

## **Witness Tree Project FURN-2451**

### **Spring 2017: The Politics of Belonging: Race, Diversity, and the Immigrant Experience in Brooklyn and Beyond**

Instructors: Dale Broholm, Ben Watkins

Office: Dept. of Furniture Design 2<sup>nd</sup> FL Prov- Wash Building

E-mail: [dbroholm@risd.edu](mailto:dbroholm@risd.edu)

Class: M 1:10-6:10 pm, Dept. of Furniture Design Woodshop, 1<sup>st</sup> 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.

This year the NPS has connected us with the Parks New York City and the Prospect Park Alliance (the supporting organization of Prospect Park). We will be working with an Elm tree from Prospect Park of at least 150 years age.

### **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.

RISD this year has partnered with RE-CO BKLYN, a Brooklyn, and NY. based furniture shop and lumber mill to process the Elm for the class. 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. 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**

- 2/20** Intro to Studio, Dept. Rules & Reg's, Safety Talk. Wood Technology. Demo of Basic Hand tools. Sketch book And Design Development talk. 1<sup>st</sup> Assignment given.
- 2/27** Hand & Power tool demonstrations. Various technical demonstrations.
- 3/6** Carving, shaping, sanding demonstration. Finishing demonstration. In class working time.
- 3/13** Field Trip to Prospect Park. 2<sup>nd</sup> Assignment given.
- 3/20** 1<sup>st</sup> assignment due, class critique. Review of designs for 2<sup>nd</sup> Assignment. In-class working time.
- 3/27** **BREAK**
- 4/3** In-class working time.
- 4/10** 3<sup>rd</sup> Assignment given. In-class working time.
- 4/17** 2nd assignment due, class critique. Design review of 3<sup>rd</sup> assignment.
- 4/24** 3<sup>rd</sup> assignment final design development review, in-class working time.
- 5/1** In-class working time.
- 5/8** In-class working time.
- 5/15** Final Critique, location TBA

## **Witness Tree Project. Spring 2017 FURN 2451**

### **1<sup>st</sup> Assignment: HOME**

Identify an immigrant group that used or uses Prospect Park. Design and create an object that represents that group's country/culture of origin.

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Assignment: CHANGE**

Working with the same immigrant group that you chose in Assignment 1, design and make an object that reflects the changes that can occur in one's identity through acculturation, accommodation, assimilation or resistance to American culture.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Assignment: Belonging**

Over the course of the nation's history, immigrants to this country have experienced a wide range of responses to their arrival on our borders. These responses range from open arms and free land to exclusionary laws and segregation to outright violence. Pick a time or event and explore what it means to an immigrant to be "greeted" in a given manner.