



Why Architects Design Furniture

An exhibition at Friedman Benda highlights never-before-seen creations from some of history's most important architects

TEXT BY HANNAH MARTIN



An Eames cabinet, Gio Ponti cocktail table, and Frank Gehry chair star in "Inside the Walls," an exhibition of 20th-century furniture by architects at Friedman Benda, was curated by dealer Mark McDonald.

When a trio of women commissioned a shared Los Angeles home from Rudolph Schindler, the Austrian-born American architect presented his clients not only with a startlingly modern structure but with an innovative interior to match. The Van Patten House's prized contents? A cast of modular furniture designs Schindler called Units, which were in aesthetic keeping with the exterior's linear rigor.

Martin, Hannah. "What Will Furniture Look Like in the Future," *Architectural Digest*, September 28, 2017.

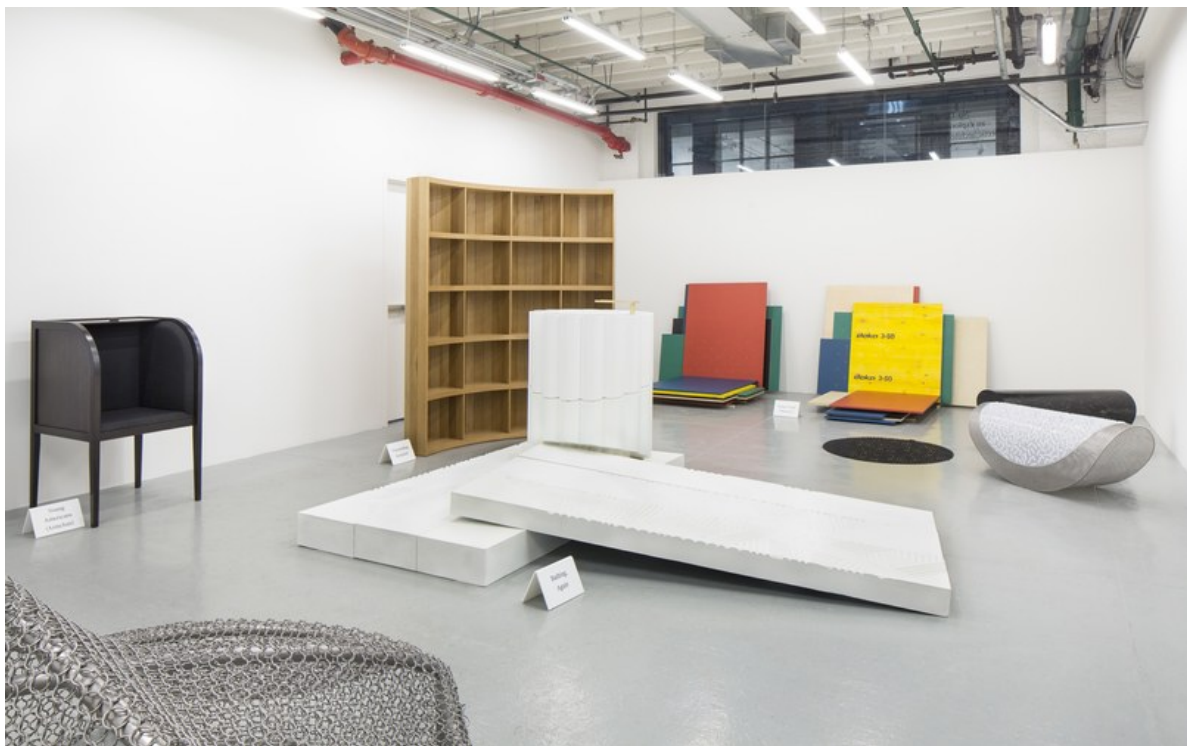
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It should be "impossible to tell where the house ends and the furniture begins," Schindler famously declared.

A chair and ottoman set from the Van Patten House joins a cache of never-before-seen designs by 20th-century architects such as Gerrit Rietveld, Philip Johnson, and Frank Lloyd Wright as part of *Inside these Walls*, an exhibition at New York gallery Friedman Benda curated by seasoned 20th-century design dealer Mark McDonald.

"Historically, the photographs were often taken of the exterior, and the furniture was not always concentrated on," explains McDonald of the show's contents, many of which were special commissions with limited production runs. "We wanted to show people these things they have never seen before and give them some context for how they looked in the spaces they were created for."

We see, for instance, an example of the cypress furniture crafted for Frank Lloyd Wright's Clarence Sondern House, in Kansas City, Missouri, alongside photography of the structure's original interior. A literal extension of the home's exterior architecture, its furniture was actually made out of leftover wood from the construction of the house.



Juan García Mosqueda's show, "No-Thing," at Friedman Benda.

In several cases, the pieces in the show are the only remaining relics of the interiors they once graced: a chair from a Charlotte Perriand–designed dormitory that no longer exists; a desk from a Louis Kahn house that was later redecorated.

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Arguably, the concept of an architect-ordained interior has become somewhat passé. McDonald admits: "If I had an architect build a house, I would certainly not want them to choose the furniture. But then again, I'm a furniture dealer."

But for a taste of how contemporary architects are taking on the concept of furniture design, look no further than the Friedman Benda basement, where curator Juan García Mosqueda has tapped nine of today's great architectural thinkers to distill their practice in a single, nominally functional object.

Of the "benches," "screens," and "chairs" that populate the gallery's more experimental space, García Mosqueda says: "Just by looking at one of these pieces you can see into their brain."

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