

whitewaller



EREZ NEVI PANA

By Katy Donoghue

Erez Nevi Pana was raised learning how to plant, cultivate, and arrange the flowers in the nursery where his parents worked. That early immersion in nature threads through to his current design practice, guided by a higher state of consciousness.

His current show at Friedman Benda gallery presents objects—made from materials like salt, asphalt, and natural fibers—that all relate to issues of sustainability in the environment. *Whitewaller* spoke with the artist about searching for spirituality inside and outside the studio.

WHITEWALLER: You were raised on the grounds of a plant nursery. How did that inform your design and artistic practice?

EREZ NEVI PANA: The attraction I have toward natural materials is obviously related to this. Now instead of growing flowers and plants, I'm growing objects.

WW: While at the Design Academy Eindhoven, you focused on the recrystallization of salt. How did this become an interest of yours?

ENP: The Dead Sea has always fascinated me. I came to Israel for a short vacation, and I saw this white mountain in the middle of nowhere that piqued my curiosity. When I realized that it was a mountain of neglected salt (a by-product of the manic production of potash and bromine extracted from the water of the Dead Sea), I decided I would embrace this material and try to search for ways to make it desirable again.

I ended up with the creation of marble-like, beautiful, white, shining surfaces made from 100 percent pure sea salt, and I named it "marble for the poor." I suggested covering a new building by Frank Gehry, which is being built in Arles with my salt tiles. The great response to the research brought more studies and experiments with salt and made me focus on additional applications for natural materials.

WW: For your upcoming show at Friedman Benda, the three series presented are made from salt, asphalt, and plant fibers—materials that each address problematic industrial practices in Israel and India. What

was the starting point for each series?

ENP: For the show at Friedman Benda, I am using loofah as a material that suctions, so the object is functioning as a salt pump that absorbs the salt. The loofah in the water look like coral that begins to bleach with the passage of time, a process that happens when the coral dies, just like the Dead Sea itself (which is currently in its worst state).

Contradicting the abundance of salt, the asphalt is a rare material that is stemming from the depths of the Dead Sea. The Egyptians used it in the mummification process and I'm using their technique—I cut my objects and reassemble them into their "afterlife" cycle—a totem-like structure warped with yarn and asphalt in order to preserve the new object and make it internal.

"Wasted" and "Unravel" are both related to practices in India. In "Wasted," I'm trying to comment on the garbage piling up in every corner. This project is a closer look at my own consumption and the remnants that I leave behind. It started with my idea to collect my trash to bring back home to recycle, and turned into a project that exposes discarded volumes of consumption in my journey, which are translated into a basket series made from bamboo and cashew nuts' shells. "Unravel" refers to a vegan process of silk production. It's more about morality, but I see these concepts go together as I believe that the environmental crisis is an expression of a spiritual crisis.



Photo: Y. Hoshino. Photo: Shiro and Eric Fajer Pana




Courtesy of Friedman Benda and Erez Nevi Pana. photo by Claudia Rutzinger.

Donoghue, Katy. "Erez Nevi Pana," *Whitewaller*, April 2018.

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WW: Your work comes from a personal exploration of your own spirituality. Can you tell us about that journey for you?

ENP: Aligned with the curiosity that leads me, I search for deeper meanings in my own existence, as well as for my role as a designer. I'm seeking a broader spirituality, one that brings people together, that sees the beauty in unity within diversity and that allows you to see what's beyond yourself. In addition, my PhD research on vegan design led me to acknowledge moral values, especially in those in Hinduism, which has opened the door to beautiful concepts such as ahimsa (nonviolence principles) and oneness.

As a creative person, my personal life is interwoven with my professional life—and instead of preaching, I'm practicing. By using the platform that the design world offers, I'm sharing a harmonious state of consciousness.



Photo by Claudia Rothkugel, courtesy of Friedman Benda and Erez Nevi Pana

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EREZ NEVI PANA

CONSCIOUSNESS

May 3–June 9



Photo by Claudia Rothblatt courtesy of Friedman Benda and Erez Nevi Pana.

Erez Nevi Pana's first solo show in the United States, "Consciousness," studies the impact of human interaction on the environment. Constructed from salt, asphalt, and plant fibers, the three series on view—"Bleached," "Wasted," and "Unravel"—interrupt, enhance, or combine naturally occurring processes. The highlight of the exhibition is "Bleached," a project motivated by the impact of mineral extraction in the Dead Sea, in which Nevi Pana allowed unnatural objects to crystallize like coral formations. In imitating human influence, the artist evokes "intangible blueprints of our consciousness," the way we mold our environment.

For more information, visit whitewall.art

78

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