

Jeffrey Cooper

Art Furnishings For Artful Living

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## Art Furnishings for Artful Living Newsletter

**Ladies Vanity Desk**  
**April 2011**

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Dear Friends,

I've begin work on my piece for the 2011 NH Furniture Masters exhibition season and auction. It's a ladies vanity desk with hummingbird carvings on the side panels and the drawer fronts, and a mirror. I think it will be quite a sweet item. I'll give you the NHFMA calendar at the end of this letter.



Design drawings

Before I start I prepare a complete set of construction drawings. There are front view, back view, side view, and front back and side views showing interior, and top view. The drawers will need lots of interior parts to guide them as they slide in and out. Because I plan to carve the drawer fronts and side panels the entire desk has to have frame and panel construction. Solid pieces mixed in with frame construction would create

conflicts as the wood adjusts to seasonal variations in humidity. At lower right is a drawing of how I envision the desk to look.

Cutting tenons



The whole desk is assembled with mortise and tenon joinery. All pretty straightforward, but there are lots of them, and a need for accuracy. This photo shows how I like to cut my tenons. I use the two blades from my dado set with spacers between so that the resulting cut exactly matches the mortise. For a tenoning jig I've built a sled that mounts to the table saw fence, and I've clamped a scrap to it to hold the work square. Sorry I couldn't be in the photo to demonstrate, but with this setup I can use both hands to hold the work and push it through

the cutters with my hip.

Routing mortises



I once got a phone call from an unknown woodworker asking my advice on what hollow chisel mortiser to buy. My answer - Don't bother. I find that I can always create a jig to cut mortises with my router, and I always get a clean and accurate cut. Here I've rigged up a cradle in my vise with a straight edge to guide the router. Afterward I'll square up ends of the mortise using a chisel.

Parts for vanity



And here are all the parts cut out with the mortises and tenons. You can see that some are double mortises, and one is a triple. The back of the desk is shown assembled, as is the interior frames. One side panel shows a drawing, and the other is in a holder which I clamp to the workbench as I carve. With this I am ready to begin assembling, and I'll have to do it in several steps.

Here are some dates for your Calendar.

- The auction is at the Currier Museum September 10.
- I will have some things at the Fells Estate on Lake Sunapee July 20 to October 20, probably a garden dinette set and an arm chair.
- We will be at the Gallery at Frenchman's Bay, Ellsworth Maine, which is at Bar Harbor, from July 31 to August 3, and I am bringing the desk. We will be at Canterbury Shaker Village from August 5 to September 8, with a reception August 6;
- and we will be back at CSV starting September 16, and I'm not sure what I will be showing.
- I will also be at the Living with Craft Exhibition at the League of NH Craftsman's Fair at Sunapee showing a bear bench and hopefully a lamp and some of the panels to be made for the new League HQ. Dates for that are August 7 to 14.

I hope to see you at one of our events.

I'll also be at a 'house party' in Chestnut Hill, MA on June 26. That's by invite; so if you are in that area and want to join us you will need to write to me. If anything else comes up I'll let you know.

Be well, and enjoy the fine weather
Jeffrey

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