

Witness Tree Project FURN-2451
Spring 2018: Passion for the Public Good: Debating America
[in conjunction with HPSS 732-01]

Instructors: Dale Broholm, Ben Watkins

Office: Dept. of Furniture Design 2nd FL Prov- Wash Building

E-mail: dbroholm@risd.edu

Class: M 1:10-6:10 pm, Dept. of Furniture Design Woodshop, 1st FL Metcalf Building

The Witness Tree Project is a curricular initiative involving Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) and the National Park Service (NPS). Witness trees, as designated by the NPS, are long-standing trees that have “witnessed” key events, trends and people in American history. The Project arranges for fallen witness tree(s) to be shipped from a national historic site to RISD, where in a joint history seminar and furniture studio, students interpret the history the tree(s) witnessed and make relevant objects from the trees wood. In addition to classroom study, the Project variously involves field trips, guest lectures, exhibition of student’ objects and other events that highlight the significance of material culture, landscape and design in learning about American history.

In this eight year of the Witness Tree Project we will be working with several different species of trees from the Adams National Historical Park in Quincy, Massachusetts.

Class Description

As designer/makers we understand that research provides the maker with a deeper understanding of where ideas come from, and how to utilize them in our design process. This research-based studio class, in conjunction with its Liberal Arts component (HPSS 732-01), will use readings, discussions, and research from the seminar to build a fully informed design vocabulary from which you will create objects. There will be 3 studio assignments for the class. The assignments are reviewed in a class critique process and are expected to be finished for the critiques.

With all the projects in this class, the wood is free to the students for the creation of their objects. Instructor’s approval is required for the release of the wood for student use. Upon completion of the class, all student work will be professionally photographed and through a jurying process work will be selected for public exhibition. In past years selected works have returned to the Site for exhibition. Please note that any student work selected for exhibition must be available for the duration of the exhibition. Students retain ownership and rights to the objects at all times.

Course Requirements and Grading

As in all studio courses you are expected to attend all classes. If you miss a studio class you are expected to make up the work and have it ready for the following week. Missing 3 classes (unexcused) means an automatic F. Studio hours are limited and there will be demand for the machines and tools, which means effective use of your time in the studio will serve you well. You are not to use any Dept. machinery until you have permission of the instructor(s) for its usage. You are bound by the Departmental Studio Rules and Guidelines and must follow them. Not doing so may result in your time in the studio being restricted.

Students are required to keep a sketch book/design journal and bring it to class weekly. This book should contain all handouts, careful notes from demos and be a register of your thoughts and ideas from both the seminar and studio components of this collaborative class. This sketch book will be referred to frequently when discussing your ideas so always bring it to class.

Your grade will depend on your attendance, class participation, demonstration of technical knowledge and completion of the 3 studio assignments. Grading is done on the A-F scale with everyone starting the semester with a C. Please understand that a "C" grade is given for average work, (you did what was asked of you and on time), "B" is for above average work and an "A": is for demonstrated excellence in all areas of which you are graded in the studio. Since this is a collaborative class all of your instructors will be determining the studio grade.

Class Meeting Schedule

2/19 Intro to Studio, Dept. Rules & Reg's, Safety Talk. Wood Technology. Demo of Basic Hand tools. Sketch book And Design Development talk. 1st Assignment given.

2/26 Field Trip to Adams National Historical Park Quincy, MA. All Day.

3/5 Carving, shaping, sanding demonstration. Finishing demonstration. In class working time.

3/12 Studio demonstrations and in-class working time.

3/19 1st assignment due, class critique. Review of designs for 2nd Assignment. In-class working time.

3/26 **BREAK**

4/2 In-class working time.

4/9 3rd Assignment given. In-class working time.

4/16 2nd assignment due, class critique. Design review of 3rd assignment.

4/23 3rd assignment final design development review, in-class working time.

4/30 In-class working time.

5/7 In-class working time.

5/14 Final Critique, location TBA

Witness Tree Project. Spring 2018 FURN 2451

1st Assignment: Power, Shared by Many or Held by Few.

John Adams was deeply concerned about how power was to be shared and who was to govern in the newly formed United States. As a delegate to the Continental Congress, one of the Framers of the Declaration of Independence and a Founding Father, Adams feared that power would be consolidated by wealthy elites. He struggled with this issue throughout his life. Pick one of his writings on this topic and make an object that reflects this point of view.

2nd Assignment: “Remember the Ladies” vs “The Despotism of the Petticoat”.

Women’s roles and rights in colonial times were limited. Married women were subservient to their husbands, could not hold property in their names and could not vote. Single and widowed women, could run a business, acquire property in their name and bring suit in a court of law, but still had no voting rights. Make an object that explores women’s standing in John and Abigail’s time.

3rd Assignment: “3/5ths a Man”.

Until the civil war and the ratification of the 13th Amendment to the US Constitution, slavery was legal in the United States of America. John Adams and the framers of the Constitution fought over this issue, but let it stand. John Quincy Adams argued against it. Choose a perspective on slavery from a given historical moment and make an object that reflects this point of view.