

Exhibition in Ebony



When Englishman Richard Williams was offered an exhibition at a prominent London gallery, he designed this Macassar-ebony writing desk to showcase his shop's virtuoso craftsmanship. Williams calls the desk "a bit of a nod to British furniture history" but says it isn't modeled directly after a particular period or piece. In form, however, with its covered compartments and gallery of drawers, it is a Carlton House desk, with a lineage leading back to a desk George Hepplewhite designed for the Prince of Wales.

Williams's desk had its own generous patron—a longtime client who offered to foot the cost of building it and wait until it sold to be repaid. That was fortunate, because the desk and chair required 930 hours to build. Williams, who employs five cabinetmakers and can spare

only a day a week at the workbench, built the chair but entrusted the desk to Stuart Webster. The trickiest technical issue was getting the tambours to slide without sticking or racing. A full-scale mock-up solved that riddle.

—Jonathan Binzen

Pro Portfolio Visit FineWoodworking.com to watch an audio slide show of work by Williams.

Photos: Ian Gibbs