

Rhythms
WEM's 30th Annual Juried Woodworking Exhibition
June 13, 2024 – September 8, 2024

Rhythms: WEM's 30th Annual Juried Woodworking Exhibition Opens

From personal ritual to the patterns of nature, contemporary makers take on the theme of rhythms.

Malvern, PA – The Wharton Esherick Museum (WEM) is pleased to announce the opening of *Rhythms: WEM's 30th Annual Juried Woodworking Exhibition*, on view beginning June 13, 2024.

Since 1994, the WEM's annual rhythm has included the Juried Woodworking Exhibition, designed to highlight connections between Esherick's creative legacy and the work of contemporary makers. For thirty years, this project has showcased works by hundreds of professional woodworkers, artists, designers, hobbyists, and craftspeople that reflect a form or theme drawn from Esherick's life.

This year, WEM invited artists to share works that explore the rhythms that shape their creative lives. Rhythm – often defined as a strong, regular, repeated pattern of movement or sound – has appeared in Esherick's artistic life in both concept and practice. Many of the progressive artistic communities Esherick aligned himself with believed that human, creative, and natural rhythms are inextricably interconnected. We see this in form when walking into Esherick's Studio. Visual rhythms echo throughout the building in features as varied as the repeating sculptured treads of Esherick's iconic *Spiral Staircase* (1930) and the dappled paint of the silo, whose color reflects the annual rhythm of autumn's changing leaves.

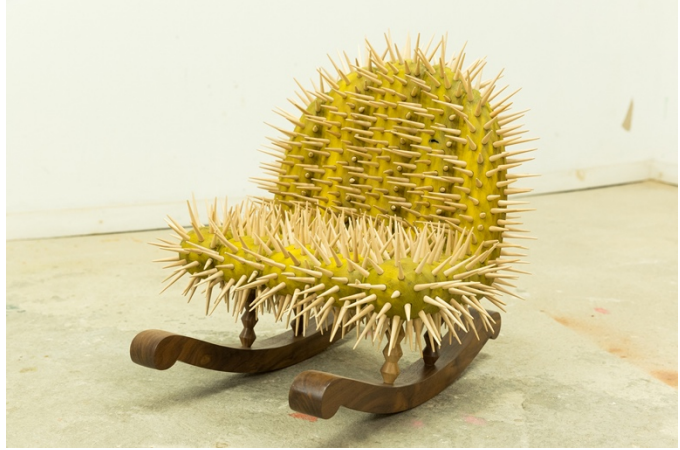
While the twenty-five artists featured in this exhibition each think differently about this concept, each skillfully uses Esherick's chosen medium of wood to invite us into the patterns shaping their own lives and thoughts. A selection of the prizewinning works will be on display in the museum Visitor Center, with the remaining artworks included in a virtual exhibition. Like Esherick moving between two- and three-dimensional work, *Rhythms* first place winner Chelsea Witt works in both printmaking and furniture to



Chelsea Witt, First Place Winner
Reaction, 2021
Beech, felt. 48 x 16 3/4 x 30 inches
Photography by Mark Juliana

explore core ideas. *Conflict Can Amplify Love and Reaction*, a block print and a bench, each feature flowing parallel lines which change as they meet an intrusive round object. While we don't know whether this form is an obstacle or a partner for collaboration, we are invited to follow the new pathways created by this encounter.

Second place winner Raul De Lara engages the rhythms of emotion that come with big life changes – especially grief – in ways that are both tangible and abstract. As rocking chairs, *The Wait (Again)* and *Tornado* suggest the lulling, pleasurable motion that we associate with coaxing a small child to sleep. This is countered by the cactus spikes that cover each work, promising a rhythm that moves back and forth between pleasurable soothing and painful discomfort.



Raul De Lara, Second Place Winner
The Wait (Again), 2022

Walnut, cedar, hemu, lacquer, color pencil, urethane, pigment
21 x 19 x 20 ½ inches

Discontinued, by third place winner George Lorio, explores how the rhythms of the natural world are disrupted by human intervention through the creation of an object that is both of nature and fundamentally man-made. Lorio upends the perpetual cycle of growth and decay

by resurrecting plant matter into “fictitious renderings” of trees, stumps, and logs. Talia Drury’s *The Sound of Nature*, which received an honorable mention, is both a functioning instrument and a testament to Drury’s own experiences observing the rhythms of the summer landscape in Deer Isle, Maine, while studying at Haystack Mountain School of Crafts. This guitar reflects in its form the rhythms of Drury’s hand carving and the environment in which it was made, but also has the capacity to pulse with life in new ways when strummed.

The philosopher Rudolf Steiner, whose ideas influenced Esherick as well as many of the artistic movements with which he was linked, wrote in 1906 that “**One can ascend to a higher development only by bringing rhythm and repetition into one's life. Rhythm holds sway in all nature.**” All twenty-five artists featured in *Rhythms* explore this idea materially and conceptually, offering insight into the cadence of their practice and their creative aspirations. They invite us to ponder the rhythms at play in our own lives, the patterns that shape who we are, and how effectively wood can engage this expansive idea.

Exhibiting Artists: Christian Burchard, Abigail Castañeda, Kate Cameron Davidson, Raul De Lara, Alicia Dietz, Talia Drury, Karen Ernst, Roberto Gastelumendi, Martin Goebel, Graham Hyun, Alex Jarus, Zac Keane, David Knopp, Rainy Lehrman, George Lorio, Aaron Michalovic, Matthew Mosher, Cory Olsen, Hilary Pfeifer, Bella Rielly, Seth Rolland, Rob Spiece, Stephen Thrasher, Chelsea Witt, and Leah Woods.

2024 Guest Jurors: Jennifer-Navva Milliken and Kimberly Winkle

The finalists for *Rhythms* were selected from an international pool by jurors Jennifer-Navva Milliken and Kimberly Winkle along with Emily Zilber, WEM’s Director of Curatorial Affairs and Strategic Partnerships. Milliken is the Executive Director and Chief Curator of the Museum for Art in Wood in Philadelphia. Winkle

is an artist, professor, and the Director of the School of Art, Craft & Design at Tennessee Technological University.

Rhythms is a virtual exhibition viewable at whartonesherickmuseum.org/programs beginning June 13, 2024. A selection of the artworks awarded First, Second, and Third place, and Honorable Mention will also be on display onsite in the WEM Visitor Center, which is open during the Museum's tour hours. Please note, all visitors must have advance tour reservations to enter the Studio. Details about visiting can be found at whartonesherickmuseum.org.

Many of the works showcased in *Rhythms* will be available for purchase through the WEM store along with new jewelry and home-goods made by artists featured in the exhibition and a catalog featuring the work of all twenty-five artists.

For related programs and events visit <https://whartonesherickmuseum.org/events/list/>

About the Wharton Esherick Museum: The Wharton Esherick Museum, located just outside of Valley Forge Park in Malvern, PA is the handcrafted home and studio of Wharton Esherick (1887-1970), an internationally significant artist and leader of the Studio Furniture Movement. Esherick worked primarily in wood and extended his unique forms to furniture, furnishings, interiors, buildings, and more. His motto, "If it isn't fun, it isn't worth doing," is evident in the joyful expression of his work. A National Historic Landmark for Architecture, his hilltop studio/residence has been preserved much as it was when the artist lived and worked there.



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