Sitting Together: An Examination of the Bench


The bench is the most basic of furniture, and perhaps the most ancient. Found all over the world, they’re used as seating, tables, and work surfaces. There’s something humble and optimistic about benches; they imply an egalitarian sort of togetherness. Benches are used in churches, monasteries, Utopian communities, beer halls, and prisons. Material economy aside, why are benches so symbolically compelling?

This term, we’ll investigate the structure, form, and function of the bench. We’ll place emphasis on learning the tools in the wood shop and designing to suit the processes available. The principles of Commodity, Firmness, and Delight will guide us through the term - structural stability will be counted as important as a compelling design.

In order to provide reasonable constraints on the design process, we’ll work with a local institution as a mock client. They’ll provide physical, cultural, and functional context for the term’s work.

Students are responsible for the cost of their final project materials and any field trip transportation. They must also promptly complete a safety training with the shop technician in the first week of class. This course is offered solely as pass/fail.