

BIO:

Joy, laughter, and the unexpected are at the heart of Annie Evelyn's work. Employing a range of materials (handmade paper flowers to Swarovski Crystals) and processes (tessellating metal pieces to create soft upholstered seating or embedding fresh cut flowers to add aroma), Evelyn uses furniture's inherent interactive qualities and relationships to the human body to create new and surprising experiences.

From 2014-2017 Evelyn was resident artist at the Penland School of Craft in North Carolina and in 2016 was awarded The John D. Mineck Furniture Fellowship. She received both her BFA and MFA from Rhode Island School of Design (RISD). Evelyn has taught at RISD, California College of the Arts, Parsons - The New School, Haystack Mountain School, Penland School of Craft, and others. Her work has been featured on the cover of American Craft Magazine and published in Agata Toromanoff's book, Impossible Design. She has been awarded Windgate Furniture residencies at the Indiana University of Pennsylvania (2011), the University of Wisconsin-Madison (2018), and San Diego State University (2020). Evelyn had a solo show at the Houston Center for Craft and in 2018 was a finalist for the Burke Prize for contemporary craft and her work was included in an exhibition at the Museum of Art and Design (MAD).

Artist Statement:

Joy, human connection, and self-discovery are at the center of my work. The intrinsic behavior of furniture, especially chairs with their ability to draw people in, provides the perfect platform for engagement.

I grew up surrounded by Old Colony Furniture, made by my grandparents' company. It was period reproduction furniture, but was often interactive and had many moving parts: tambour doors, slide-out tables, and adjustable headboards. A child of divorced parents, I spent

summers with my father where I had no friends and would play with the furniture. The pieces ended up having a major role in my imaginary play world. They were also the most valued objects our home and later as I became an artist it made sense that I would express myself through furniture.

My work has always been playful but not until losing my beloved stepfather, my father, and getting divorced within a span of two years did I realize creating furniture helped me cope with the pains of life by making people laugh and smile. Ever since I have wanted to draw in as many people as I can and create joyful experiences.

With these goals I made coin-operated vibrating tables that broke everything on them, chairs with hidden whoopee cushions, a 54-inch heart-shaped whoopee cushion that said "Love Stinks" and even a chaise lounge completely designed by the magic eight ball. I made a chair that cracked like an egg when sat on. The result was a cement shell adhered to foam which squished once cracked but still appeared hard. Sitters, not realizing the chair had cushion until the last moment, experienced an instant of fear and astonishment, followed by relief and joy.

This chair sparked years of exploration into "upholstering" with hard materials consisting of small tiles of wood, metal or concrete tessellated together into intricate patterns. In exploring alternative upholstery I created "Nest" and "Scale Lounge" by layering thousands of hand-sewn metal scales, and "Oshibana" by upholstering with handmade paper flowers. These were adorned sculptural forms. Desiring to bring the focus back to the human body I created the 'Static Adornment' series: furniture that adorns the user. The object dictates the person's position and decorates the spaces around and between the body. "Cathedral Train Chair" imagines the chair as a garment and the "Windsor Flower Chair" sprinkles fresh flowers around the sitter.

Making furniture to adorn the body has accidentally caused me to make design decisions based on how a person will look in the photo. This has forced me to examine the effect the daily barrage of internet imagery has had on my work. My newest piece "The Hideous Beautiful New Reality" looks to poke fun at these issues by exaggerating them. The front is "pretty" and

"selfieworthy", with faux gold and copper scales and blue velvet upholstery, while the back is intentionally ugly and poorly constructed. The chair only looks "good" from certain angles. Just like the rest of us.

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Annie Evelyn

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