

Mikko Dizack

Lamp

Fall, 2024

Emily Ginsburg

Sara Huston

Overview:

My plan for this project is to design and create a lamp-like lighting fixture that

will replicate the warm natural atmosphere of outdoor lighting in an indoor space. From initial sketches and small rough mockups to exploring different shapes and forms of lighting, I plan to create a fixture that replicates and inspires comfort within my own psyche. My project will progress through the entire life cycle of my product, starting from initial ideas and prototyping, and culminating in refined form that could be produced on a larger scale. The driving force behind this project is my love for ambient lighting, inspired by the soft glow of something as simple as an oven light in a dark room, the glow of a setting sun in a south facing window, or the soft warmth of campfire coals. I want to replicate this warmth and atmosphere in a functional yet artistic way. The lighting itself will project comfort and ease, while the fixture inspires curiosity and creativity in shape and functionality. This project holds deep importance to me not only due to its combination of therapeutic craftsmanship and practical design, but because it allows me space to practice implementation of my artistic style when approaching everyday items—and I need a bedside lamp.

Concept:

Lighting is how we perceive everything around us. It's more than just a tool to see, it influences mood, stress levels, social interaction, and sleep regulation. The varieties of lighting contextualize the atmosphere of a space, subtly shaping the ambiance and affecting emotional connectedness within it. This is why I'm drawn to creating small subtle light fixtures such as lamps, because light plays a critical role in the flow and functionality of a room.

Artistic/Creative Context

Inspiration for my thesis has been deeply influenced by artists who produce similar work to my own. Some of these artists include George Nakashima, Frank Lloyd Wright, and Kyle Kidwell, all of whom have motivated my passion for lighting and household design. George Nakashima is a large inspiration because of his combination of Japanese and modern art design. His work is simplistic yet elegant, a balance I strive to achieve in my own designs. Throughout my growth as an artist I have noticed similar patterns between Nakashima and I's creative styles; my design philosophies naturally run parallel to his. Another artist from which I draw inspiration is Frank Lloyd Wright. His work has played a personal role in my lived experience. As a child I was raised in close proximity to his buildings, living near a high school designed by one of his disciples as well as seeing his other structures has had a profound impact on my taste in design and my creative practice. At a young age, I resonated deeply with his work, even before understanding his prominence in modern design. In addition to Nakashima and Wright's works, Kyle Kidwell is another artist whose work inspires my curiosity and creative process. From his work, I find a deep connection to his use of natural materials. He cuts

into stone only where needed and leaves wooden structures raw, incorporating natural flaws into the beauty of his work—a philosophy I aim to carry forward in my own practice.

Materials, Processes, Techniques

To execute my lamps, I plan to use hardwood materials such as oak, walnut, or any other available wood types that inspire natural comfort. In addition to the wooden structure of the fixture, the shade will be a key piece in distributing the light in an effective direction. For this element, I'm considering the use of a rice paper or a similar material, due to its soft and transparent properties. Lastly, I will experiment with various light bulbs to determine which produces the best ambient light. The bulbs will require careful selection and remodeling to fit into the structure aesthetically and effectively. The materials I use are mostly recycled, with much of the wood coming from cutoffs or second-hand pieces. This practice stems from my childhood, and the core practice of reusing materials to create new ones. Growing up on a farm in an environmentally conscious family and with a family background that requires careful resource use, the practice of repurposing materials was used whenever possible. This upbringing shapes my approach; I see potential in scrap materials that others might overlook, wood destined for kindling often finds new life in my projects.

Project Description and Materials

To refine my ideas and develop the design I plan to start by creating mockups, using blocks to shape the rough outline of the lamp. Once the form takes shape, I will create a drawing to effectively communicate the concept to others. The wood will be added and sculpted using only joinery and glue—no screws, nails, or other fasteners. This approach will help me achieve a prototype where final adjustments can be made. For the viewing and display, I plan to create a space that mimics the interior of a home, allowing the lamp to be seen in a natural habitat, surrounded by other furniture I've made.

Summary

This project aims to design and create a series of lighting fixtures that replicates the warm, natural ambiance of outdoor light indoors. The project involves progressing from initial sketches and prototypes to a refined final product, using hardwoods like oak or walnut and recycled materials, emphasizing handcrafted touch and the mark of craft. Rooted in a childhood of resourcefulness on a farm, the project reflects an eco-conscious approach. The final lamp will be displayed in a home-like setting alongside other handmade furniture to illustrate its integration into everyday life, highlighting its artistic and practical value.

Artist statement

Mikko Dizack

It's about enjoying the moment, the result and getting there. The time you spend creating, the journey, revelations and friends you make along the way all steer the heart and hand in the most organic way possible. Like a smoothed face of rock by a river, the twisting trunk of a juniper tree, or the shaping of clay by the hand on a wheel. For me, art takes all aspects of life into consideration. No matter how large or small these aspects may be, they shape the way we think and create. They are influences that can never be set down or turned off, but can and will shape the decisions I make along the way.

Lighting and Process - Mikko Dizack

Life can be stressful, and our surroundings play a significant role in how we feel. When we bring natural light and materials back into the home, it helps ground us, creating a sense of balance and calm that's often missing in modern, sleek designs. This initiative seeks to bring users back to the earthy colors, textures, and materials that are often absent in modern design. With an emphasis on functionality and the relationships between materials, it aims to enhance natural lighting within the home. Humans have cherished the grain of wood, the texture of stone, or the gentle curves of hand-shaped clay for centuries—these materials and forms of making evoke feelings of warmth, grounding, and connection. In order to bring about a higher abundance of these materials, I am using unique wooden features to create lamps, an everyday object that people interact with at a high volume.

By utilizing simple mechanics through my designs, such as levers, wedges, and hinges, I simplify connection and adjustability in my lamps to their most fundamental elements. This timeless design draws from the enduring beauty of natural elements. Functionality is found within the form. These lamps offer a kind of joy, a moment of stillness and comfort

that creates a space where people can unwind and feel at ease.

This series of prototype light fixtures utilizes organic shapes and found forms to reintegrate natural patterns into everyday life. By blending utility and sculpture together, the light fixtures act as 3D sketches for experimental design. By puzzling together raw material, fitting form to function, and choosing the right mix of mediums, these designs arise from a change in perspective. Once the design emerges from this rearranging of material, the pieces are adhered in a way that isolates the earthly nature while disguising industrial hardware and emphasizing originality. Ultimately, this collection of pieces will represent a spontaneous design process based on intuition and seeking a cohesive language between materials and form.

LIGHTING AND PROCESS

MIKKO DIZACK

INTRODUCTION

Thank you all for being here today. Many of you know that my thesis project involves creating lamps, but what I haven't fully explained is how this journey became less about the final products and more about the process—and the self-discovery that came with it.

The title of my thesis is literal: I drew inspiration from light itself—how it shapes a room, influences mood, and defines a space. I wanted to capture light in its most natural form and integrate that essence into my designs.

As for the other aspect of my title, *process* pertains to the way I approach my work. This thesis project emphasizes the beauty in the act of making itself. As an artist, creator, and maker, my process has always felt natural—something that flows effortlessly, without much thought or reflection. I'm sure you can relate to finishing a task or crafting something without dwelling on the steps it took to get there. That's how I've often felt about my art. But as I've grown as a student and been encouraged to reflect on my methods, I've started to appreciate the beauty

in understanding how I create. For me, it's not just about the destination or the final product—what truly matters is the journey getting there.

OLD THESIS OVERVIEW

My original thesis proposal was to design and create three lamp-like lighting fixtures that incorporated natural elements and materials. I envisioned tracking the entire life cycle of each lamp—from initial sketches to rough mockups, then to semi-functional prototypes for real-world testing, and finally to a polished, production-ready design that considered manufacturing and transportation.

For research, I focused on traditional design philosophies like human-centered design and affordances. The principles made sense to me theoretically, but in practice, I encountered challenges. My process, which began methodically, gradually shifted toward something more intuitive...

Over the past year, I've spent a lot of time reflecting on my creative process. Ironically, explaining my own work—the methodology behind it—has been one of my biggest struggles as an artist. It feels like pulling teeth. That's exactly why I wanted to ground myself in a structured, research-backed approach; something clear and explainable, rather than relying solely on intuition.

LIFE CONTEXT: MY PARENTS' INFLUENCE

I have traced my process back to the root, my upbringing and lived experience. I've come to the realization that my artistic process has stemmed from the two processes I've watched most throughout my life: my parents. I've picked and pulled pieces from each of my parents' making tendencies and other

outside influences to create my process of making.

I grew up on a small farm, watching my parents build in wildly different ways. My father was an artist and builder for most of his life. A jack of all trades but a master of none. He worked with precision—blueprints, careful measurements, and intentional design.

This method of creation couldn't be any different from my mother's. My mother, raised on a rural farm in Singapore, and built intuitively. Her style of making is all driven by intuition and material. She eyeballed measurements, used found objects, and embraced imperfection because of her informal making.

CHICKEN COOP STORY

A defining memory I recall is their different takes on a chicken coop we had growing up. My dad had built this coop that was meant to look like a barn from a cartoon. It was red and white and built like a premade cookie-cutter shed. Not only was it picture perfect, but it also had all the built-ins; it had thought out egg hatches, separate stalls for chickens to lay eggs, and a chicken tractor that was easy for one person to move around. Easy egg collection from outside the coop and a fake rung ladder that added to the aesthetic.

To say the least, it was a perfect coop, but as time went on, my mom kept acquiring more and more chickens and decided we needed another coop, and this one she built on her own. Instead of a perfectly drafted coop, this one more resembled some kind of shanty hut; she used no power tools and simply nailed together whatever materials she could find. There were old dead tree branches, windows, pallets, old recycling bins, and whatever she could find all laid out in a seemingly random design.

The main contrast between the coops was that my dad's coop, beautiful as it

was, was made for people. It fit the aesthetic, was efficient for egg collection and moving, but was made with little consideration for the chickens themselves. On the other hand, my mother's half garbage pile of a coop was built with the chickens in mind. She made everything chicken-sized, and gave them lots of hiding places and comfortable places to roost, and the chickens would lay eggs everywhere and anywhere and to collect them, you'd have to climb through this jungle gym of a coop.

They have very different approaches when it comes to how something looks and gets built. Occasionally, leading to a squabble, but from them, I learned to balance Western and Eastern design philosophies. This silly childhood memory actually pretty well represents the conflicting avenues I've struggled to choose between while workshopping my artistic processes

When I first proposed this thesis, I imagined a linear process: sketches to prototypes, refined iterations, testing phases, and finally, a finished product. The goal was to create a line of lamps embodying traditional production values—polished, perfected, and possibly commercially viable. But over time, I've realized something important: that's not how I work. Or more truthfully—that's not how I *love* to work.

This conflict comes out within my lamps and its shift can be seen within the time line of my work. The first one being my bedside lamp. This was one of the first lamps that I had created while thinking under the original guidelines I had set myself, and in reflecting on my making process for this lamp, it became the start of a turning point for my thesis.

The concept started in a bit of a bubble. I was given a sunset lamp that I had no use for. It was originally meant to project its delicate orange glow onto the wall. The main idea behind this lamp was to fix the projection of light to an area and control the light it casted

I started the process with drawings and sketches without material in mind, solely trying to figure out a shape. After I finalized the idea I made a rough 3d model and figured out what materials I would use. This process took weeks, because determining that shape was difficult to conceptualize because of the infinite choices I could make in material. All the shapes I tried to invent were just not quite right, There was no ah-ha moment of inspiration.

I didn't go with a material that had a signature or uniqueness to it. I went with whatever piece of material I could use to pull the shapes I needed out of.

After building a more finished prototype I lived with this lamp for weeks. I figured out what needed to be changed or reworked. After taking these notes I reworked the aspects and landed with a more possessed lamp, but still felt the lamp lacked character I felt creatively limited by the process. I was bored, uninspired, and dragging my feet - simply I wasn't having any fun.

I decided I needed an outlet to feel my intuitive artistic flow. This is how the bonus lamp came to life. Its making process contrasts the bedside lamp because its making was total intuition and material driven. On top of that, it wasn't planned or labored over, simply was a fun little pet project. This lamp was never meant to be a part of my original thesis project, but the joy and satisfaction I found in the making of this lamp led me to the realization that my thesis needed to shift directions.

Why am I forcing myself to labor over this project and confine my creative process?. This thesis is the capstone of my growth as a student artist, and is about my personal and unique works. When I created the bonus lamp, I realized that it was much more indicative of my growth, and felt much more "me," than anything I've made that semester. Although I was building off of feeling and

intuition i was still incorporating stylistic and design choices that i had come across during my research.

around midterms this past semester, i decided to shift my thesis. Jason Rens a local artist an furniture maker was on my mid term panel. Alot of the questions he raised and asked really validated the shift that i wanted to make. I felt as if i was given the green light but was still hesitant about the shift.

What I decided on was The framework of my thesis remained, but my approach transformed. Instead of starting with 2D sketches, I began working directly in 3D mocheups using nearly finished materials. These evolving prototypes often incorporate elements from previous iterations, gradually being shaped into their near-final form.

It was around this time my mentor Sara told me about the practice wabi sabi. This was a practice that some of my most referred to artists, like George Nakishima, were also following. I'd been channeling the philosophy of *wabi-sabi* without even knowing it.

I've learned I don't want these pieces polished to perfection. There's beauty in leaving room for imperfection, in preserving the mark of the hand. There's something profoundly special about the raw, vulnerable honesty of showing the entire process—flaws and all.

NEW PROCESS

HOW IT ACTUALLY WORKS

To describe my new process literally, i start with a function, material, or purpose that starts as the foundation of the lamp this may have to achieve some ability or use a certain material or a light I have to give off. I hold my chosen **foundational object** in hand if possible and start rifling through my stockpile of material laying it out with any piece I slightly think would compliment it. Or by scavenging various free piles or garbage areas to see what hidden gems I can bring back to life.

Over the years in the woodshop, I've collected a mix of wood scraps—cutoffs, odds and ends from a local furniture maker, pieces too rough to sell, or lumber riddled with knots that weaken its structure. Essentially, they all bear some flaw that would make a manufacturer discard them. These scraps have been my primary medium for most of my making career. But for this project, instead of fighting the imperfections—trying to disguise or work around them—I've decided to make them the focal point. By not having large workable pieces of wood i have to get clever with the resources I have at hand.

The foundational object for most of these lamps is a piece of wood with a sertant character to it. Oftentimes, these are imperfections in the wood—but this is what draws me in, intrigues the viewer, and gives the piece its character. There's something all too human about it.

From there, I start narrowing down my material options until I'm left with what I feel are the final pieces. I make these choices based on things like texture or grain, color, size, and how each piece contrasts with the foundation object. I look at the geometry of the body of work and try to find materials that

complement its shape. As I'm selecting these final components, I also begin imagining how I might tweak them so they fit together seamlessly. At this stage, the puzzle isn't complete—far from it—but by visualizing the small adjustments I'll need to make, I can figure out which pieces are right for the job. It's kind of like casting a show, or describing a friend group—each piece has its own role, its own personality, and part to play. And it's all about trusting my eye to see how they'll work together in the end.

After this selection is made, I sit on an idea for hours, days, or weeks thinking about other possible arrangements and ways to put these materials together. I start with a material already close to the shape I'm trying to achieve. Once a shape is chosen, the shaping of the materials begins! Technical additions like connections and cabling are left out at this time unless the emphasis is placed on them. By restricting my options by making the body of the lamp first, I have to get inventive with how the smaller facets are dealt with. While putting the main body of the lamp together, I can get a better idea of how the light, shade, and cable routing will go together.

This way of process and thinking takes to the likes of Martino Gamper's project - 100 chairs in 100 days where he too built of intuition and material scarcity. Taking a closer look at this philosophy in my own work can be seen within my task lamp

TASK LAMP

This was one of the last lamps that I finalized, but the first that I had started. This lamp first started as a need. Its purpose was to be a work light for my desk. Providing light over my sewing machine and computer, which share a workstation.

I took a heavy amount of inspiration from found materials. Its cross-like

design idea came from a bookshelf frame that I had never completed. And the shape of the billed shade came from the first iterations shade idea.

This was the most challenging piece, This lamp started as a steel prototype for my desk. Originally, I wanted this lamp to be wirey and light, having an adjustable x and y axis. My first material choice was thin stock steel because of its thin and rigid nature. metal clashed with the collection's themes, so I made the decision to switch to wood, it took a few attempts as seen in the materials laid out before you, bu when I selected the final materials, the main neck of the lamp had band saw marks on two of the sides.

I purposely left that and even continued it throughout the piece to accent the original. Stemming away from the traditional ultra-smooth finish on most things and leaning into the imperfection of the piece.

One of the biggest hurdles with this lamp was creating the sliding carriage for the light and shade. After assembling the final base neck and arm of the lamp I originally thought of either attaching the shade and light by twine or fixing it into place. This posed a few problems but didn't sit right with me. My classmate Ruby gave me the idea to hang it off the side and so I made a rail and carriage that would allow it to slide on its X axis.

The rail stuck out pretty far and offset the balance and weight of the whole piece so I built another arm where I was able to embed the rail within the arm and center the light and shade.

SKONSE

The sconce was designed around a piece of scrap oak I had accidentally broken some time ago. I was attracted to this piece specifically because of its grain. The

break created a gentle curve in the wood that I absolutely loved. It also had cracks running through the bottom where I put in joints to stop the cracking from continuing. I intentionally left one crack to splinter longer than the other to one day be patched higher than the other.

To put emphasis on displaying that piece of wood, I wanted to move the light to the side and balance out the statement that the curve makes. I also wanted to contrast the rectangular nature of that oak piece by introducing a curved shade.

To achieve this, I created a frame for a shade that is meant to sit close to a wall, to provide subtle mood lighting without being a large statement piece in a room. The intended place for this lamp was a hallway where space was limited. I wanted it to have a small footprint and not impede on a person's movements.

Additionally, as I sanded and scraped the oak wood piece into its final shape, I slightly exaggerated that curve, it reminded me of the Chinese character Da, which is just the word for big but Ironically, it's my smallest lamp.

The sconce, like all my lamps, embodies the lessons of this project. It wasn't just about crafting a functional object—it was about listening to the material, honoring its history, and finding harmony between accident and intention. This mindset extends beyond individual pieces; it's how I've come to understand my creative practice.

TAKEAWAYS

This project has given me a deeper understanding of my creative process—and myself. Moving forward, whether in a self-directed career, research, or design work, I now recognize how I operate at my best (and worst). Most fundamentally, I've reaffirmed that I still hate to draw. Sketches provide me little clarity; my ideas only come alive in three dimensions, through hands-on engagement with materials.

Beyond that, this thesis has laid a foundation for my artistic future. I plan to continue making after school, knowing my process and passions will evolve. But now, I have a framework to guide those changes. The biggest hurdle has always been articulating my choices, but through this work, I've gained the language to analyze my instincts. That self-awareness makes me feel far more equipped to grow as an independent artist.

As for the lamps themselves, I see them as a beginning, not an endpoint. I'll keep refining the pieces here today and creating new ones, because the joy lies in the exploration. These objects are vessels for discovery—imperfect, evolving, and alive with the marks of their making.

CONCLUSION

Looking back, this thesis became something far richer than I'd planned. What started as a study of lamps transformed into a meditation on how I create—and why. My parents' contrasting approaches taught me that design isn't just about function or aesthetics, but about philosophy. From my father's precision to my mother's improvisation, from the rigid ideals of human-centered design to the freedom of wabi-sabi, I've learned to embrace the tension between control and spontaneity.

The lamps here are physical proof of that journey. They carry the grain of scavenged wood, the shadow of rough cuts, the warmth of light shaped by accident. What makes them special isn't perfection - it's their authenticity. Through making them, I've learned to trust my instincts as an artist and embrace where my creative process takes me.

Thankyou for your time

Bibliography

Parsons, Tim. *Thinking Objects: Contemporary Approaches to Product Design*. Lausanne, Switzerland: AVA Academia, 2009.

“George Nakashima Woodworkers - New Hope, Pennsylvania.” *George Nakashima Woodworkers*, <https://nakashimawoodworkers.com/>. Accessed 31 Oct. 2024.

[Preview attachment Jerzy Smardzewski \(auth.\) - Furniture Design-Springer International Publishing \(2015\).pdf](#)

Bandes, Susan J. “Herman Miller: A Way of Living by Amy Ausherman, Sam Grawe and Leon Ransmeier.” *Michigan Historical Review*, vol. 47, no. 1, 2021, pp. 118–20. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.1353/mhr.2021.0008>.

Nakashima, George. *The Soul of a Tree: A Master Woodworker's Reflections*. New York: Kodansha USA, 2011.

Norman, Donald A. *The Design of Everyday Things*. Revised and Expanded edition, Basic Books, 2013.

“The Woodworkers.” YouTube, July 11, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6CHlm9Xc8yY>.

Nakashima, Mira und George Nakashima. 2003. *Nature, form, & spirit: the life and*

legacy of George Nakashima. New York: Harry N. Abrams

Wilhide, Elizabeth, Robert Anderson, and Design Museum, eds. *How to Design a Light*. London: Conran Octopus, 2010.

Descottes, Hervé, and Cecilia E. Ramos. *Architectural Lighting: Designing with Light and Space*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2013.