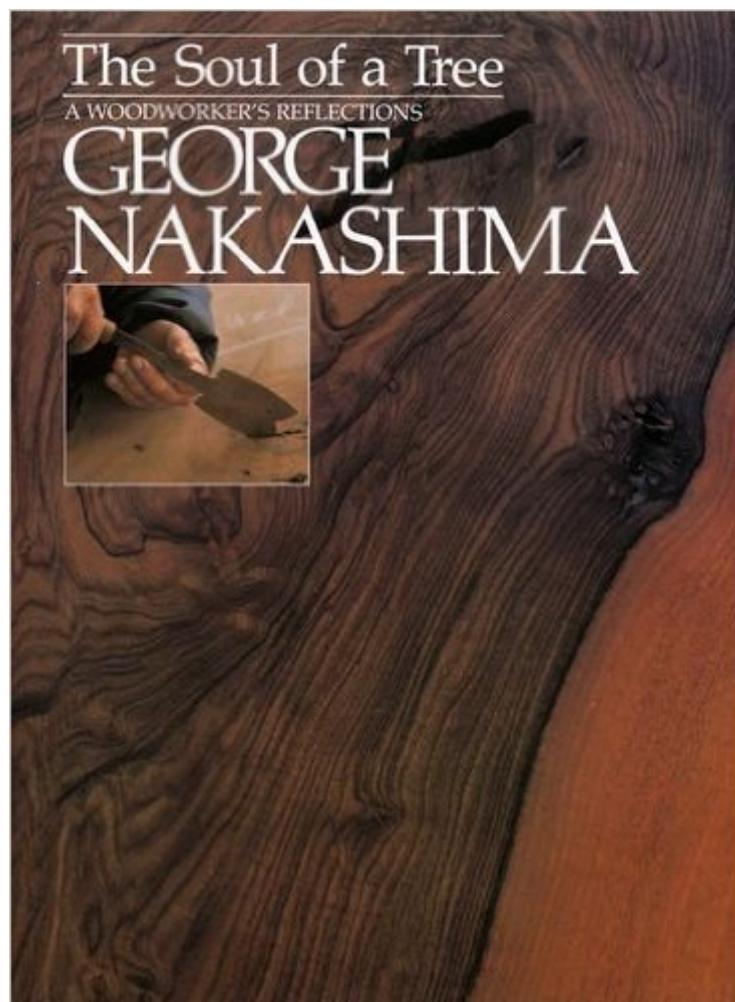


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# The Soul Of A Tree: A Master Woodworkers Reflections



## **Synopsis**

On a farmlike compound near New Hope, Pennsylvania, George Nakashima, his family, and fellow wood-workers create exquisite furniture from richly grained, rare timber. Tables, desks, chairs, and cabinets from this simple workshop grace the homes and mansions and executive boardrooms of people who prize such excellence. In this lavishly illustrated volume, George Nakashima allows us in intimate look at his artistry, his philosophy, his life. It is the portrait of an artisan who strives to find the ideal use for each plank in order to "create an object of utility to man and, if nature smiles, an object of lasting beauty." The author's search for the meaning of life took him as a young man to Paris, Tokyo, and Pondicherry, India. In India, he found the inner peace for which he had been searching and began to find ways to work with timber. He writes movingly about the grandeur of ancient trees and stunning figured woods and explains how he selects and prepares his materials. Above all, he impresses us with his devotion to discovering the inherent beauty of wood so that noble trees might have a second life as furniture. The Soul of a Tree looks at the world through the eyes of an artist and evokes the joy of living in harmony with nature.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

A genuine rock star of 20th century American Art Furniture, George Nakashima (1905-1990) is often identified with his large scale, live edge slab tables, often joined and reinforced with his signature butterfly key inserts, but his work and genius extend well beyond that form. In 1933, after earning a Bachelor of Architecture degree from the University of Washington, a Master's degree in

Architecture from M.I.T. and subsequently working for several years in New York, Nakashima bought a round-the-world tramp ship ticket and headed east. He variously traveled, lived, and worked in France, North Africa, China, Japan and India (where he made his first furniture pieces) and points in-between. He returned to America in 1940, and set up a furniture workshop in Seattle, Washington. Although born in the U.S., as a Japanese-American Nakashima and his family were interned during the Second World War at Camp Minidoka in Hunt, Idaho. There he mastered Japanese hand tools and joinery while serving as apprentice to a fellow internee who was a traditionally trained master Japanese carpenter. After his release the family settled in New Hope, Pennsylvania, where Nakashima lived and worked until his death. His home, studio and workshop were listed on the U.S. National Register of Historic Places in 2008. His daughter, Mira Nakashima, continues to produce her father's as well as her own furniture designs in New Hope. [...] This book serves both as Nakashima's autobiography and a personal exploration of his philosophy and artistic aesthetic. It is also a treasure trove of woodworking knowledge and insight. I have always found it quietly inspirational, on both the human and the artistic levels.

I'm a part-time woodworker, of course dreaming (as many do) of becoming full-time. The past couple years I've been getting more into live-edge furniture and found myself constantly looking at examples of George Nakashima. It was too long after I started down that road, that I discovered his "The Soul of a Tree" book, and quickly ordered it. The book is amazing. Not only insightful of George's life growing up, and world adventures, but his philosophies of what he believed furniture should be. I learned a lot from his knowledge and this book. I highly recommend it to anyone who enjoys reading about an interesting man, as well as learning about his ideas on furniture.

Very thoughtful and thought provoking book for a serious and seasoned woodworker. It makes you think about the life of a tree and how wood, the output of its growth, is used. This is NOT a "how to" book. It has many artistic sketches of scenery, trees, and furniture Nakashima has designed and made. It is also a bit of a biography on Nakashima. He lived a very interesting and exploratory life. The book is of excellent quality and made of quality paper. Recommended.

Fox's "Strange Inheritance" was the inspiration for getting this book. Wow, makes me seriously take up wood working. What great great man George was and his work will live long in our found memories of beautiful functional furniture. Thank you.

As a memoir, it's fine. George Nakashima expresses his philosophy and experiences in a way that is pleasant to read, and the reader can take it or leave it (though the author is far from ambivalent about what he believes). What's disappointing is that the book doesn't showcase more of Nakashima's work, but maybe that's just being greedy; there is enough to give a clear impression of his style. Overall, the book was enjoyable reading and viewing— but it could have been more.

This book is an undeserved classic. I now know about the author's life and philosophy, but not his approach to woodworking. The book seemed 'preachy' at times but did not tie the authors thoughts, feelings and experiences to his relationship to woodworking. Perhaps it is just too personal an issue to be adequately put into words.

This was a gift to my son-in-law. He is a happy guy enjoying this beautiful book. He makes beautiful furniture and will doubtlessly be inspired. I was!

Before there is a design or a construction of a furniture piece, there is the tree. GN is reverent in his approach to recreating a new history of each tree he uses.....Seminal!

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