

FRIEDMAN BENDA  
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# designboom

## Henrik Vibskov on Creative Crossover + Radical Experimentation 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 80 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 [andile dyalvane on ancestry and community](#), and [jonathan jackson on 'doing it all'](#).

Nina Azzarello, "Jonathan Jackson on Doing it All for Friedman Benda's 'Design in Dialogue'," *designboom*, January 19, 2021.

on december 18, 2020, design in dialogue welcomed danish fashion designer, artist, curator and musician henrik vibskov, whose visionary fashion shows, installations, and museum exhibitions have constantly surprised his diverse and growing fanbase. his work is known for its enticing universes and crossover into other art forms, and has seen radical experimentation in various fields including film, interiors, and performance. across a playful yet commercially independent studio practice that blurs the artistic, sexual, and sometimes functional boundaries of clothing, vibskov has designed over 40 unconventional menswear and womenswear collections since founding his eponymous label 20 years ago. in a conversation with stephen burks, vibskov delved into the creative roots that helped shape his unique identity, and took the audience through some of themes that feature throughout this practice.

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](#).



'popeye death by a thousand penises' I  
at 'fabricate', daelim art museum, seoul,  
south korea, 2015  
a large inflatable installation depicting  
the narrative of a 'man's man' killed by  
his own masculinity  
image by giorgio morra



henrik vibskov's multifaceted universe of amalgamated creative expression began with an early love of music — an artistic outlet that imparted cultural and creative influences that would come to shape his own identity. 'at the age of 10, I got a drum kit from my brother,' he remembers. 'I think his plan was for my big sister, big brother and I to have band together — my sister was pretty good at singing, but she didn't really want to join. so I've been playing drums for around 37 years. that was kind of my introduction to something other than mathematics and language. from there, I took off in all kinds of directions, and because I always played music, it became a way of finding myself. I was super shy, and I found a little bit of self confidence in music.'



'the 5 o'clock leg alignment' | AW17 collection at westin hotel, paris / østre gasværk, copenhagen (above), 2017

sports tracks with curving graphical lines, mind zones, striped sporting uniforms and old school games inspired vibskov for the AW17 collection. in a surreal show installation set-up, deformed yogis were aligned to perform a series of synchronized movements in a rusty red temple.  
image by alastair philip wiper

'through music, suddenly I noticed that the social circles I was part of were dressed in a certain way,' vibskov continues, in recalling his first encounters with fashion. 'there were certain codes of what films to see, what music to listen to. it was pretty dark — everyone was dressed in black, with black pointy shoes. there was a whole identity with music. I

went more wild into the techno world in the mid-to-late 90s, and started dressing with the fashion, and becoming very interested in fashion. I started sewing a few things myself out of some weird materials, like the skin from a water bed that was left over. I had furry shoes, and I started to wear skirts and had bedsheets covering me...I kind of dressed down over the years. (laughs)‘.



‘the transparent tongue’ | SS13 collection, lycée turgot, paris / kunsthall charlottenborg, copenhagen, 2012  
leading from a hole in the backdrop, a 10-meter length of fabric tongue covered in black taste buds lurked sinuously, ready to lick what lay ahead. activated by dancers emerging from various spots on the surface, a slow-motion cleaning performance began.  
image by tue juelsbo

expanding his education in fashion at central saint martins to become a myriad oeuvre of performance and installation art, film, and photography was an important process for vibskov that saw him slowly shape a unique identity. ‘at the beginning, I was mostly fashion and clothing focused. I ended up doing shows in paris, and I did a few where I was not feeling so...comfy. there were a lot of people telling me what I should do, and at some point, I was maybe slightly fed up — so I did a project with a massive performance installation with a lot of sculptures, and that was a game changer in my



way of doing presentations. it led into all kinds of other requests about doing things at museums, installations, theaters, and costumes, but it took a while for me to kind of find a way. when I said I was working in fashion, some people didn't take me super seriously as a creative person. I think I had a big need to express myself.'



'fragile soap bodies' | 'neck plus ultra', solo exhibition at galerie des galeries, paris / kunstforeningen gl. strand, copenhagen, 2013  
a photo series exploring new bodies by inspecting it through soap and water executed in collaboration with photographer, thomas jessen.  
image by alastair philip wiper

for vibskov, creative expression is something visceral and almost compulsory, and the stimulus of his ideas is not something he tries to dwell on — it's all about making. 'inspiration is not something you turn off,' he says. 'it sometimes happens at night, sometimes it's intuitive, or something that happens with the team...I try not to analyze too much what I'm doing. it's just about being as creative and productive as possible. sometimes I feel that I'm wasting my time. I'm not here forever, and I have to express as much and possible and get it out somehow.'



'the repetitive clean' | 'everyday life—signs of awareness', 21st century museum of contemporary art, kanazawa, japan, 2017

this installation contextualized one of the most common daily routines, known to us all, regardless of individual cultural background – dishwashing. the installation became an unusual everyday ritual that the audience identified with, demonstrating how dishwashing can be either a monologue or a dialogue, and sometimes even a meditative practice.

image by tadashi okazaki



mindcraft17 installation at haven, copenhagen, denmark, 2018 — image by morten rygaard

Nina Azzarello, "Jonathan Jackson on Doing it All for Friedman Benda's 'Design in Dialogue'," *designboom*, January 19, 2021.





'the onion farm' | installation for victoria and albert museum as part of london design festival, england, 2018

the length of the room inspired vibskov to create an installation measuring some 25 meters from end to end. the result came out as the onion farm, a light, dynamic structure reminiscent of the game of mikado, clattering down the gallery.

image by andy stagg

Nina Azzarello, "Jonathan Jackson on Doing it All for Friedman Benda's 'Design in Dialogue'," *designboom*, January 19, 2021.



erreur surprises (surprise mistakes) | one-week workshop at domaine de boisbuchet, france, 2016  
 in the summer of 2016 vibskov ran the domaine de boisbuchet workshop, at the estate in france. the five-day meeting in the boisbuchet grounds with vibskov's creativity led to an emotional performance called surprise mistakes – a rhythmic sway of the participants as 'ghost riders', waltzing around a strange circular hole in the ground, designed the year before by architect, go hasegawa.  
 image by ingebjörg kårestad





klangstoffer (tonal textiles)

stage design and costumes for three textile concerts by ensemble midtvest at heart: herning museum of contemporary art, denmark, 2013

in collaboration with laptop composer jacob riis, vibskov created a concert inspired by old knitting machines.

image by ole jørgensen

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portrait of henrik vibskov, courtesy of friedman benda

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