

FURN 2451
Fall 2012: Social Justice and the Great Depression
[In conjunction with HPSS 732-01]

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Office Hours: By Appointment

**Class: Monday 1:10-6:10 at Dept. of Furniture Design Woodshop, 1st Fl
Met-Calf 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 National Park Service, are long-standing trees that have “witnessed” key events, trends, and people in American history. The Project arranges for fallen witness trees 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 witnessed and make relevant objects from the trees wood. In addition to classroom study, the Project variously involves field trips, guest lectures, exhibitions of students’ objects, and other events that highlight the significance of material culture, landscape, and design in learning about American history.

Due to the nature of this collaborative class the work load is similar to a major studio. Be prepared! Mondays will be very demanding; with both classes meeting all day and work outside the studio is not to be underestimated.

This is the fourth year of the Witness Tree Project. We will be working with historic trees from the Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Sites and the Vanderbilt National Historic Site in Hyde Park, NY. In the past years of the Project we have worked with a tree from a former slave plantation in Towson, MD., trees from the Summer White House of Theodore Roosevelt on Long Island and an Elm from Frederick Law Olmsted’s home in MA. For more information on past projects, please go to www.witnesstreeproject.org

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 the readings, discussions, and research from the seminar to build a fully informed design vocabulary from which you will create objects. We will be working with material from a variety of tree species removed from the historic sites at Hyde Park.

RISD took possession of the tree upon its removal, processed the wood into lumber and dried it. With all projects in this course, the wood is free to the students for usage. Instructor's approval is required for the release of the wood for student use. Upon completion of the Project, 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 Sites for exhibition. Please note that any student work selected for exhibition must be available for the duration of the exhibition.

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 machines and tools, which means effective use of your time in the studio will serve you well. You are not to use any Department machinery until you are check out by the instructor. 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/ideas from both the seminar and studio components of the collaborative class. This sketch book will be referred to frequently and is considered part of your body of work. Always bring it to class!

Your grade will depend on your attendance, class participation, demonstration of technical knowledge and the completion of the 3 Studio assignments. Please understand that a "C" grade is given for average work, (you got the work done on time). "B" is for above average, and an "A" is for excelling in all areas of demand in the studio class. Since this is a collaborative class Dan and I will do the grading together.

Class Meeting Schedule

- 9/17** Intro to Studio, Dept. Rules & Reg's. Safety Talk, Wood Technology, View Wood in Storage. Demo of Basic hand tools. Sketch book and Design Development talk. 1st Assignment given.
- 9/24** Hand & Power tool demonstrations. Various technical demonstrations.
- 10/1** Field Trip to Hyde Park (all day).
- 10/8** Review 1st assignment. Carving/shaping/sanding demo. Give 2nd assignment.
- 10/15** Design development review, group and individual. Finishing Demo.
- 10/22** Work on 2nd assignment (in class time).
- 10/29** Work on 2nd Assignment. 3rd Assignment given.
- 11/5** Review 2nd Assignment. Design development review. Class pin-up and critique.
- 11/12** Final design review, in class working time.
- 11/19** In class working time.
- 11/26** In class working time.
- 12/3** Final Critique, Location TBA.

Witness Tree Project. Fall 2012 FURN 2451

Social Justice and the Great Depression

1st Assignment

The advent of the Great Depression is commonly dated to the Stock Market crash of the fall 1929. Many events contributed to this crash and had been happening for years if not decades. These events ranged from the lack of regulation of financial rules to climatic changes. Make an object that reflects /demonstrates one aspect of either the events leading up to the Great Depression or the impact of the crash on American citizens.

Class Review: 10/8

2nd Assignment

To find a way out of the Great Depression, the Roosevelt Administration created many programs to help/support/encourage U.S. citizens. These programs ranged from the PWA, CCC, WPA, and AAA, to name a few. Pick one of these programs and create an object that tells the story of the program or represents the participants of said program.

Class Critique: 11/5

3rd Assignment

Franklin and Eleanor had a complex relationship. Together, their interests and passions, brought changes to American society in profound ways. Identify one of these interests/passions and create an object that demonstrates this choice. Link the object directly to a place at the Site as a means of engaging the viewer both with the presentation of the object in context and in content.

Final Critique: 12/3