

Marie Craig

Around the Curve, or the story of the sidewalk chairs

“The things people discard tell more about them than the things they keep.”
- Hilda Lawrence

Back in the summer of 2007, I began to notice a little slice of life sitting on the curb. The many chairs left out on the sidewalk grabbed my attention. I did not seek them out, but came upon them while crossing the neighborhoods on my many errands. I looked twice, stopped, and photographed. I made myself some rules. Only chairs. Only on the side of the road. I asked friends and strangers to notice, and call me. They did! The project became a bit of an obsession; much more than just a collection of images for me. I started to call the project ‘Rocker on Curve’, in honor of the one that got away. Three words, left for me on a post-it note by one of my ‘spotters’. By the time I got there, the chair was gone!

Whenever I found myself taking a second look, I was surprised by unexpected color, light and texture. Each chair had so many secrets. Whose was it? Where was it before? Why would someone throw that away? Or conversely, why did anyone hang onto that awful thing for so long? Did it start out ugly, or did it just get that way? Was it loved? Abused? Both? I found myself thinking of the person who once sat and read the paper in that chair, snuggled with a little one and a bedtime story, or fell asleep in front of the TV.



The chair also tells a story of consumption, serving as a metaphor for the many things we admit into our homes. The things we acquire have value and purpose. They are incorporated into our lives, become the setting for the drama that is home and family. Over time that fine new chair becomes invisible. It scratches, sags, splinters. Eventually we tire of it, and it’s time to acquire again. The fate of the sidewalk chairs reminds me of what happens to all our stuff once it gets worn and tired.

When it hits the curb, the chair is at a turning point. As it takes a slow journey from the living room to the family room to the basement to the garage to the street, sometimes it gets a reprieve as someone’s bargain or craft project, or it gets scavenged and becomes part of a college student’s experiment with independence.

I wonder, what happens next?

Random quotes

Nature is by and large to be found out of doors, a location where, it cannot be argued, there are never enough comfortable chairs. ”

Fran Lebowitz

“I like all the chairs to talk to one another and to the sofas and not those parlor-car arrangements that create two Siberias.”

Mario Buatta

“It isn't so much what's on the table that matters, as what's on the chairs.”

William S. Gilbert

“I had three chairs in my house: one for solitude, two for friendship, three for society”

Henry David Thoreau

“Marge, there's an empty spot I've always had inside me. I tried to fill it with family, religion, community service, but those were dead ends! I think this chair is the answer”.

Homer Simpson

“When fortune calls, offer her a chair”

Yiddish proverb

“I went to the park and saw this kid flying a kite. The kid was really excited. I don't know why, that's what they're supposed to do. Now if he had had a chair on the other end of that string, I would have been impressed.”

Mitch Hedberg

“I was walking along and this chair came flying past me, and another, and another, and I thought, man, is this gonna be a good night. “

Liam Gallagher

The story of the yellow chairs. A couple of years ago, the neighbor to my left put a pair of chairs out our street. They disappeared pretty quickly. Yesterday I found them out on the street again, this time in front of neighbor to the right!! (Somebody must want them; they've disappeared again!)