

David Byrne

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A collection of sculpture, embroidery, digital prints, and ink-on-paper works, David Byrne's "Furnishing the Self—Upholstering the Soul" plumbs the depths of familiarity and domestic comfort through perfectly wrought interpretations of the most basic of living room accessories: the chair. From dreamy constructions in vibrant outline set on upholstery straight out of your great-aunt's sitting room—Comfy Face, 2006, a deep-orange easy chair embroidered on a tan, brown, and black paisley ground being particularly inviting—to Wedge, 2005, a wood and wood-veneer sculpture whose back culminates in a mean-looking point, the blend of clean sculptural lines and whimsical drawings throughout the show create a sense of intimacy without overstepping, or, perhaps, oversitting, the line into kitsch.

While never exactly ironic, a few of the pieces do offer some artistic commentary—Ancient Modernism, 2004, a black-and-white digital print of a half circle set into a not-just-broken-but-downright-crumbling obelisk, for instance. And the paper-pulp sculpture Log, 2005, an aptly titled sixteen-by-eighteen-inch log, might bespeak a certain postmodern wittiness—though not as overtly as the drawing Post Modern, 2006, comprising so many repeating lines and angles it almost collapses in on itself. The final drawing in the room, The Freud, 2006, a portrait of the analyst with a cigar jutting out of his mouth (a more interesting alternative to director Robert Wilson's wire-mesh Hanging Freud Chair, 1969), illuminates the suggestion in the show's title that there is an insidious connection between our subconscious and our sofa. But even with the hanging psychoanalytic quandary, "Furnishing the Self" is an unusually capricious and fun exploration of functional—and dysfunctional—art.