

Renewal
WEM's 31st Annual Juried Woodworking Exhibition
June 12, 2025 – September 7, 2025

Renewal: WEM's 31st Annual Juried Woodworking Exhibition Opens

New exhibition of twenty-five contemporary makers explores the capacity for material, personal and collective renewal through art in wood.

Malvern, PA – The Wharton Esherick Museum (WEM) is pleased to announce the opening of *Renewal: WEM's 31st Annual Juried Woodworking Exhibition*, on view beginning June 12, 2025.

The Annual Juried Woodworking Exhibition at WEM began in 1994 as an opportunity to highlight connections between Esherick's creative legacy and the work of contemporary makers of all kinds, including professional woodworkers, artists, designers, hobbyists, and craftspeople. For over thirty years, these exhibitions have showcased artworks that reflect a form or theme inspired by Esherick's creative work or personal narrative.

This year, WEM invited applicants to think broadly about the idea of renewal, which Esherick took seriously across his career. After training as a painter he renewed his artistic identity time and again, finding enough inspiration to make everything from illustrated books to stage sets and costumes to iconic furniture. He believed in renewed approaches to form, refusing to make objects that conformed to expectation, but which instead straddled the line between function and sculpture.



Cameron Lasson, First Place Winner
Taxidermy Tree, 2023
Birch bark, birch heartwood, birch plywood
18 x 18 x 35 inches

WEM asked artists to consider questions like the following: Have they made an artwork that represented a moment of personal, professional, or ideological renewal? What objects facilitate moments of renewal, restoration, or caretaking? Is there a way to renew meaning from the past through artwork that's wholly contemporary? The enthusiastic response to this prompt underscores the ongoing relevance of renewal for contemporary makers.

The twenty-five artists featured in this exhibition each approach renewal from a unique perspective, yet they share an interest in exploring its many manifestations through wood, whether focusing on its material properties, historical resonance, inherent narratives, or metaphorical potential.

First-place winner Cameron Lasson merges traditional furniture forms with innovative reinterpretations of their historical production. In *Taxidermy Tree*, he integrates birch in multiple ways—from foraged bark to industrially processed plywood—to create a hybrid object. His *Bow Back Windsor Chair* renews this familiar form through skewed manufacturing techniques, combining hand-hewn and machine-cast components made entirely of urethane rubber. Existing alongside each other, their juxtaposition prompts the viewer to consider what might be renewed when the traditional and the industrial meet.

It is hard not to see Esherick's own chairs and stools utilizing vellum when considering the work of second place winner Ellen Sigunik, who has made a career of applying sensitive design and consummate craftsmanship to the materials with which she works, including animal skins. In objects like *Bistro Trestle Table*, Sigunik uses repurposed parchment remnants to create an elegant patchwork separated by thin lines of recycled brass and framed by a clean, architectural oak frame repurposed from cast-off floor boards. The result is a striking, modern object with a clarity that both acknowledges and transcends its origin stories.

Third-place winner Eva Sturm-Gross explores renewal through its narrative and spiritual dimensions. Her contemporary *palmesel* (palm donkey) reimagines kinetic religious sculptures common in Germanic countries between the 13th and 16th centuries to envision a world of "enduring peace." In *D-g Days*, she relocates the concept of the universe's creation—perhaps the ultimate act of renewal—within the framework of physical birth. Sara Tabbert's innovative prints secured an honorable mention for the ways in which the artist seeks to renew decorative techniques like marquetry – as well as the idea of the decorative itself. Trained as a printmaker, Tabbert marries disparate fields and media, crafting composite works that blur the boundary between two- and three-dimensional space. Just as cut wood and printer's ink intermingle, her juxtaposition of traditional ornamental designs with motifs drawn from urban landscapes—such as chain-link fences and brick walls—enlivens decorative traditions with contemporary relevance.



Eva Sturm-Gross, Third Place Winner
The Ass, 2024
Carved wood
24 x 6 x 30 inches
Photography by Paul Takeuchi

At its best, art has the capacity to serve as a shortcut to the transcendent, to take what is depleted and fill it with a sense of what human creativity is uniquely capable of accomplishing. The twenty-five artists featured in *Renewal* facilitate that experience for viewers through their generous invitation into the ways in which they renew themselves, both as creators and individuals.

Exhibiting Artists: Dotan Appelbaum, Teresa Audet, Ashoke Chhabra, Wednesday Childs, Bruce Colburn, Talia Drury, Matthew Giossi and Ronald Kuhn, Miles Gracey, Elias Griffin, Richard Haining, Jr., Aydan Hüseyinli, Danny Kamerath, Mizuki Kojima, Janos Korodi, Cameron Lasson, Lisa Max, Keren Oertly, Seth Rolland, Emma Senft, Ellen Sigunik, Steve Sinner, Eva Sturm-Gross, Rosalind Sutkowski, Sara Tabbert, and Wu Hanyen.

2025 Guest Jurors: Rosanne Somerson and Jennifer Scanlan

The finalists for *Renewal* were selected from an international pool of applicants by jurors Rosanne Somerson, President Emerita and Professor of Furniture Design, Rhode Island School of Design, and Jennifer Scanlan, Executive Director, James Renwick Alliance for Craft, along with Emily Zilber, WEM's Director of Curatorial Affairs and Strategic Partnerships.

Renewal is a virtual exhibition viewable at whartonesherickmuseum.org/programs beginning June 12, 2025. 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, Wednesday – Sunday, 10:00am – 3:00pm. 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 included in *Renewal* will be available for purchase through the WEM store along with new jewelry and home-goods made by artists featured in the exhibition. An accompanying publication featuring the work of all twenty-five artists [can be downloaded for free or purchased as a print edition.](#)

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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