

# Recrafting Creativity

Two-year exploration of Currier Museum of Art archives leads to site-wide installation designed to spark discussion

Some artists use brushes and pigment to create paintings, while others sculpt or arrange raw materials to express their visions in gallery halls.

But Andrew Witkin makes use of objects, images and text in hopes of getting people to reconsider the way museums themselves represent history and help convey meaning.

Witkin's two-year exploration of the Currier Museum of Art archives has resulted in an exhibition designed to entice visitors not only into viewing featured works but giving some thought

as to how the pieces got there and what cultural, artistic and educational elements they might represent.

The project stems from an offer museum officials gave Witkin: explore its collection, archive and library holdings and use items as starting points for his own creative displays.

"Witkin's exhibition reveals itself in a series of surprising installations throughout the building, many of which interact with existing displays," said curators of the Manchester landmark. "The exhibition aims to stimulate new ways of experiencing and thinking about the Currier collections and functions, and the museum's role in the process of making history."

In addition to possibly giving visitors new ways to consider offerings, the exhibit, set to run

through May 11, focuses on changes in museum practices and what curators call "knowledge shifts over time," which invite chances to re-examine works.

Witkin, who splits his time between Boston and Sanbornton, worked with many collaborators on this project, including New Hampshire Furniture Master Tom McLaughlin, who fabricated furniture featured in the exhibition.

## Experiencing Art

Unlike traditional exhibits, which are displayed in separate rooms of a museum, "Exploring the Currier Inside Out: Andrew Witkin, Among Others" is situated strategically throughout the galleries and halls. The idea is encourage people to rediscover offerings, much the same way Witkin did while delving through the Currier's material.

For example, visitors are invited to sit in McLaughlin's plywood chairs and consider the everyday materials that went into the furniture's design. Positioned near antique mahogany and maple furniture the Currier has collected, they create a contrast that provokes guests to reconsider how museums determine what is suitable for purchase and display.

In another installation, Witkin places two plywood wingback chairs near a fireplace that is currently boarded up. The scene is reminiscent of an original presentation at the Currier, but which has changed over time. In an early American tavern display, Witkin has positioned a contemporary plywood table where none before had been displayed.

A large wall mural near the library contains an alphabetized list of words and phrases Witkin



**CONSIDER THIS:** Plywood chairs designed by Andrew Witkin and New Hampshire Furniture Master Tom McLaughlin (below right) complement objects from the Currier Museum of Art collections in an installation designed to get visitors to re-consider art and its presentation.



At left, Andrew Witkin explores archival materials in the Currier Museum of Art's library with librarian and archivist Meghan Petersen in 2013.

collected from among the museum's historic documents during his research. Geometric shapes fill a nearby wall, complementing the text list.

"Throughout the process of exploring Witkin's exhibition, we come to view the Currier as a changeable canvas of partial histories and stories that might inspire more questions than it

answers," said Nina Gara Bozicnik, assistant curator.

"Witkin's art aims to open eyes and minds," she said. "It invites us to take active ownership of the information around us, to bring a more critical awareness to what we see and experience, and to reconsider the things we think we know about culture and history."

*Andrew Witkin used the Currier's archives and library holdings as inspiration for his own artistic installations at the Queen City landmark.*

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