

CULTURED

CAMPANA BROTHERS: MASTERS OF REINVENTION

DESIGN | SEP 2017 | BY BROOK S. MASON



Humberto Campana. Portrait by Dan Kukla.

The São Paulo-based brothers Humberto and Fernando Campana have long been making waves in the global design arena. And when it comes to their latest endeavors, their multi-dimensional talents are front and center as they have created an entire new editioned body of work on view at Friedman Benda in Chelsea.

What makes their new body of work featured in the exhibition “Fernando and Humberto Campana: Hybridism” so dramatically different? “They’ve gone beyond design as solely functional to a sculptural approach that is highly personal as they turn

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to their everyday surroundings for inspiration while assembling different elements," says Marc Benda. "At the same time their point of departure is a commentary on what is happening in the world." The exhibition will feature one distinct piece from each studio practice and will look discretely at each designer's process, highlighting their major contributions to contemporary design. Additionally, documentation in the form of drawings, sketches, videos and models will accompany the work on view.



A case in point is their *Noah Wall Shelf*, which at first seems to owe its origins to an ornate Baroque console, but tells of their predilection for a hybrid nature. The aluminum base is cast from the shapes of plush toy dolphins, alligators and dogs along with dismembered dolls telling of the dire effects of climate change, yet the entire assemblage is poised on a single bird symbolizing both fragility and strength. The bronze top of the console is cast skin from the Pirarucu, the world's largest freshwater fish.

"There's a sense of the surreal in that the animals are all upside down and that's the disquieting effect we achieved to throw into light these perilous times," says Humberto. "It's a response to the current political and social upheaval in Brazil and around the world."

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Nearby the *Noah Bench* is a quixotic take on a routine sofa—the only piece in the exhibition made up of assorted cast aluminum plush animals. Other sofas on view feature legs cast from twigs and branches Humberto collected during his daily jogs through São Paulo parks. “For the upholstery we invented a new weaving technique in which we had artisans insert plastic tubes into the fabric, which gives it resistance,” says Humberto, who continues to work with artisans in city slums.

Elsewhere are vases and candlesticks in cast bronze, iron, and aluminum, which are also hybrid sculptures of fish, dogs, gorillas and other animals from “Noah’s Ark.”

Photography by Dan Kukla

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