

In NY, Early Works by Ettore Sottsass

Marc Benda grew up in Zurich, surrounded by works of decorative art designed by Ettore Sottsass.

"A lot of people in our social circle owned objects made by him," he says. "His influence as a designer was huge."



Figure 1 Sottsass Tenebre Vass

Indeed. A native of Austria, Sottsass established his architecture practice in Milan after World War II, earning a reputation as a modernist and a well-respected theorist.

"Milan was a fertile ground for the cross fertilization of ideas during the postwar period," he says. "It was dominated by a handful of people and he was one of them."

Sottsass was heavily engaged in industrial design, eventually creating the bright red *Valentin* typewriter for Olivetti. He developed ceramics from his impressions of travels in India and the U.S., as well as lighting, furniture and enameled objects.

"Almost every piece was a sketch for the next – he was hugely curious, so each builds on the last," he says. "He achieved a counterpoint to modernism that was emotional, with an interest

in the human condition infused in his designs."

His style is an Italian take on modernism that's more playful than varies in material and is very sculptural. "It was made during a period of very radical thinking, when postwar Europe was redirecting itself and rethinking what it could do to make people's lives better," he says. "He was at the forefront."

Benda got to know the designer in the last five years of his life. During the past 10 years, he assembled a collection of Sottsass's early work, from 1955 to 1969. More than 100 pieces will be on display at the Friedman Benda gallery on West 26th Street in Chelsea, beginning Sept. 10.

"In NY, Early Works by Ettore Sottsass," Architects + Artisans. 04. JUN, 2015

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“His later work is hugely known but his early work is so rare, so what I’m doing is the ultimate show of his early work,” he says. “It’s a full and complete – almost kaleidoscopic view of his work during those years. You’d have to travel to Italy and France to see even a fraction of what I’m showing.”

Each piece will be for sale, priced anywhere from \$5,000 to \$500,000.

And – for work by a contemporary of Aalto and Scarpa – it’ll be worth every penny.

For more, go to <http://www.friedmanbenda.com/>

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