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## Who sat here? Marie Craig's chair photos intrigue

FRAMINGHAM - Photographing chairs left on the street, Marie Craig creates portraits of the folks who sat in them for years, leaving memories of their lives in the frayed cushions and soiled fabric.

The co-founder of Fountain Street Fine Art, Craig is showcasing 18 poignant photos of abandoned chairs in "Around The Curve," a thoughtful exhibition of throwaway furniture and lives.

Craig didn't find any chairs from IKEA on Concord Street or Rte. 135.

Instead, she photographed an easy chair with a busted arm that looks like the one your dad used to doze in watching the Red Sox. And she found the comfy egg chair with the embroidered slipcover like the one on which Ma used to watch "The Mary Tyler Moore Show."

Asked why she chose chairs for her first solo show in the gallery she founded with painter Cherie Clinton four years ago, Craig described herself as "a silent witness ... to the vigor and life these things once had."

"Because somebody spent hours every day for years looking out that window, sitting in that chair," she said. "Because time is unstoppable, memory is fleeting, and life goes on."

In a sense, Craig's exhibit grew from a lifelong fascination with making photos and discovering wonder in "those places that are unnoticed at best, eyesores at worse."

As a child, she learned the rudiments of photography from her father, David Picard, who, along with his father had a home darkroom where they developed pictures together.

After studying art and biology in college, Craig worked for a decade as a medical photographer for pathologists who trained her "to appreciate the incredible detail and beauty of things unseen by most."

She observed, "Sometimes it seems I'm looking at these chairs through a microscope."

Craig is showing and selling three essential kinds of chair portraits.

In the first, like "Free," she photographed an easy chair with vibrant upholstery in the context of the street where she found it, letting viewers decipher clues about its users' lives from the beach toys and boogie boards left beside it.

About half her photos, like "Relaxed Modernism" and "Surprisingly Affordable," take their titles from grandiose contemporary furniture advertisements that she slyly contrasts with images of split seams and dirty cushions that hint of their worthy service for users who grew old with them.

A few take their names from the streets where they were found, so the soiled white armchair in "Cottage" that appears to have been reupholstered with an old chenille bedspread might remind viewers of familiar people from the neighborhood.

For Craig, a favorite chair reflects a home's ambiance by revealing its users' interests and their willingness to keep it or repair it even as it wore down.

"Everybody has a story of a favorite chair from their childhood," she said.

Viewers won't require much prodding to imagine stories about each chair's occupants.

Like Bermuda shorts that went out of fashion 30 years ago, the low-slung plaid chair found on School Street by scattered cigarette butts screams Salvation Army bargain.

Resting next to an empty barrel on rubbish day, the ornate winged chair in "Main" might make a visitor wonder what became of the person who relaxed in it so long.

Clinton said the sight of abandoned chairs perhaps makes viewers reflect on the "throwaway consumer culture" that transforms favorite furniture into junk.

Yet the identical polka dot patterned chairs on the curb on Second Street might make viewers wonder about the parents or grandparents who shared shared meals and, perhaps, quiet moments on them.

Craig's subtle photos of everyday chairs make us ask will our kids leave our favorites - or us - "Around the Curve" when the time inevitably comes?

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**"Around the Curve: Photographs by Marie Craig"**



Marie Craig with her exhibit of photographs "Around the Curve" at Fountain Street Fine Art in Framingham. (Daily News Staff Photo/Ken McGagh)