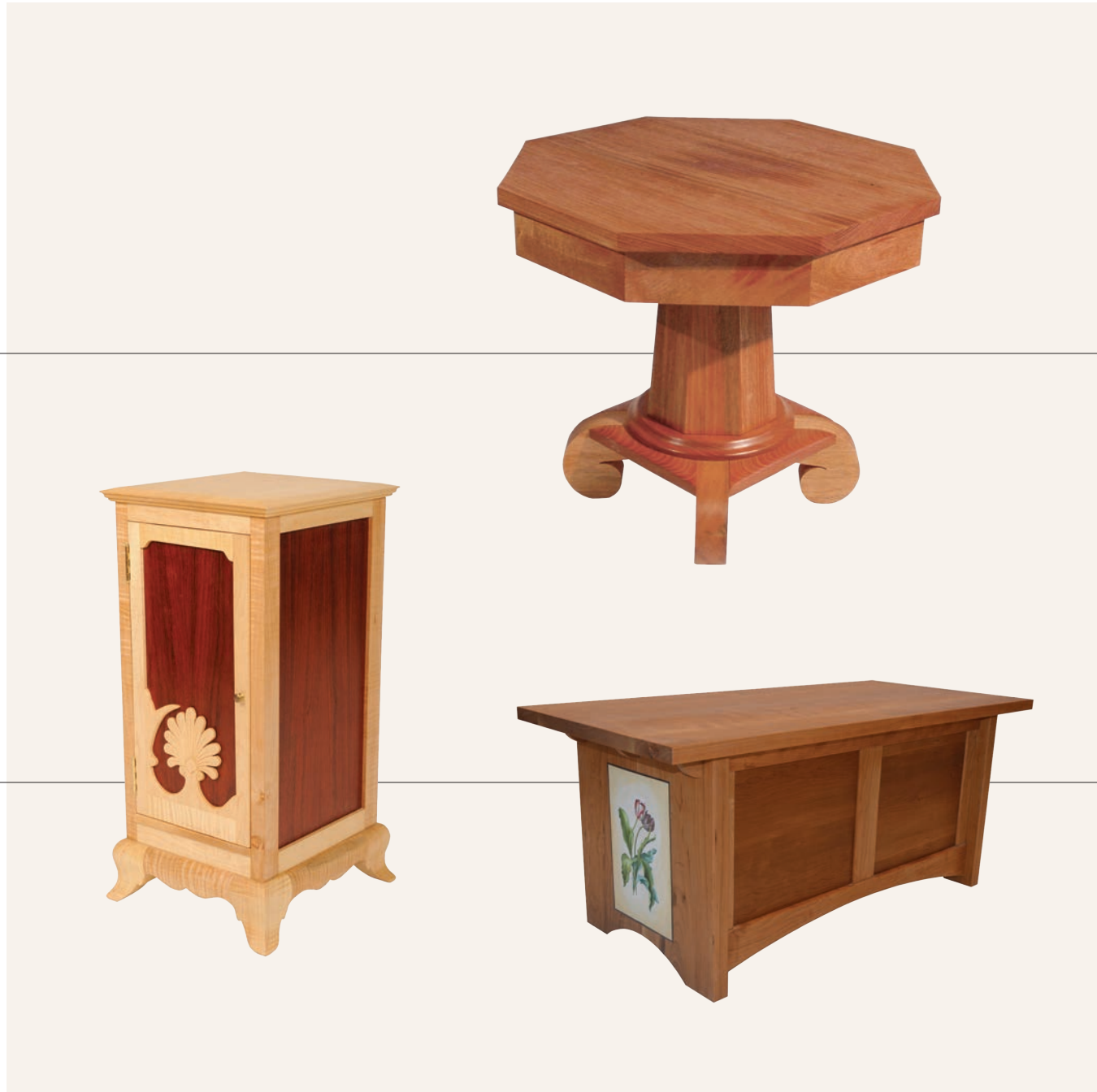
A sampling of pieces that have been designed
and built by students in the first three
decades of the furniture design program.



Top left: Artisan Unknown. Right: Courtney Payne '04, mahogany. Bottom left: Artisan Unknown. Right: Allison Michels Markovich '05, walnut.



Top left: Artisan Unknown. Right: Abigail Courtney '12, walnut. Bottom left: Sarah Ponko '04, oak. Right: Morgan Gick '04, mahogany.



Top: Anna Kruse '04, mahogany. Bottom left: Gina Paietta Dixon '11, maple and padauk. Right: Adriana Sanchez '19, cherry.



Top: Artisan Unknown. Bottom left: Gina Cannistra '12, cherry. Right: Daniel Yanez '08, cherry.



Top: Jennifer Trzaska '22, ash. Bottom left: Angela Janesheski Lehman '05, walnut and maple. Right: Jack Adams '20, walnut.



Top: Matthew Winters '03, cherry. Bottom left: Sarah Ponko '04, oak with granite top. Right: Ha Min Joo '14, mahogany.



Left: Courtney Payne '04, cherry. Top Right: Gina Paietta Dixon '12, mahogany. Bottom: Patrick Keough '19, mahogany.



Top left: John Michaels '19, curly maple. Right: Sean Gaouette '19, oak. Bottom: Adriana Sanchez '19, cherry.



Top left: Andrew Califano '16, cherry. Right: Christopher Heim '04, cherry and maple. Bottom: Allison Michels Markovich '05, cherry.



Top left: Jessica Kim '19, cherry. Right: Artisan Unknown. Bottom: Elizabeth Slaski '12, walnut.



Top: Leah Malito Ryan '04, walnut. Bottom: Meredith Lenzini Evans '13, mahogany.



Top: Morgan Gick '04, walnut. Bottom left: Sarah Ponko '04, walnut and maple. Right: Candace Mendez '05, mahogany.



Top left: Johnny Maas '03, maple and walnut. Right: Jonathan Unger '19, cherry.
Bottom left: Claire Egelhoff '23, cherry. Right: Ava Longoria '23, walnut.



Top left: Heather von Mering '03, curly maple. Right: Ben Caudron de Coquereaumont '23, mahogany.
Bottom left: Guy Crowley '23, cherry. Right: Jonathon Roberts '23, curly maple.



Joe Peterson '12, maple and walnut.



Beverly McCarthy '19, maple.

Women Graduates

of the Furniture Design Concentration



Prior to the official recognition of the furniture design concentration in 1997, many School of Architecture undergraduate students had taken furniture design courses. Although these students are not listed as graduates of the concentration, they had the same opportunities, experiences, and satisfaction of completing furniture pieces. Additionally, architecture graduate students have also been involved in furniture design courses since 1992. Even though some complete the four-semester sequence, they are not listed here because it is an undergraduate concentration.

Students from across the University have participated in the furniture design program, including ones from the colleges of engineering, arts and letters, and science. There has been a special bond between our furniture design program and the Department of Art, Art History & Design, particularly with the industrial design program. Both studio BFA and MFA candidates have done great work in our furniture design studios.

Over the past thirty years many students have taken just one or two furniture classes, and these students have also created wonderful pieces of work. The furniture design concentration courses continue to be filled to capacity, and there are always more students wanting the experience than we can accommodate.

1999

Ayako Kawashima

2000

Shannon Brown
Sarah Asmuth Hayes

2001

Lois Donovan
Katherine Kepferle Garland
Angela Spykerman-Wahlquist

2002

Roslyn Amparo
Anna Grasso
Amanda Schuette
Melissa Shanks

2003

Kathleen Courtney
Heather von Mering

2004

Celeste Hall Hopkins
Courtney Payne
Sarah Ponko
Leah Malito Ryan

2005

Anna Kruse
Angela Janesheski Lehman
Allison Michels Markovich
Marissa Dionne Mead
Candace Mendez

2006

Amelia Vogelheim Myers
Margaret Reynolds

2007

Mandisa Fullwood
Sarah Nelson
Kathryn Roos

2008

Maria Fanardy
Kathryn Fulmer
Tiffney Gulick
Jennifer Heller

2009

Manuela Montufar Arroyo
Karen De Los Santos
Cindy Duffy
Maria Victoria Jorge
Eileen Murphy
Kaitlin O'Brien
Rebecca Sigman

2010

Theresa Steinhardt
Yojana Vazquez

2011

Carolina Fabrega
Anamaria Quijano Franky
Stephanie Jazmines

2012

Abigail Courtney
Gina Paietta Dixon
Christina Gallo McCausland
Elizabeth Slaski

2013

Gina Cannistra
Meredith Lenzini Evans
Sylvana Gomez Mendoza
Danielle Murphy

2014

Jennifer Fitzpatrick
Ha Min Joo

2015

Amalia Carmona
Kathleen Joyce
Lisa Schumaker

2016

Calla Chang
Amy Ding
Lauren Lynch
Mary Catherine Walter
Lily Chufang Xing

2018

Claire Bauer
Ellen Chen
Sarah Crovello
Catherine Pharris
Si Yu Zhao

2019

Valeria Hasbun
Beverly McCarthy
Adriana Sanchez

2020

Jillian Ahern
Stephanie Kubus

2021

Anna Kong
Teresa Minondo
Elisa Vieira Pliopas
Kathryn Shelby
Margaret Willse

2022

Julia Bertram
Maeve Kelley
Natalie Pratt
Jennifer Trzaska

