

FRIEDMAN BENDA
515 W 26TH STREET
NEW YORK NY 10001

SURFACE

Designer of the Day: Jonathan Trayte

With his razor-sharp wit, Jonathan Trayte mines our everyday surroundings for the surreal to create weird and wonderful objects that reflect on the universal language of consumerism. The British designer now debuts a body of tongue-in-cheek furnishings—inspired by hazy recollections of a road trip through the American Southwest—sedimentary rock formations, Joshua trees, lichens, silver cholla cacti, and prickly pear fruits are all funneled through his distinctive lens, forming an unforgettable hybrid of nature and artifice.

By Ryan Waddoups
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Here, we ask designers to take a selfie and give us an inside look at their life.



Age: 40

Occupation: Artist and designer.

Instagram: @jonathan_trayte

Hometown: Huddersfield, UK.

Studio location: Margate, UK.

Describe what you make: I'm an artist. I make lots of things. Some are useful—you can eat on them, sit and relax on them, or possibly bathe or sleep in them. Others project light or sound or both. Some move on their own volition and all it takes is a quarter to get them started.



Kula Sout (2020)

The most important thing you've designed to date: I had a museum exhibition a while back and the galleries were kind of dark with oak paneling on the walls and parquet floors throughout. So I put some light on my painted bronze assemblages to punctuate ambiance. This simple gesture completely transformed the way I think about making and using materials. I feel so happy to have found this in-between place where I can make whatever I want. It's so liberating to produce things that have a function, a purpose beyond a static sculptural gesture.

Describe the problem your work solves: Generally, my work makes more problems. It's a bit like having an estranged family member come over for Thanksgiving and then them staying for Christmas too...

Describe the project you are working on now: We just shipped a huge body of work to the U.S. for my show at Friedman Benda called "MelonMelonTangerine." It has been a challenge with everything going on, but I'm so happy to have managed despite this. Next, a really exciting hidden office installation, six dining chairs with bronze sausages for arm rests, two wonky chandeliers that look like tree roots, a stalky planter, three mirrors, some deliciously painted bronze melons, and a vanity that looks like it came from a gem catalogue and went to space.

A new or forthcoming project we should know about: “MelonMelonTangerine,” my solo exhibition at Friedman Benda, New York, which opens today through March 13.



MelonMelonTangerine (2019)

What you absolutely must have in your studio: Delicious things to eat are critical. My studio is a barn deep in the countryside and we work hard, so snack time is very important. Also a forklift and my TIG welder.

What you do when you're not working: Eat nice things and swim off Main Sands. When not travel-restricted, I'm exploring epic landscapes, doing day hikes with flasks of hot tea and sandwiches in the North, or cycling the Pyrenees.

Sources of creative envy: I love seeing the giant things that people have made, either as roadside attractions or simply just for fun in their backyards. It's a personal ambition of mine to contribute generously to this category.

The distraction you want to eliminate: Social media.



Atomic Double (2020)

Concrete or marble? Marble, though everything has a place and a purpose.

High-rise or townhouse? Neither. I'd rather a yurt, thanks...

Remember or forget? Remember. We're just a mere speck in time. Someday none of this will matter. This perspective helps me a lot with the day to day.

Aliens or ghosts? Aliens??!

Dark or light? We need both. You can't have one without the other.