

Ming masterpiece, joint by joint

BY ANISSA KAPSALES



Characterized by a simple yet elegant aesthetic, appealing proportions, and exquisite craftsmanship, Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) furniture has withstood time, wars, and design fads to take its place in history.

When John Cameron began dissecting an original Ming table, the Massachusetts woodworker knew he'd have to pool all his experience and technical resources to build an exact reproduction (both are shown on the back cover).

But the two most important tools used were patience and a delicate touch, as he crept up on the perfect fit for all the complex joinery.

THE TOP



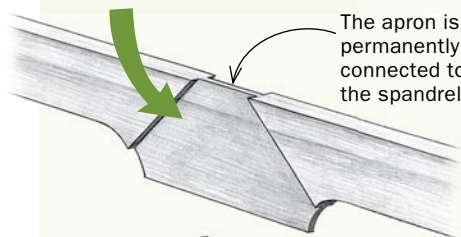
Unlike most tabletops, this one uses frame-and-panel construction. The panel rests in a groove in the frame, and the mitered corner has a through-mortise and tenon.

APRON TO SPANDREL TO LEG

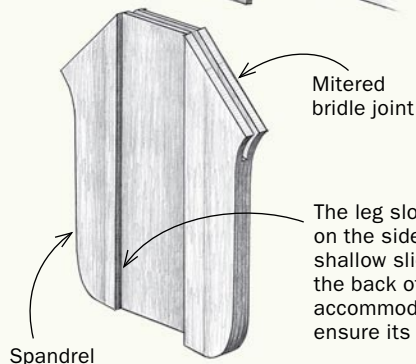


Hidden mitered dovetails join the corners of the apron, while bridled joints connect the apron to the spandrel and the spandrel to the leg.

THE ONLY GLUE JOINT



The apron is permanently connected to the spandrel.



Mitered bridled joint

The leg slot, slightly angled on the sides, forms a shallow sliding dovetail on the back of the spandrel to accommodate the leg and ensure its alignment.

Spandrel

LEGS TO SHELF



Coming in at a 1½° splay, each individually shaped leg gets two mortises at that same angle. The frame holds the shelf in a groove and forms the mitered tenon and hand-coped joint that straddle each leg.

