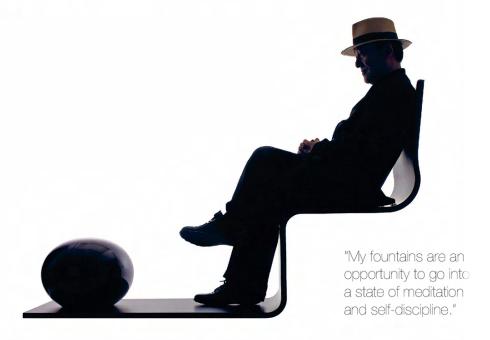


Salt of the Earth

Korean designer Byung Hoon Choi presents an earthly new show at Friedman Benda.

BY STEPHEN WALLIS



inspired by calligraphic brushstrokes, with parts of and self-discipline." their surfaces left raw and others polished to a lustrous black sheen. "We wanted to inspire Choi to lacquer, marking the first time in Choi's career—one work at a more ambitious scale and with different — that spans more than 35 years—that he has utilized materials," says Friedman Benda partner Jennifer the material, as he puts it, "in earnest." Biomorphic Olshin, "And having a show in a gallery like ours gave tabletops, cut from red oak, are lacquered to the engagement and an open mind, "These are pieces him the freedom to explore-to create works that have an ambiguity, raising the age-old question of delicately atop rounded bases of natural stone. The intellectual depth. They need a person to complete whether his gem-like objects are furniture or reductive character of the forms masks just how

to Friedman Benda this month with a dozen new 20 hand-brushed layers for each piece, producing fully get your head around it."

Elemental yet enigmatic, muscular yet pieces that will be on view through December 17. rich, almost aqueous effects. exquisitely refined, the Minimalist creations of South Once again he is working extensively with basalt, but Korean designer Byung Hoon Choi are anything but the central theme this time is water—literally and used it to create shallow basins, some freestanding, simple. Marrying East Asian traditions with a metaphorically. The largest works are three basalt Modernist sensibility, his sculptural furnishings in fountains (one standing nearly seven and a half feet stone, wood and metal are studies in harmony and tall) with gentle cascades running along smooth, balance, often combining contrasting materials and dark channels carved into their sides. "In the East, textures in evocative ways. For his first-ever solo there is a saying that the highest good is like water," show in the U.S., at New York's Friedman Benda remarks Choi. "Many scholars gained the wisdom of gallery in 2014, Choi presented a series of benches life while watching flowing water, and my fountains carved from huge basalt blocks into lyrical forms are an opportunity to go into a state of meditation

The other defining element of the show is glossy smoothness of river pebbles and balanced labor-intensive these pieces are. Choi worked with a Choi, who lives and teaches in Seoul, returns master of traditional Korean lacquer to apply up to

Because lacquer is also water-resistant, Choi others set into the tops of tables. And when they are filled, the shimmering surfaces of lacquer and liquid converge seamlessly. It's the kind of poetic gesture that defines so much of Choi's work, with its close links to Eastern notions of contemplation, reflection and inner stillness. For nearly 20 years, the designer has given most of his creations the title Afterimage. which he explains "signifies an imaginary and mystical encounter with a previous world not yet encountered." Passing through the cycles of life, we are connected to all things, even those that we are not immediately conscious of

As Olshin notes, Choi's work invites thoughtful for people who enjoy both the aesthetic and them-to sit on them, look at their reflection," she says. "The work is not easy and instantly graspable. If you like it, you like it in part because you can never

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