



Name of Property: George Nakashima Woodworker Complex
City, State: Solebury Township (Bucks County), Pennsylvania
Period of Significance: 1946-1982
NHL Criteria: 2 and 4
NHL Exceptions: 8
NHL Theme: III. Expressing Cultural Values
 5. Architecture, landscape architecture, and urban design;
 6. Popular and traditional culture.
 V. Developing the American Economy
 1. Extraction and production
 2. Distribution and consumption

Previous Recognition: 2008 National Register of Historic Places
 Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS No. PA-6783)

National Historic Context: Special Study
 XVI. Architecture
 U. International (1915-1945)

NHL Significance:

- The George Nakashima Woodworker complex is significant under NHL Criterion 2 for its association with internationally-renowned furniture designer and woodworker George Nakashima, and under NHL Criterion 4 for its innovative Japanese-influenced International Style structures designed by Nakashima and built under his direct supervision.
- George Nakashima is recognized as one of America’s most eminent furniture designer-craftsmen, and a significant force within the American Craft movement of the mid-twentieth century, a seminal period for woodworking in the United States. As a self-proclaimed “woodworker,” Nakashima became an important voice for the artist craftsmen helping to create a new paradigm for studio furniture production in the postwar period.
- Between 1945 and 1954, internationally-recognized modern furniture manufacturers Hans and Florence Knoll produced a selection of Nakashima’s designs, which appeared alongside those of other noted modernists including: Franco Albini, Harry Bertoia, Pierre Jeanneret, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Isamu Noguchi, Eero Saarinen, and Florence Knoll herself. High-end furniture manufacturer Widdicomb-Mueller of Grand Rapids, Michigan, likewise produced suites of Nakashima furniture between 1957 and 1961.
- Nakashima is best compared with prominent craftsmen such as Wharton Esherick and Sam Maloof. Still, Nakashima’s work expresses a worldview that is based upon a unique set of circumstances, including his formal education in architecture, his exposure to European



Modernism, Eastern religious philosophy, and traditional Japanese craft traditions, including instruction from Issei carpenter Gentaro Hikogawa while confined to a Japanese-American Internment Camp.

- As a testament to George Nakashima's skill and national prominence, he was awarded the American Institute of Architect's Craftsmanship Medal in 1952. Nakashima's work has also appeared in some of the most celebrated national exhibitions of handcrafted Modern furniture of the twentieth century, and he appears in every noted publication on the Craft movement and fine woodworking in America.
- George Nakashima began his professional career as an architect working at the vanguard of International Modernism in Japan before turning to furniture design. This experience informed his designs for the buildings within the Nakashima Woodworker Complex, which are of the International Style intermingled with elements of traditional Japanese architecture, and featuring the innovative use of concrete.

Integrity:

- The George Nakashima House, Studio, and Workshop complex retains a high degree of historic integrity.
- Very few noncontributing resources are located on the property; with few exceptions most of the buildings remain unaltered and the setting and overall landscape of the property are outstanding.

Owner of Property: Private (Mira Nakashima-Yarnall)

Acreage of Property: 12.2 acres.

Origins of Nomination: The nomination was an outgrowth of a Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) recording project.

Potential for Positive Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program:

- NHL designation will recognize one of the most significant twentieth-century American designers.
- NHL designation will provide a demonstration—through art and architecture—of the merger of Japanese and American cultural threads.
- NHL designation will increase understanding and appreciation for the way that modern design often utilized features and forms drawn from a variety of sources.

Potential for Negative Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program: None known.

Landmarks Committee Comments:

Landmarks Committee Recommendation: Designation. Dr. Murtagh moved, Dr. Allan seconded; unanimous approval.

Public Comments Favoring Designation (comments received as of 04/08/13):

Mira Nakashima Yarnall (owner), George Nakashima Woodworker, S.A., New Hope, Pennsylvania

Advisory Board Recommendation: