

Sunday, March 08, 2009

## Mid-century Remix at James Fuentes

Saturday was irresistibly warm, so Jae and I took a long walk across the Brooklyn Bridge, through Tribeca, and up the West side to check out some art and enjoy the "fresh" air.

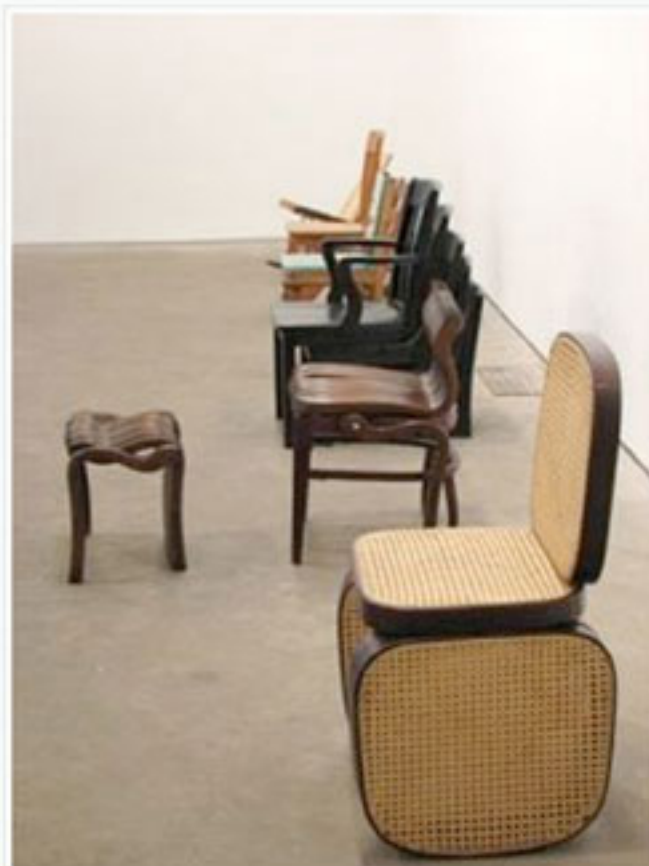
We happened upon a wonderful show at James Fuentes Gallery in Chelsea. Called *Wares*, it's an exhibition of "modified furniture" by New York artist William Stone.

The show features original works of furniture, mostly chairs, built from pieces of other furniture, mostly chairs. For example, the tops, backs, and arms of two old editor's chairs become an apparently functional new piece, aptly titled "Chair Without Legs."

Think Transformers, but chairs.

The artist uses mostly old, worn furniture or scrap to make the work, so each piece has a nice patina of age and use, that vintagey, slightly rustic, and gently eco-conscious aesthetic we know and love. (See also [Cleveland Art](#), [Nightwood](#).)

But the sense of design brings it up a notch, sort of like if all the furniture in Mad Men started having babies. Call it mid-century remix. (See also [Marc Andre Robinson](#), though the copulation is more literal there.)

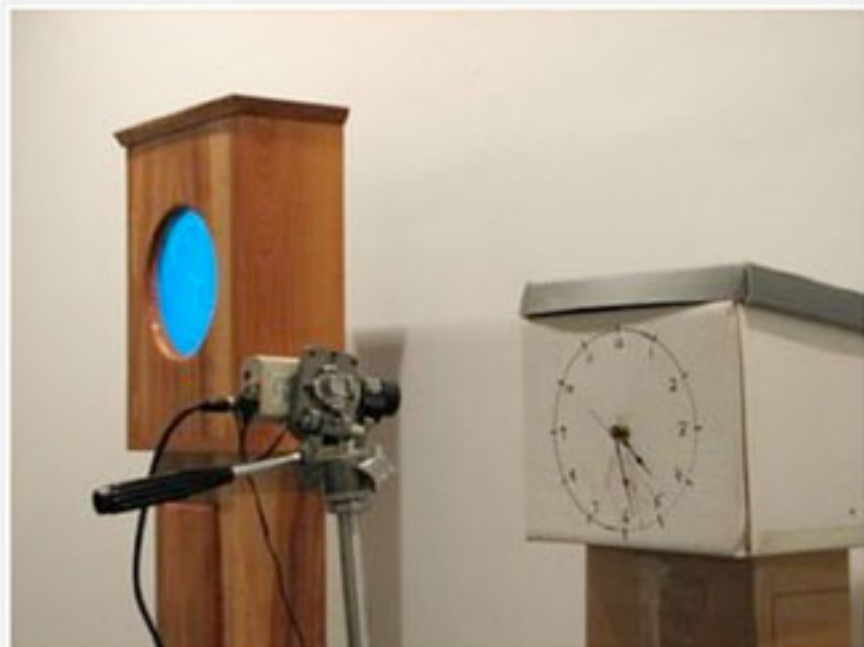


As works of sculpture, forms in themselves, the chairs draw curiosity and invite pondering. They are clever objects, with harmonious proportions and unnoticeable craftsmanship (which is to say, they're neither fine furniture nor rustically cobbled). They just seem ripe with stories. (See also [Doris Salcedo](#).)

At the same time, they are very consciously presented in a white-wall art gallery setting, and so beg the question "where does art end and craft being?" (Or at least the press release suggests as much in so many words.)

While lovely and affecting, I wouldn't call the work poetic. More like prose, short stories. We are first caught up by their playfulness, then their formal and engineering aspects, and then we start to think about the lives of the chairs, the chairs they used to be. Even, or perhaps especially, in their disassembled and remixed forms, these objects have a certain largeness. They set forth a world.

But sometimes they're just fun, like the grandfather clock built from cherry in a vaguely Shaker style, but with a video-projected face. The video is live feed of a working clock crudely drawn on a cardboard box set up right next to it.



This is a pop-up gallery, a temporary satellite to [Fuentes' downtown location](#), set up just to put on this exhibition while the building's in some sort of transition. In fact, when I asked the owner where the artist's studio is, he said "upstairs!"

A beautiful show, *Wares* reflects both the artist's and the gallery's sense of the times, appreciation for opportunity, and general good taste. Let's see more shows like this please!

Smartly (or maybe coincidentally?), it coincides with a nice [Louise Nevelson](#) show at PaceWildenstein around the corner.

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