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Amber Perfume in Brooklyn, \$1.2 Million Desk: N.Y. Scene



This 1965 Wendell Castle desk is being offered for \$1.2 million at the Lost City Arts booth of the Winter Antiques Show, which runs through Feb. 3. Castle, 80, lives in Rochester, New York. Photographer: Amanda Gordon/Bloomberg

On his desk is a tiny wood-framed picture of his son.

“I carry it everywhere I go,” said William Nadylam last night after his performance as Philomen in “The Suit” at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, a red button rose peeking from his jacket pocket.

Peter Brook’s production opened in Paris last year and has traveled to London and China. Nadylam plays a doting husband hardened by the discovery of his wife’s adultery.

Last night’s performance, a benefit for BAM, received a standing ovation. In the audience were actor John Turturro (who’ll be tackling Ibsen at BAM in the spring);

Gordon, Amanda. “Amber Perfume in Brooklyn, 1.2 Million Desk: N.Y. Scene”, *BloombergBusinessweek*, January 25, 2013.

Adam Chinn, a co-founder of Centerview Partners LLC; choreographer Mark Morris; singer-songwriter Stew; and Adam Max, managing principal at Jordan Co.

Alan Fishman, chairman of BAM, was randomly plucked from the audience for a stage cameo as a party guest.

“I was shocked at how controlled the actors are physically,” Fishman said.

Afterward, the actors joined patrons at a reception in the Harvey Theater, and Nadylam shared the traveling needments he lays out on whatever desk he finds to hand.

Besides his son’s picture, there’s a bottle of Serge Lutens perfume, which smells like amber and leather, Nadylam said, pushing up his light-blue shirt sleeve to offer a sample. There is a pen and paper and an iPad.

“When you are on the road, you can have 400 books. I have all of Shakespeare!” said the actor, who played Hamlet in a Brook production.

Writing Desk

He also has an ergonomic desk attachment so he can work standing up. He imagines that Shakespeare wrote standing up, he said, flourishing an imaginary pen through the air.

One thing for certain: The bard didn’t have the option of working on the desk created by Wendell Castle in 1965.

It went on view last night at the preview of the Winter Antiques Show at the Park Avenue Armory, with an asking price of \$1.2 million.

“Look at the legs, it looks like it’s a panther, about to pounce,” said Jim Elkind of Lost City Arts.

Castle never made a desk all by himself after this one and it seems to prove his point that furniture can be art. He famously submitted a stool to a juried exhibition of sculpture to show there was no difference.

“Furniture is capable of passion and emotion,” Castle once said.

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Private Hands

The desk has been in private hands since Castle made it. Its rich vermilion wood shines, a flawless surface.

“If you work on it, you’d definitely use a blotter,” Elkind said.

Last night, collectors such as Peter Brant and Richard Chilton assessed through the Winter Antiques Show. Chilton deemed an 1876 porcelain vase at Michele Beiny Inc. “spectacular.”

The preview benefited East Side House Settlement, which provides educational services in the South Bronx.

(Amanda Gordon is a writer and photographer for Muse, the arts and leisure section of Bloomberg News. Any opinions expressed are her own.)