

FRIEDMAN BENDA
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designboom

Pedro Reyes + Carla Fernández on Practice and Personal Life for Friedman Benda's 'Design in Dialogue'

By Nina Azzarello
September 15, 2020



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 ekene ijeoma on his practice of drawing and sculpting with data](#), and [NGV curators simone leamon and ewan mceoin on commissioning creativity](#).

Nina Azzarello, "Pedro Reyes + Carla Fernández on Practice and Personal Life for Friedman Benda's 'Design in Dialogue'," *Designboom*, September 15, 2020.

on september 11, *design in dialogue* welcomed artist [pedro reyes](#) and fashion designer [carla fernández](#) — the cross-disciplinary creative couple from mexico. while they foster a focus on different practices, the duo express similar themes and concerns across their work, often tackling topics such as social values in communities, mexican indigenous cultures, and human interaction in the digital age. in a conversation with stephen burks from their celebrated self-designed home and laboratory, reyes and fernández presented their individual practices and shared projects.

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](#).



inside pedro reyes and carla fernández's home in mexico | image © designboom. read more on designboom [here](#)

located in coyoacán, the home of [reyes](#) and [fernández](#) is a deeply personal wunderkammer of artifacts, design objects, publications, and sculpture that was designed by the couple as a reflection of themselves. flexible and adaptable, almost like an exhibition space, the centerpiece of the site — which also houses reyes' studio — is a large, open, multi-level living area with custom concrete details that accommodate a

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seemingly endless sprawl of books. *'there was a structure that housed a pool, a large pool,' reyes says on the origins of the site. 'we demolished half of it, but kept the main space. it's interesting that probably if the design process would have been from scratch, we would not have thought of such a large living room. when we saw the place where the pool was, it was very attractive because we hoard books in a compulsive way. every week there's a new hundred books that enter the library, and we need a lot of space! so the idea was to have a single space where all the books could be organized — the bookshelves are made in concrete, and everything is concrete cast on site.'*



the artists' home is an ever-evolving architectural and interior project | image © designboom. read more on designboom [here](#)

reyes went on to describe how having his studio at home has allowed for a greater sense of engagement and participation in his sculptural practice, and how he fluidly interprets the discipline across his furniture, architecture and artistic projects. his furniture designs — which include tables rendered in volcanic stone and chairs in concrete — have an unmistakable raw quality that is highly sculptural, and breaks down the boundaries between different disciplines. *'sculpture is a practice is that you are making decisions every minute that you are working on a piece. it really changes the process to be able to do it here, as it's a studio-based practice. it has made my life much happier to be able to work from home like this. I am an architect by training, and then I started a career in art, so for me, furniture design and architecture have always been my main*

inspirations for making art. I think that there are sculptures that are functional, and others that are not, but I really don't draw a line between the two practices.'



the site also houses reyes' workshop and studio | image © designboom. read more on designboom [here](#)

fernández's fashion design practice is deeply rooted in the preservation and revitalization of the textile legacy of indigenous and mestizo communities of mexico. typically working from her studio in mexico city, (but currently in an reconfigured part of the home due to COVID-19), fernández and her team visit communities of artisans who specialize in handmade textiles and centuries-old techniques. she actively engages in creative collaboration with them — from embroidery to manual weaving — in every aspect of the design and production of her new collections. *'we work on fashion with people that you think would not work within the fashion system that most of us know,' fernández says of her progressive approach to ethical fashion. 'we work with a lot of indigenous women, which for me are the best designers in mexico. since I as very young, I've understood that they are the most amazing designers and textile weavers— they are fantastic. so I had two choices: one was to only be inspired by the amazing craft of my country; and the second one was to work together these amazing artisans. obviously I chose the second. we can prove that another fashion system is possible.'*



pedro reyes, metate chair II, 2018 | volcanic stone | 70 x 45 x 58 cm



pedro reyes, mano-sillas II, 2019 | salam and painted steel | 89 x 62 x 74 cm

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pedro reyes, silla mitla, 2019 | red concrete | 45 x 54 x 80 cm

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carla fernández: manifesto of fashion as resistance. image by graciela iturbide

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fernández's studio works with artisans from all over Mexico specialized in creating textiles and handcrafts



fernández's F/W 2017 collection forms part of the studio's ethical manifesto

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portrait of pedro reyes and carla fernández. image by ana hop, 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.

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