



Essence of Chippendale, 1985
Chair parts, applied pigment
mixed media
64 x 38 x 1.5 inches

MARGARET WHARTON

Constructions: 1979 - 2011

Constructions: 1979 - 2011 is Margaret Wharton's first solo exhibition at Rhona Hoffman Gallery. A member of the Chicago Imagists, Margaret Wharton remains a highly regarded artist whose work focused on the manipulation of objects, mostly chairs, and the deconstruction of ready-mades. Influenced by an eclectic mix of artists like H.C. Westermann — a descendant of the Surrealist lineage — and Claes Oldenburg of the Pop art movement, Wharton's desire to reimagine the quotidian led her to experiment with and reassemble everyday items.

Sculptures constructed of wood, reappropriated chairs, and other found objects such as books, baseball bats, clocks, and golf clubs and tees populate this exhibition. Wharton's wall-based chairs are flattened and fashioned into bodily forms in active states — wielding a tennis racket, playing an instrument, or dancing en pointe, for example. Other sculptures are transformed wooden chairs where Wharton has removed their functionality as furniture by manipulating scale and incorporating materials such as paint, glitter, gold leaf, magnets, and various mixed media.

For the catalog text on the occasion of Wharton's 1995 solo exhibition at the Evanston Art Center, Jim Yood discussed the artist's persistent usage of chairs as a fruitful motif and recurrent object of exploration, stating: "For Wharton the wooden chair has always been the mute companion of the people that made and utilized them, and sometimes with the subtlest of alterations it could be made to reflect and reveal its anthropomorphic origins. Chairs, after all, have arms and legs, and are specifically contoured to receive the body." Wharton's whimsical and idiosyncratic chairs, each possessing their own distinctive character and spirit, simultaneously act as vessels, portraits, and vehicles for projection.

Margaret Wharton (b. 1943 Portsmouth, Virginia; d. 2014 Chicago, IL) received her MFA in Sculpture from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 1975 and her undergraduate degree from the University of Maryland, where she studied Advertising, in 1965. Wharton has exhibited widely and her work is in the collections of the Art Institute of Chicago; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York City; the Milwaukee Museum of Art; the Dallas Museum of Art; the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; the Indianapolis Museum of Art; and Yale University Art Museum, among others.