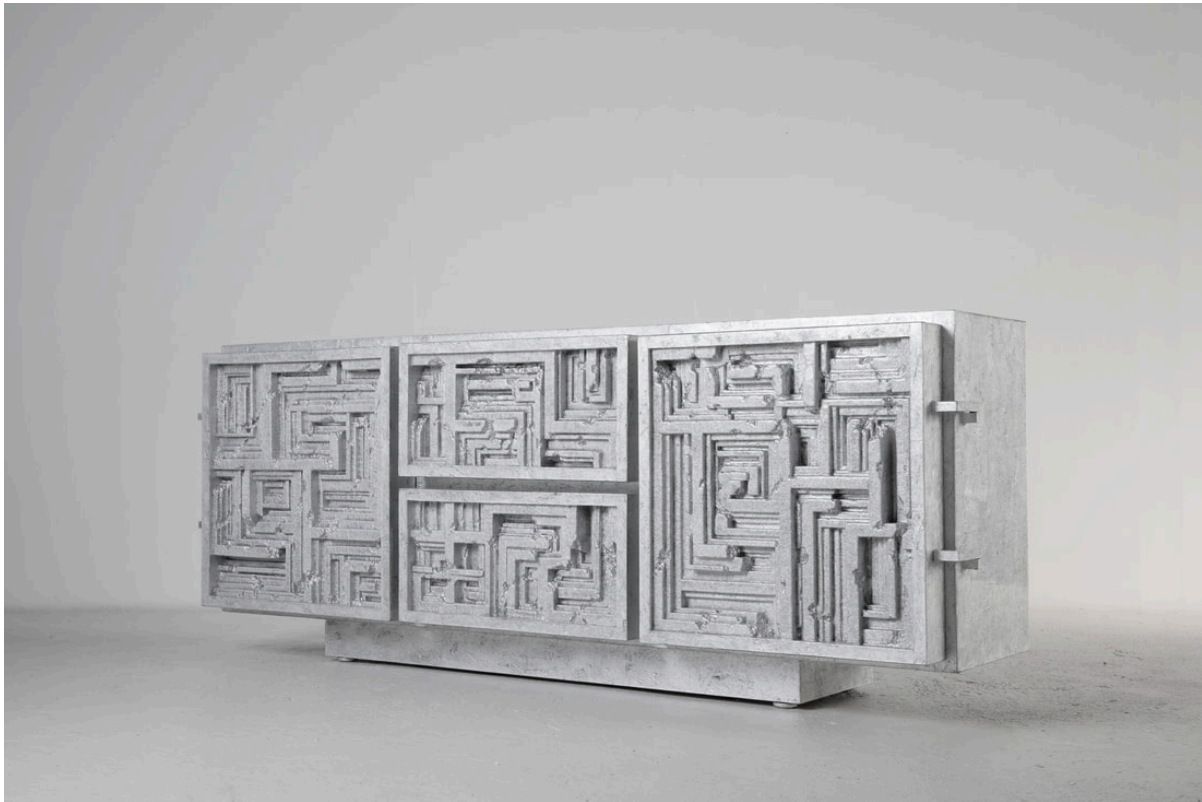


Daniella on Design

Chris Schanck: Unhomely

3/1/2018



Visiting the newly-opened solo exhibition “Unhomely,” of Detroit-based designer Chris Schanck at Friedman Benda, is identical to visiting a fine art show. The pieces which look like jewels, precious sculptures crafted of non-precious and found materials, cannot be simply understood as functional objects. It is when you understand the story, that you can find the humanizing perspective which is moving and intriguing, because the exhibition manifests an image of Schanck's personal life. There are layers and layers that one can discover once digging into the meaning, the narrative, the craftsmanship. Each one has its story, each is unique, personal, one-off, each represents hundreds or thousands of hours of labor, and each features a piece of biography. I was not surprised to learn from Chris that he began the journey into this innovative technique and use of materials while a student at Cranbrook Academy of Art, because it is complex, refined, and polished, demonstrating skill and proficiency. He has made it his own. Beyond the craftsmanship that incorporates metals, wood, and packing materials, all carefully veneered in metal foil and resin, the stories and symbols make these pieces even deeper, more captivating and imaginative, stimulate you to absorb them all. 'Banglatown' tells the story of an enormous community of Bangla famously settled in Detroit; 'Oubliette' is homage to Frank Lloyd Wright,

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whose presence in Detroit has been particularly strong; 'Decobot,' a small take in the form of an engine, is about the state's automobile industry; and 'Gold 900' crafted of wood found on the premises of the studio is about the studio. I found that the more bold and abstract the pieces, the more successful they are. Chris Schanck's pieces are more than simple hybrids of sculpture and furniture, they are brutalist and soft; whimsical and authentic; comprising fantasy and reality; future and present; irregular and sleek; vernacular and diverse; they are pieces of contemporary art.





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