



NOVEMBER 2018

CUT!

Bad Director's Chair | John Waters



VISIT THE BMA

and see *Bad Director's Chair*
on view in the *John Waters:
Indecent Exposure* exhibition
through January 6, 2019.

John Waters (American, born 1946).
Bad Director's Chair. 2006. Canvas, wood, steel,
paint, and leather script binding with 22-karat
gold embossing. 46 × 24½ × 22 inches
(116.8 × 62.2 × 55.9 centimeters). Courtesy
of the artist and Marianne Boesky Gallery,
New York. © John Waters

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Imagine this fantasy: the all-important director, typically a man, exuding wisdom, gravitas, and irrepressible energy. He presides from his portable canvas throne, where he oversees an impeccably coordinated movie set, poised to produce the next Oscar-winning masterpiece.

But look at *Bad Director's Chair*, and you'll notice that the chair is covered in words and phrases that reveal what's likely to be closer to reality, especially given that most films typically fall short of artistic excellence and/or commercial success. Consistent with John Waters's ability to sharply puncture pretensions, this chair ruthlessly exposes the chaos of a horribly run film set about to unleash yet another bad film on the public or into the ether in which forgettable movies disappear.

"No shot list," "unprepared," "nothing matches," and "tested badly" hilariously upend the notion that this director is in control. The word "hack" loudly announces this and "reshoot" occupies the back of the seat where "Director" is typically found. Waters has even placed "DGA [Director's Guild of America] reject" on the unfortunate director's footrest.

At the same time, the chair celebrates Waters's interest in bold bad taste and acknowledges that failure is always possible whenever someone takes a creative risk. In fact, this work questions the very notions of "bad" and "failure." What some may judge harshly, others may see as a success and vice versa. Waters has said that he mocks the things he loves. Perhaps the many problems he cites with this particular film will create something new and interesting and he might—like many of us—end up thoroughly enjoying this poorly made movie.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Find in a magazine or newspaper a symbolic image intended to communicate something great. This may be an object such as a crown, a throne, a beautiful house, or a sleek car. Now decorate it with words that shed light on the reality of the object and its context. The words should challenge the uniformly positive message associated with the original image. What new truths emerged about the symbol you selected?

John Waters has talked about making artwork by examining something and then creating its opposite. Watch a film that you consider to be excellent. List all the things you think made this movie great, such as character development, storyline, acting, set, cinematography, etc. Now, develop a list of the opposite of those things. Take these elements and make a terrible movie on a mobile device. What did you discover by making this film?

PRINT THE IMAGES ON PAGES 2 AND 3 FOR YOUR STUDENTS.



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Bad Director's Chair

John Waters (American, born 1946). 2006. Canvas, wood, steel, paint, and leather script binding with 22-karat gold embossing. 46 × 24½ × 22 inches (116.8 × 62.2 × 55.9 centimeters). Courtesy of the artist and Marianne Boesky Gallery, New York.
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