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515 W 26TH STREET
NEW YORK NY 10001

designboom

Bijoy Jain speaks about scale, skill, time, and craft for Friedman Benda's 'Design in Dialogue'

By Nina Azzarello
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on april 1, 2020, new york gallery **friedman benda** initiated a series of online interviews aimed at connecting individuals across the world with leading voices in the creative field. *design in dialogue* is a conversational program hosted alternately by curator and historian **glenn adamson** and designer **stephen burks** that engages with designers, makers, critics, and curators as they reflect on their careers and creative processes. against the backdrop of **COVID-19** and global lockdowns, the conversations are held virtually on zoom for 1 hour for anyone in the world to tune in to, and include a participatory Q&A with the audience in attendance. friedman benda has since presented more than 40 episodes, and will continue with a lineup of future guests, each offering unparalleled insight into the sensibilities, musings, and memories of today's creative protagonists. **see our recent feature of [patricia urquiola's conversation about her prolific and powerful oeuvre](#), and [daniel arsham's discussion on the dissolution of architecture and time](#).**

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on august 12, *design in dialogue* welcomed indian architect bijoy jain, founder of architectural practice **studio mumbai**, in a conversation with glenn adamson about his philosophy of practice — a notion he bases on the considerations of **local expertise, craft, and patterns of life**. following a fascinating and intimate virtual tour of his own studio, which he narrated himself, the architect discussed a range of projects from building to object scale, which draw on a global palette of forms, materials and skills.

watch the full video interview at the top of the page and stay tuned as designboom continues to share *design in dialogue* features. see all past episodes — and RSVP for upcoming ones — [here](#).



gandhara study | | image courtesy of maniera. read more on designboom [here](#)

jain's work — both on an architectural and intimate scale — is deeply rooted in individual expertise, craftsmanship and the strong relationships he fosters with the artisans he collaborates with. *'I don't give instructions — it's more a framework...a story,'* he says on how he shares the origins of his ideas with them. it's a two-way process of artistic collaboration that is reciprocally rewarding, intensely valued, and filled with ongoing learning. *'it's finding, in this mutual communication, a discovery of what is*

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possible in this field — finding a space that is new to all of us. it's only when you discover that you learn — otherwise it's repetition or just refining something. that's part of the reason why it's a continuing process.'



a behind-the-scenes look tools and trades, which jain showed as part of his presentation with friedman benda. image courtesy of studio mumbai and friedman benda

the theme of *time* emerged as an important point of discussion for jain, who recognized its intense connection to his practice. *'I'm really connected to the idea of the moon,' he says, 'that's something I recognize within myself — the idea of lunar time. lunar time is embedded within all of us — it's our fundamental DNA, we've come from that. it's inherent. greenwich mean time (GMT) then came in when we were controlling the seas and water. it has a different ideology, and a different basis of existence. that's our cultural basis today, and over a long period of time, that too is embedded in our DNA.*

for me, it's the idea of understanding the essence of what these two times mean to us. one's a lunar flow — we are bodies of water at the end of the day; that's our physical structure, and we resonate and respond to that. simultaneously you have things that are

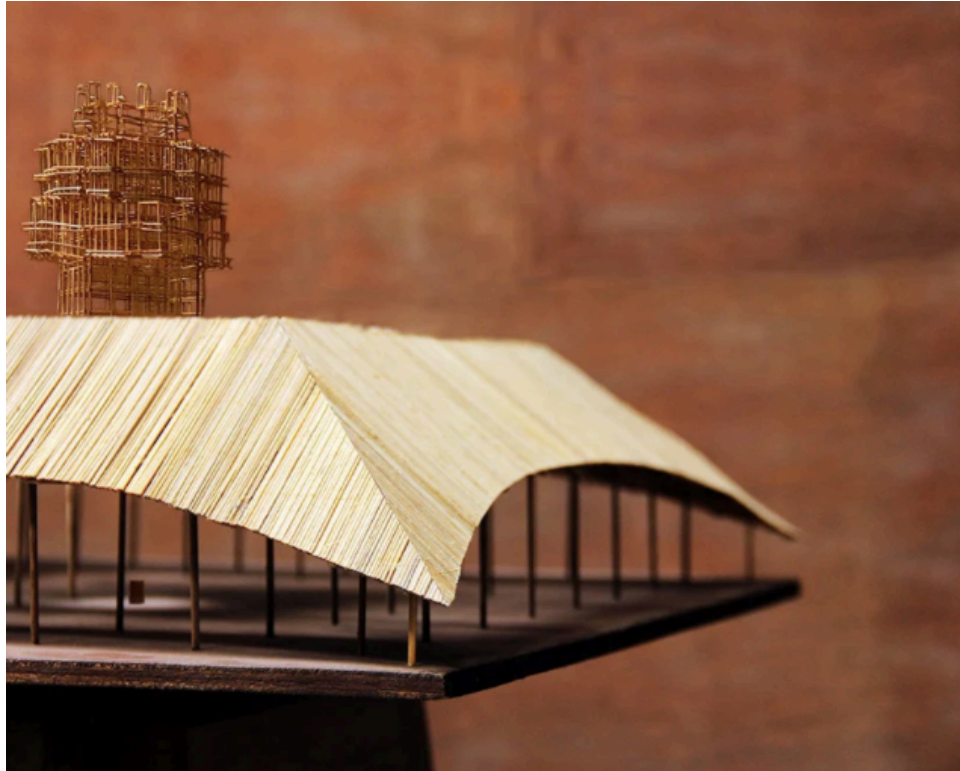
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about control, and time, and efficiency. my practice is about negotiating these nuances. that's really the most essential part of what I do.'



jain's design for the 2016 MPavilion comprised a sprawling bamboo structure | image © john gollings. read more on designboom [here](#)

in thinking about time, jain discussed the impressions that the pandemic has left on his practice, and reflects on what he calls a 'cultural erosion' that the world is now confronted with. *'what's been interesting is the discipline of my practice has been in the production of doing one thing every day. has my practice changed? no, my practice remains exactly the way it has before all of this transpired. it's more about adjusting in terms of agility, resilience, response time, and speed. so — how do I cover distance in time with a certain agility? for me the practice is about that exercise. the whole idea of the practice has been slowed, because everything that we've been going through is going to take time to reverse — it's not just going to happen overnight, or in one day. the idea of 'what's next?', if someone asks the question, is how to slow the erosion down. it's only by slowing this erosion down that a transformation can occur, and hopefully on the other side...'*



jain and a team of craftsmen tested the MPavilion through a series of models and full-scale prototypes. [read more on designboom here](#)



studio mumbai drew on traditional indian craft using brick and bamboo to hand-make furniture for maniera. image © [filip dujardin](#), courtesy of maniera I [read more on designboom here](#)

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jain's 'brick studies' explore the possibilities of adapting industrial building material to a more intimate scale. image © filip dujardin, courtesy of maniera I read more on designboom [here](#)



details of brickwork from jain's presentation with friedman benda. image courtesy of studio mumbai and friedman benda

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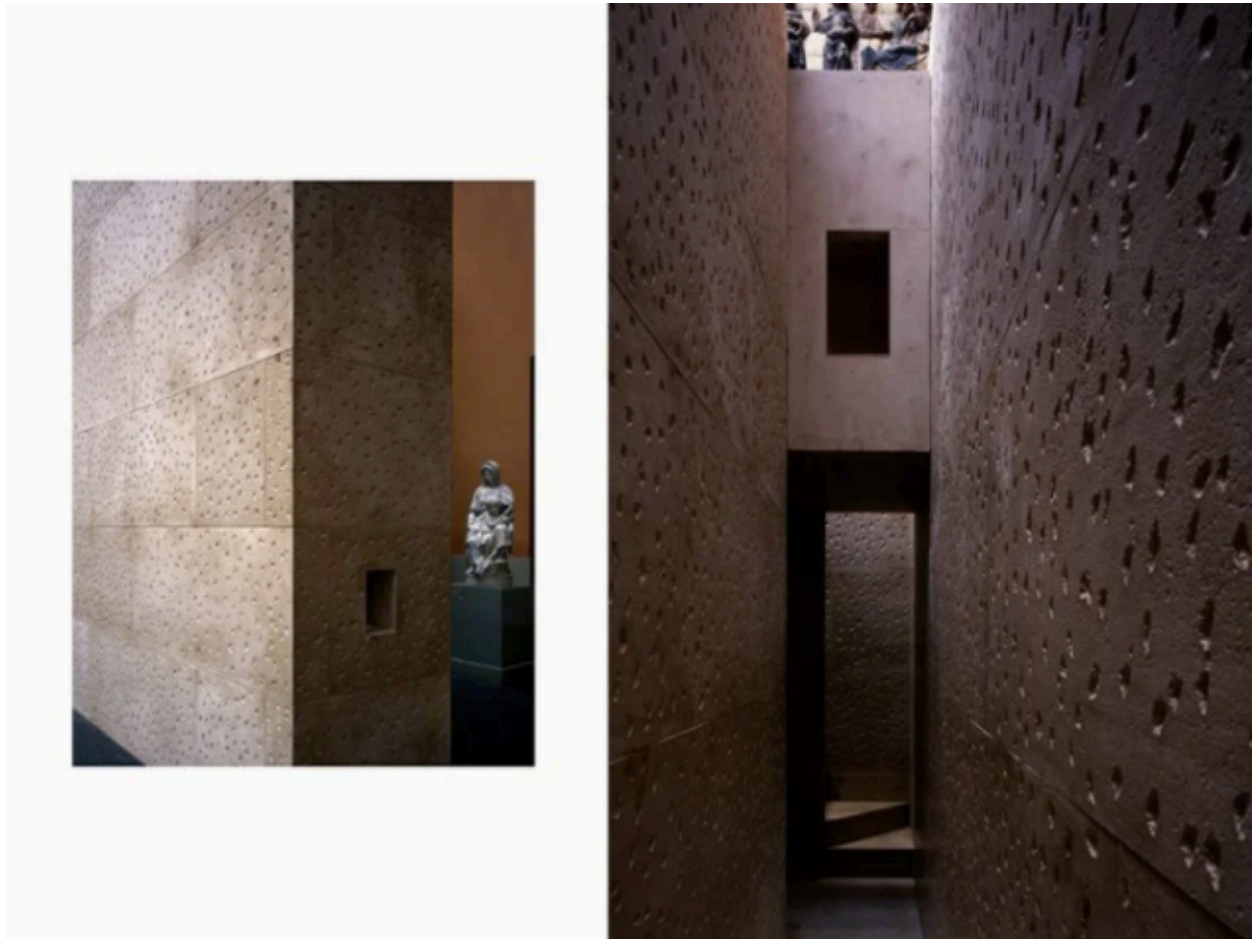


at the 2016 venice architecture biennale, studio mumbai presented a series of studies titled 'immediate landscapes'. read more on designboom [here](#)



a series of open-air wooden structures presented at the national museum of modern art in tokyo. image © studio mumbai, courtesy of MOMAT I read more on designboom [here](#)

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‘in-between architecture’, an installation at the V&A museum in 2010 I read more on designboom [here](#). image from presentation with friedman benda, courtesy of studio mumbai and friedman benda



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portrait of bijoy jain. image courtesy of friedman benda

design in dialogue is a series of online interviews presented by new york-based gallery **friedman benda** that highlights leading voices from the field — **designers, makers, critics, and curators** — as they discuss their work and ideas. hosted alternately by curator and historian glenn adamson and designer stephen burks, the conversations are held on zoom for 1 hour and include a participatory Q&A.

watch the full video interview with iris van herpen at the top of the page and stay tuned as designboom continues to share *design in dialogue* features. see all past episodes — and RSVP for upcoming ones — [here](#).

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