



Albany Institute of History & Art

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NEWS

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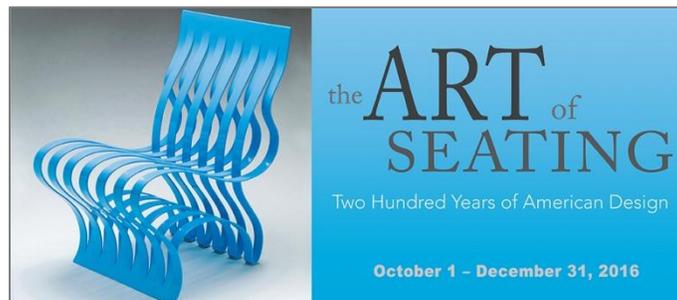
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THE ART OF SEATING: 200 YEARS OF AMERICAN DESIGN

Private Chair Collection is a Reflection on American Design History



ALBANY, NY—The Albany Institute of History & Art in Albany, New York is pleased to announce The Art of Seating: 200 Years of American Design, on view from October 1 through December 31, 2016.

Most chairs encountered throughout the day define themselves fairly simply—a place at the family table, a comfortable spot with a great view of the river, a seat of corporate power. When looking at the 43 chairs selected for The Art of Seating: 200 Years of American Design, however, there is much more to see than simple pieces of furniture. Developed by the Museum of Contemporary Art Jacksonville and organized for tour by International Arts & Artists,

Washington, D.C, these works of art have compelling stories to tell about our national history, the evolution of American design and incredible artistry and craftsmanship.

The Art of Seating provides audiences with a unique opportunity to see chair types that usually reside in private homes, withheld from public display. The American Chair Collection, the center of this exhibition, is an amazing and comprehensive private collection of iconic and historic chairs reaching back from the mid-1800s to pieces from today's studio movement. The exhibition provides an opportunity to see readily recognizable pieces alongside those rarely seen by the public.

“This exhibition is a fascinating chronology of American design history,” says Albany Institute of History & Art’s executive director Tammis Groft. “We’re thrilled to be the northeastern host for a show that dovetails art with history.”

Curated by Ben Thompson, curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art Jacksonville, The Art of Seating takes the viewer into the design studio through patent drawings, documented upholstery, artist renderings and multimedia presentations. Selections from the Thomas H. and Diane DeMell Jacobsen Ph.D. Foundation offer a stylistic journey in furniture with showstoppers by John Henry Belter, George Hunzinger, the Herter Brothers, the Stickley Brothers, Frank Lloyd Wright, Charles and Ray Eames, Eero Saarinen, Isamu Noguchi, Frank Gehry and others waiting to be discovered. The exhibition also features contemporary and historic designs by some of the biggest manufacturers such as Knoll, Herman Miller and Steelcase.

“Of all furniture, the chair has the closest affinity with the human form,” says Albany Institute’s chief curator W. Douglas McCombs. “We each have legs, backs, seats, and arms. And just like human beings, chairs have their own distinct individuality and character. That’s what makes the Art of Seating exhibition so exciting: to see how artists and architects, designers and craftsmen have given personality to the chairs they create. It’s a little like Geppetto carving that distinctive quality into the character of Pinocchio.”

Perhaps the most illustrious piece of history in this collection is that of the House of Representatives Chamber Arm Chair from 1857. Designed by Thomas U. Walter, Architect of the Capitol from 1851 to 1865, the House of Representatives chairs were created to be used in the halls of Congress and were showcased in portraits of political leaders such as Abraham Lincoln and Andrew Johnson. A later design by David Wolcott Kendall, deemed by his peers as “The Dean of American Furniture Design,” was presented to William McKinley during his term in the White House and has become known as the “McKinley” arm chair.

The Albany Institute of History & Art will host a variety of programs related to The Art of Seating, including lectures with exhibition curator Ben Thompson and contemporary designers Vivian Beer and Jon Brooks, who both have chairs on display in the exhibition. In addition, there

will be presentations by expert furniture conservators as well as chair-themed art making opportunities for the public. A full list of exhibition-related programs may be found under the Exhibition Programming section of this release.

The Art of Seating exhibition is also serving as a catalyst to explore Albany, New York's history through the histories of some local chairs. The "PASTPORT to History: Pull Up a Chair" program organized by Partners for Albany Stories (PAST), is a special collaboration of PAST sites during the month of October 2016 that encourages participants to discover the hidden stories in Albany's famous seats through a stamped passport program that offers users 20% discount on adult admission and a chance to enter into a drawing for a beautifully crafted reproduction Shaker chair. To learn more about the program and the partners, please visit www.albanyinstitute.org/art-of-seating.html. PASTports will be available at PAST sites, including the Albany Institute of History & Art.

Major funding for The Art of Seating exhibition has been provided by David & Lois Swawite. Additional support has been provided by the Nancy Hyatt Liddle Fund for the Arts, Burlingame Interiors, Ltd., JLM Design, Trudeau Architects, pllc, architecture +, and Digitalx-Press.

The Art of Seating is developed by the Museum of Contemporary Art Jacksonville, in collaboration with the Thomas H. and Diane DeMell Jacobsen Ph.D. Foundation, and is organized for tour by International Arts & Artists, Washington, D.C.

The press is invited to a special tour of the exhibition on Friday, September 23 at 10am. RSVPs are appreciated for this tour. Contact Aine Leader-Nagy at leader.nagy@albanyinstitute.org or (518) 463-4478 ext. 408.

Exhibition hosts:

The exhibition originated at the Museum of Contemporary Art Jacksonville, FL, where it was displayed from January 21 through April 3, 2011. Current tour dates include: Figge Art Museum, Davenport, IA (June 11, 2011 – September 4, 2011); Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts, AL (September 22, 2011 – January 15, 2012); Westmoreland Museum of American Art, Greensburg, PA (February 5, 2012 – April 8, 2012); Columbia Museum of Art, SC (April 27, 2012 – August 26, 2012); Academy Art Museum, Easton, MD (November 29, 2012 – January 2013); Telfair Museums, Savannah, GA (February 26, 2013 – May 19, 2013); Royal Alberta Museum, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada (June 15, 2013 – October 6, 2013); Fullerton Museum Center, Fullerton, CA (October 25, 2013 – December 22, 2013); Paul and Lulu Hilliard University Art Museum, University of Louisiana at Lafayette, LA (January 17, 2014 – April 11, 2014); Reading Public Museum, Reading, PA (May 31, 2014 - July 27, 2014); Reynolda House Museum of

American Art, Winston Salem, NC (August 23, 2014 – December 31, 2014); The Elliot Museum, Stuart, FL (February 6, 2015 – May 31, 2015); Western Gallery of Western Washington University, Bellingham, WA (September 2015 – November 2015); Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA (February 2016 – April 2016); The Woodson Art Museum, Wausau, WI (June 2016 – August 2016); Albany Institute of History & Art, Albany, NY (October 2016 –December 2016); Huntsville Museum of Art, Huntsville, AL (March, 19, 2017 – June 18, 2017). For an updated tour schedule, please visit <http://artsandartists.org/exhibitions/chairs.html>

More about the lending and organizing institutions:

The Museum of Contemporary Art Jacksonville, a private non-profit visual arts educational institution and cultural resource of the University of North Florida, serves the community and its visitors through exhibitions, collections, educational programs and publications designed to enhance an understanding and appreciation of modern and contemporary art with particular emphasis on works created from 1960 to the present.

The American Chair Collection started as a way to provide further context to the Jacobsen Collection of American Art—paintings, sculpture, silver and furniture which were acquired during the early 1990s. With the help of Andrew Van Styn, Director of Acquisitions, Conservation and Photography, the creation of the chair collection began with the purchase of an Egyptian Revival Side Chair and has since blossomed to the more than 40 works on display in this exhibition.

International Arts & Artists in Washington, DC, is a non-profit arts service organization dedicated to increasing cross-cultural understanding and exposure to the arts internationally, through exhibitions, programs and services to artists, arts institutions and the public. Visit www.artsandartists.org.

Exhibition Programming:

The Art of Seating Opening Night

Friday, September 30

Exhibition Preview & Champaign Reception | 5-6PM

Enjoy complimentary champagne and hors d'oeuvres during a private preview of the exhibition. Open to Sponsor level AIHA members and above (\$250). RSVP to Briana at (518) 463-4478 ext. 412

Exhibition Opening | 6-8PM

Join us for a special night of celebration and refreshments as we open this dynamic new exhibition. Live music by classical guitarist John Charles Cook. RSVP to (518) 463-4478 ext. 403

- Free for AIHA members | \$10 for non-members

The Art of Seating | Lecture & Gallery Talk

Sunday, October 2, 2PM

Ben Thompson, Exhibition Curator, and Curator, Museum of Contemporary Art, Jacksonville, FL. Thompson will highlight selections from the exhibition and give insight into his process of curating the show.

- Free with museum admission

Columbus Day | Free Admission Day

Monday, October 10, 10AM-5PM

Drop-In Art Making 10AM-4:30PM

Gallery Talks at 11AM and 1PM

Visit the museum for free today! Plus, the whole family will enjoy making model chairs in our Art Studio. *Sponsored by M&T Bank*

- Free admission

Behind-the-Seats | 1791 Club

Thursday, October 13, 5:30-6:15PM

Come see where we store some of our historic chairs. You'll be surprised at what we have! Then, hear more remarkable stories about chairs throughout Albany at In the Hot Seat (see below). Register online. Space is limited.

- \$10 per person

In the Hot Seat | Special Event

Thursday, October 13, 6:30PM

A *pecha kucha* (whirlwind tour) revealing some of the stories behind highlighted chairs in the collections of Partners for Albany Stories (PASt) members. Sometimes a chair is not just a chair.

- Free admission; Light refreshments

Peculiar Grace: The Shakers and Their Chairs | Lecture

Thursday, October 27, 6PM

Samantha Hall-Saladino, Education Director Shaker Heritage Society

Did you know Oprah collects Shaker furniture? For decades, Shaker furniture has been sought by collectors worldwide. Join us for a special program on the history and design of Shaker chairs. *This program is part of the "Pull Up a Chair" series, presented by Partners for Albany Stories.*

- Free admission



Chairs in storage at the Albany Institute of History & Art

The Art of the American Studio Furniture Movement: Contemporary Designers

| Lectures & Gallery Talks

Sunday, October 30, 2PM

Vivian Beer and Jon Brooks, Designers

Award-winning artists Beer and Brooks will present an overview of their work and then discuss the works included in the exhibition, Beer's *Current Chair* and Brooks' *Solid Elm Ball Chair*.

- Free with museum admission



Current (2004), designed and manufactured by Vivian Beer (b. 1977), Photo by Douglas J. Eng

Hamilton's Grange: Replicating Alexander Hamilton's Furniture | Lecture

Sunday, November 6, 2PM

Tad Fallon and Randy S. Wilkinson, Principals, Fallon & Wilkinson, LLC

In 2010, Fallon & Wilkinson, LLC of Baltic, Connecticut, was awarded two contracts: one to replicate twenty-eight pieces of Federal furniture in museum collections, and the second to conserve five of the original Louis XVI chairs for Hamilton Grange. Hear about this exciting commission that included making 1,472 bellflowers that were inlaid into the sixteen chairs used in Alexander Hamilton's dining room.

- Free with museum admission



Side chair, Attributed to Elbert Anderson, New York, New York, Mahogany, beech, maple and satinwood, 1790-1800, Albany Institute of History & Art Purchase, 1984.9.2

Worlds Apart: Introducing Frank Lloyd Wright to the chairs at Schuyler Mansion | Lecture

Thursday, December 1, 6PM

David Bayne, Conservator, New York State Bureau of Historic Sites

Frank Lloyd Wright is infamous for uncomfortable furniture; the chairs he designed for the Darwin Martin House in Buffalo are classic examples. In contrast, the chairs at Schuyler Mansion tell a story of grace and comfort. Where might we be if he had learned his lessons during a field trip to Schuyler Mansion in Albany?

- Free admission

Build It! Chair Design Art Challenge | Family Program

Sunday, December 4, 2-3:30PM

Join us for a design challenge that will exercise both your artistic and engineering skills! Participants will be tasked with creating unique miniature chairs out of a variety of exciting materials like sculpture wire, wooden shapes, cardboard, and chenille stems. At the end of our timed building session we'll step back, admire the unique forms, and share our observations on their constructions. Visitors are welcome to join us on their own or build with a team.

- Free with museum admission

Playing with Pattern | Vacation Art Break for ages 6-12

Tuesday, December 27 – Thursday, December 29, 9AM – Noon

In this three-day drop-off program students will be inspired by the decorative designs, and prints found in our current exhibition, The Art of Seating. We'll try out exciting art and fine craft forms like weaving reeds as we explore in the art studio. Participants will have the chance to test out printmaking, stencils, weaving and more in this engaging art class. Registration is required and space is limited.

- \$65 non-members; \$50 members
Tuition includes materials and museum admission. Register online at albanyinstitute.org

ONGOING

Art for All | Hands-on Art Activity

Bring your family to the museum and spend the day being creative.

- Free with museum admission

Mini Chairs: October 1, 8, 15, 22, 10AM-4:30PM

October's project celebrates the exhibition opening of The Art of Seating: Two Hundred Years of American Design. We'll create and decorate our own miniature chairs.

Weekend Gallery Talks

Most Saturdays and Sundays, 1PM

Led by volunteer docents. Availability subject to change. Please call (518) 463-4478 to confirm.

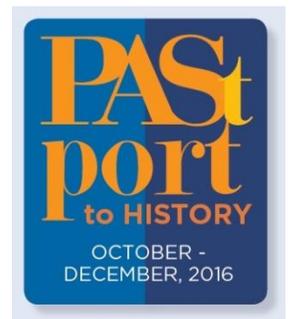
- Free with museum admission

SPECIAL COLLABORATION

PASStPORT to History: Pull Up a Chair

October 2016

Building on the must-see Art of Seating exhibition, Partners for Albany Stories (PASSt) is sponsoring a special program, Pull Up a Chair: Hidden Stories in Albany's Famous Seats. Grab a "PASStport" to get a 20% discount on adult admission at PASSt sites. Hunt for "seats" that tell the story of Dutch settlement or have witnessed the anti-slavery movement or that hold secrets or have held the seats of Founding Fathers! Special tours at some sites. During October, visit three sites and get your PASStport stamped to enter a raffle for a beautifully crafted reproduction Shaker chair. Tours and events at many PASSt sites will continue through the end of the year. To learn more, please visit www.albanyinstitute.org/art-of-seating.html. Pick up your PASStport at AIHA.



Selected Images:

Selected images of the chairs in the exhibition are available in a separate piece.

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The Albany Institute of History & Art is located at 125 Washington Avenue in Albany, New York. Free parking is available in the museum's lot at the corner of Elk and Dove Streets.

The exhibition galleries, Museum Shop, and the new Crisan Café at the Albany Institute are open Wednesday 10am-5pm, Thursday 10am-8pm, Friday 10am-5pm, Saturday 10am-5pm, and Sunday noon-5pm. In addition, the café and museum shop are open Tuesdays from 10am-5pm. The Research Library is open on Thursdays from 1pm-4:30pm and by appointment.

Current admission rates are \$10 for adults, \$8 for seniors and students with ID, \$6 for children aged 6-12, and free for children under 6. Albany Institute members are admitted for free. There is no charge to visit the café or museum shop. The museum offers free admission to the galleries on Thursdays from 5pm-8pm and on the First Fridays of the month from 5pm-8pm. To learn about other discounts and free admission days, please refer to the Visit section of www.albanyinstitute.org.

For more information, visit www.albanyinstitute.org or call (518) 463-4478.

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Founded in 1791, the Albany Institute of History & Art is New York's oldest museum. Its collections document the Hudson Valley as a crossroads of culture, influencing the art and history of the region, the state, and the nation. With more than 35,000 objects and one million documents in the library, it is an important resource for the region, giving our community a sense of the part the Hudson Valley played in the American story, and our own place in history. Permanent and temporary exhibitions are open year-round and create a sense of place, allowing visitors to meet the people who helped shape this region. Among the museum's best-known and most-loved collections are the 19th century Hudson River School landscape paintings by artists like Thomas Cole and Frederic Church, the 19th century sculpture collections, and, of course, the famous Albany Mummies that came to the museum in 1909 and have been on view ever since. For more information, please visit www.albanyinstitute.org and be sure to follow us on Facebook (www.facebook.com/albanyinstitute), Twitter (@AlbanyInstitute), and Instagram (albanyinstitute)

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