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23 April, 2014

Candy R. Wei Prize for International Studies in Art and Design Submission Essay

During the summer of 2013, I studied furniture design at the Danish Institute for Study Abroad (DIS) in Copenhagen. During this highly enjoyable, influential course I learned the fundamentals of Scandinavian furniture and then designed and constructed my own chair. With this chair, titled *Fårstol* (*Sheepchair* in Danish), I combined the Scandinavian ideals of honest materials (natural fibers, solid woods, etc) and joinery (nothing hidden) with comfort, something professors urged me to cease fixating on but were pleased with in the end.

Prior to studying abroad, I wanted to be an industrial designer, and I chose DIS simply to add furniture to my repertoire. However, I fell unpredictably in love with chair design and therefore spent my entire thesis investigating seating, materials, and furniture. I took what I had learned in Copenhagen and applied it to designing prototype rocking stools that cannot be sat on passively, thus making sitting slightly healthier.

Lately, I have been buying secondhand tools in order to start my own workshop to continue designing and building furniture after graduation. I no longer want to design for industrial production—I want to work on my craftsmanship to try and achieve the level of craft I witnessed throughout Denmark, Sweden, and Finland. The projects that I have planned for the coming years stem from the same honest materials, joinery, and aesthetics that I fell in love with while studying abroad.



The front view of my chair, *Fårstol*. The biggest struggle designing this chair was accommodating what I wanted to accomplish with the Scandinavian ideals my professors wished to impart.



The side view of my chair *Fårstol*. The style and method of upholstery was strongly influenced by Danish master craftsmen like Børge Mogensen and Finn Juhl.



The rocking stools I built for my thesis. I took the active seating of the yoga ball and formalized it for contexts in which a piece of furniture is necessary.



I brought the child-sized stool along with me to my job as a program assistant for the after school program Michigan Makers. Mitchell Elementary school students and teachers thoroughly enjoyed testing the stool, which they said was greatly needed in classrooms for fidgety children.