

PRESS RELEASE

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June 26, 2006

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(photos available upon request)

Exhibition Title:

Garry Knox Bennett:: Call Me Chairmaker

PRESS PREVIEW

Thursday, July 6, 2006

11:00am-12:00

Dates: 7/06/2006-11/26/2006 (July 6, 2006—November 26, 2006)

Location: Bellevue Arts Museum

Bellevue, WA – “A good joke is better than bad art.” Says Garry Knox Bennett.

“To understand my art, a viewer has to understand jokes. Good jokes build piece by piece, the little fact that is dropped into the story line, the accumulation of illogical data that flip-flops logic until the unexpected is understood with a joyful rush of logic and justice. The best of jokes gives clues so that you understand the joke just three beats after the teller gives you the punch line.”

Bellevue Arts Museum presents the exhibition *Garry Knox Bennett: Call Me Chairmaker* sponsored by Microsoft Corporation, featuring 52 one-of-a-kind sculptural chairs created by Garry Knox Bennett, one of the foremost contemporary studio furniture makers in America. Inspired by well-known furniture designers and architects such as Frank Lloyd Wright, Charles Rennie Mackintosh, George Nakashima and Gerrit Rietveld, Bennett’s wit and imagination comes to life with such chairs as the “Great Granny Rietveld” and “Wiggle Wright”. By using bold new forms and constantly expanding traditional boundaries, Bennett makes furniture a form of art. Each chair incorporates precious materials such as rosewood and yellow satinwood with unconventional materials including plywood, aluminum, brass, plastic and paint.

“I prefer to work in series; benches, tables, clocks, lamps and at present time, chairs,” says Bennett, who has been focused on creating chairs since 2003. “By working this way it allows me to complete one piece, select successful elements and re-invent or extrapolate on issues that come up which I feel can be more successfully resolved. Often one design will suggest another avenue or challenge to explore and succession becomes very exciting.”

Most of the chairs in the exhibit are functional; however, several operate more as symbols than actual seats. Comfort would be impossible; sitting down is even a stretch. All 52 chairs are

sculptural in quality and each one will awaken a different emotion for the viewer. One example of this is Bennett's "Great Granny Rietveld," a creative take-off on the 1934 "ZigZag Chair" designed and built by Dutch architect Gerrit Rietveld. Bennett's version does the unthinkable by design standards, wrapping a retro delicate floral-pattern upholstery around an ultra modern hard-edge functionalist design. Another homage to Rietveld is the "Wing Chair", where Bennett has added metallic wings as a pun on the classic colonial wing-back chair, modernism meets colonial Williamsburg.

"This exhibition is another example of nourishing the Museum's mission to be the center for exploring art, craft and design." says Michael Monroe, Executive Director, Bellevue Arts Museum. "Bennett's pieces command your attention. He pays homage to the past while breaking conventional furniture design rules by using a "recipe" that adds a dash of wit and a pinch of farce, topped off with sly visual puns. Bennett embraces a mixture of materials, designs, and shapes and pushing the viewer to explore new boundaries and discover that a functional chair can also be a work of art, and in this particular case -- sculpture."

"I can tell by looking at his chairs that Bennett was originally trained as a sculptor," adds Bellevue Arts Museum's curator Stefano Catalani. "His forms are fluid and organic in quality and yet he also works with very structured lines. Each chair has its own unique personality and has been crafted with great skill, attention to detail, and, of course, humor."

Bennett learned painting and sculpture at the California College of Arts in Oakland, California. In the 1960s, he used the skills he learned by creating metalwork sculpture to found a metal plating business, specializing in handmade jewelry. In the 1970s, he began building clocks and then expanded into furniture-making. In 2001, he had a retrospective exhibition at the Museum of Art and Design in New York City. Bennett is represented in the permanent collections of the Smithsonian Institution's Renwick Gallery, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, San Francisco Museum, Modern Art the Oakland Museum of California as well as many private collections.

This exhibition has been organized by Bellevue Arts Museum and is sponsored by the Microsoft Corporation. The exhibition will travel to museums nationwide and will be accompanied by a hard bound, full-color exhibition book.

Related Educational Programs:

Drop-in Art Activity

Call ME Chairmaker!

Join us on Saturdays in July and August

View the exhibition *Gary Knox Bennett: Call Me Chairmaker* and then try your hand at creating a "chair form" to take home! Supervised children and adults are invited to stop by the Museum and participate in an art activity. Materials used will be scissors, glue, staples and playing cards, and other design materials to make your own whimsical chair!

Museum Forum

12:00-3:00 PM (Starts July 15)

\$2 suggested donation

Wednesday, July 12

Lecture by Garry Knox Bennett

A don't miss! Join us for an informative lecture with nationally acclaimed sculptor turned furniture artist Garry Knox Bennett. Bennett will show slides and talk about the 52 sculptural chairs exhibited in the *Garry Knox Bennett: Call Me Chairmaker* on view until November 26, 2006.

Museum Auditorium

7:00pm

\$5 members/\$7 non-members

Saturday, August 5, 2006

The Creative Chair --A hands-on workshop activity for families

Young artist's bring your parents and view the exhibition *Garry Knox Bennett: Call Me Chairmaker*. Using the materials and a small chair form provided by the Museum and with the help of our art instructors, create a decorative chair. Students will have fun embellishing the chair with large beads, bottle caps, feathers, fabric, paper, maps and other artistic materials. At the end of the project each child will put their name on the chair and come up with a title. Up to 25 chairs will be displayed in the Museum's Café exhibition space. Class limited to 25 students so please sign up in advance by calling Instructor Lori Osseward, Director of Education at Bellevue Arts Museum (425) 519-0793.

12:00-3:00 PM

Recommended for ages 6-9

Sponsored by Del Teet Furniture

Bellevue Arts Museum

Bellevue Arts Museum is the Pacific Northwest's center for the exploration of the fine art of craft and design. An emphasis is placed on regional craft artists as part of the national and international conversation on fine craft and design. Bellevue Arts Museum is located at 510 Bellevue Way NE, Bellevue, WA 98004. The Museum's main information line is 425.519.0770 and website is www.bellevuearts.org

For more information: Renate Raymond, Bellevue Arts Museum, 425.519.0754 or renater@bellevuearts.org

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