

Related Events:

Exhibition Reception

Sunday, February 26

2:00 - 5:00 pm

Celebrate the opening of *A Modern Day Shaman's Hybrid Devices, Power Objects, and Cure Books* with the artist.

Write It Out: A Journaling Workshop for ages 15 & up

Wednesday, March 15

6:00 - 8:00 pm

Join artist and writer Rhonda Wheatley as she leads an exploration into the many ways journaling can positively impact your life. In this free two-hour workshop, we will discuss journaling as a means of processing life experiences, envisioning the future, working through self-doubt, and more.

We will use practical journaling strategies and formats along with prompts and exercises to jump-start your writing!

Excavating Myself & Eavesdropping on Your Future

Friday, April 24

3:00 - 5:00 pm

A free performance in which Wheatley will give tarot card readings to audience members in between readings from a selection of personal journal entries.

About the Artist

Rhonda Wheatley is a Chicago based artist whose paintings, sculptures, and written works explore consciousness, language, the metaphysical, and personal transformation.

Wheatley has exhibited throughout Chicago, in solo shows at David Weinberg Gallery and FLATFILEgalleries and group shows at the Koehnline Museum of Art, Hyde Park Art Center, Woman Made Gallery, Chicago Artists Coalition, and more. Wheatley's work has also been exhibited at the Black Fine Art Show in New York City, G.R. N'Namdi Gallery in Detroit, and in art fairs and exhibitions in Atlanta, Minneapolis, and Nashville. She's been featured in publications from the Chicago Tribune and Timeout Chicago Magazine to the Detroit Free Press. In 2007 Wheatley was a Ragdale Foundation Chicago Connection Fellow, in 2008 she was a featured lecturer as part of the Art Institute of Chicago's Artists Connect Series, and from 2003 to 2007 she was a Board Member of Woman Made Gallery.

Wheatley received an MA in Writing from DePaul University, Chicago and a BA in English Literature and African American Studies (Minor) from Loyola University of Chicago. She currently has a studio and is a teaching artist at Hyde Park Art Center.

Hyde Park **ART**CENTER

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Rhonda Wheatley: *A Modern Day Shaman's Hybrid Devices, Power Objects, and Cure Books*

Cleve E. Carney Gallery

February 12 - May 7, 2017



Focus/Meditation Piece. Devours and transmutes negative energy that's ready to be released. For self-use only., 2015, Vintage candle holder, driftwood, barnacle cluster, polymer clay, snake skin sheddings, hand-cut paper, modeling paste, and acrylic paint, 9 x 6 x 6 inches.

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Glass bottles, pages of handwritten notes, tables scattered with crystals, and vintage electronics decorate Rhonda Wheatley’s studio during her Teaching Artist Residency at Hyde Park Art Center. The space is warm and light-filled, and the objects seem to vibrate with a positive energy. The prolific writer and visual artist creates sculptures from found objects and natural materials, each piece infused with an otherworldliness and tapping into the spirituality in us all.

Resin-based elixirs, filled with herbs, polypore mushrooms, plants, crystals, bones, fossils, and cicadas, target basic life issues and act as an entry point for visitors who don’t consider themselves particularly in tune with their subconscious. Combining these elements breathes into them new life. The resin acts as a method of preservation, compressing the energy found within, so that it continues to reverberate. One “potion” contains ingredients to quell confusion, while another manifests as a truth serum, encouraging self-reflection and teaching viewers to be honest with themselves. Categorized as **Power Objects** within Wheatley’s body of work, these elixirs are consumed through gazing, a form of photosynthesis for the mind. Through this process of osmosis, we are able to hone our personal power. The objects may trigger a shift in a viewer’s understanding but it is merely a catalyst. The real healing comes from within.

As a writer, Wheatley uses the titles of her visual work as a disclaimer, for example, *Power and Energy Amplifier. Increases power and healing energy one receives and/or sends to others.*, which acts a directive, guiding the viewer in their understanding. The mannequin’s outstretched hand represents a bond between the healer and the subject of the healing, depicting a personal connection. Crystals affixed to the piece amplify the intention, while the barnacle cluster enhances one’s ability to adhere to intended personal changes, in this case, assisting the subject in their personal journey to heal.



Power and Energy Amplifier. Increases power and healing energy one receives and/or sends to others., 2015, Found object, barnacle cluster, titanium quartz crystals, cactus wood, and acrylic paint, 8 x 9 x 5 inches.

Icosahedrons, pentagons, and other complex angled shapes repeat in gems and drawings in Wheatley’s work and act as a metaphor for the crystal grid, a geometric pattern of natural stones used to direct energy to achieve a specific goal. This repetition of symmetrical forms in combination with plants and nature used to channel the viewer’s movement beyond time and space likens Wheatley’s work to representations of divine knowledge and travel in Afrofuturism. For instance, *Quantum Projector* engages the viewer in the act of anticipating the future to avoid bad situations. Perhaps this work can be utilized to protect bodies of color, seeing and

While Power Objects resolve surface level issues that arise in everyday life, Wheatley’s **Hybrid Devices** are geared towards advanced souls. These sculptural works dig deeper, juxtaposing vintage technology with crystals or plant life, and challenging the viewer to delve into subconscious thought. Wheatley’s *Quantum Projector*, a radio topped by a vintage View-Master projector, functions as a tool for spectators to channel ideas and see how current experiences will affect the future. The “input” is the visitor’s thought and the “output” manifests as an idea revealing a snapshot of future possibilities. Wheatley states, “This device lets users test out choices and understand streams of reverberating possible outcomes and consequences that may result from these choices.” However, this piece comes with a warning: “The future is a moving target, and all projected outcomes are subject to change due to all involved parties’ free will.”

preventing violence before it occurs and reducing the senseless killings that remain rooted in historical prejudice and that are fostered by the inherent racism built into institutional systems. Perhaps as a black woman, Wheatley is creating this piece as a way to safeguard future generations and channel positive energy for individual and collective social healing.

Beyond Afrofuturism, these sculptures perch at the intersections of spirituality and Surrealism. The Hybrid Devices and their use of vintage electronics to access the subconscious are akin to the paintings of Salvador Dalí. Dalí was fascinated in Sigmund Freud’s analyses of psychology and drew on his dreams for the content of his work. In what is considered his most well-known work, *The Persistence of Memory*, he painted melting clocks to symbolize the passage of time, referencing the past, present and future. Like Dalí, Wheatley is constantly accessing her inner dialogue and dreams to discover the thoughts of her subconscious, which she in turn uses to inform her practice. *Dream Journeying Device*, an installation comprised of a modern era clock radio, three vintage cameras (two hand-held video cameras and one film) are a gateway to other dimensions. The flashbulb that was once attached to the film camera has been replaced by a vintage vacuum tube. Vacuum tubes are amplifiers of power and energy, this particular one, in combination with the other objects in *Dream Journeying Device*, heightening one’s ability to remember dream experiences. The video cameras provide access to dream dimensions, enhancing life experiences, bringing us closer to “real reality,” and reinterpreting what we as humans are unable to comprehend with our conscious minds. This device assists in expanding dream experiences, enabling users to better understand their meanings, and triggering memories of forgotten dreams. Being cognizant of our dreams acts as a form of emotional release, helping us to process fears and receive visitations from the deceased, as well as better comprehend premonitory messages.

Cure Books, the final element of this exhibition, also tap into the hidden meanings of dreams. Rhonda fills the pages of these books — vintage publications collected from estate sales and thrift stores — with her personal writings. She records ideas, experiences, and dreams, while also emphasizing the sections of text and imagery to which she is naturally drawn. This act of journaling not only helps when recalling memories, but also makes the writer, Wheatley in this case, more in tune to future dreams. Through this process, dreamers are able to hone recollection abilities during consciousness. Her journaling gives us insight into the subconscious mind of the artist and the shamanic practices that inspire her process of creation.

A Modern Day Shaman’s Hybrid Devices, Power Objects, and Cure Books is an exhibition that explores the layers of possibility that emerge from repurposing vintage and found objects, using these materials to encourage audiences to trust their intuition. Through her work, Rhonda Wheatley places viewers on a journey of self-discovery. These sculptural devices not only assist with the healing process through visual consumption, they also challenge viewers to develop an awareness of their subconsciouses. In doing so, we become more mindful of our actions and more receptive to understanding the ways others perceive us.

Lauren Leving
Curatorial Fellow



Quantum Projector, 2017, Vintage clock radio, vintage View-Master projector, holographic paper, and collage, 24 x 15 x 10 inches.