

METROPOLIS

Metropolis's Best of 2018: The 6 Objects and Exhibitions That Represented This Year

From a snake-sofa that unpacks the ethical implications of virtual reality to tapestries that speak to material innovation, these items reveal latent truths about the present moment.

By Anne Quito | December 24, 2018



No-Thing: An Exploration into Aporetic Architectural Furniture at Friedman Benda
Courtesy Dan Kukla/Friedman Benda

As 2018 concludes, we're revisiting the year's top stories: from products to drawings, buildings, controversies, and more. In this special selection, architecture and design writer Anne Quito took a deep dive into the year's best exhibition, distilling five insightful objects. Enjoy the selection below, but be sure to find our other "Best of 2018" lists as they come online!

If 2018 were an object, what would it look like? What would it feel like? And what would it say about design culture today? *Metropolis* surveyed museum exhibits, gallery shows, and pop-ups to find out. From a snake-sofa that unpacks the ethical

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implications of virtual reality to graphic tapestries that speak to material innovation, these five objects—all displayed this year—reveal latent truths about the present moment.



Courtesy Dan Kukla/Friedman Benda

MODEL FURNITURE

DESIGNERS: MOS Architects

EXHIBITION: *No-Thing: An Exploration into Aporetic Architectural Furniture* at Friedman Benda

CURATOR: Juan García Mosqueda

For a 2014 lecture at MIT, MOS Architects' Michael Meredith and Hilary Sample asked to be introduced as "misunderstood creative outcasts looking for an authentic expression in a world of hustlers and fakers." The duo revels in picking apart nested layers and facades—vital attitudes in the post-truth era. Their non-manifesto manifesto declares their intolerance for professional B.S.: "If given the choice between staring blankly into space or reading architects' office statements on their website, we choose the first."

MOS's table and stools for Juan García Mosqueda's exhibition of architect-made furniture similarly upends what one expects to see at a furniture showcase. Pieces from their series are based on the crude miniature prop furniture made for architectural models. "They're a sort of low-resolution representational default, a reduction to the bare qualities of an object," write MOS. The work "oscillates between reality, reference, and reality." *Model Furniture* urges viewers to probe further.

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Courtesy Karen & Josette/Friedman Benda and Najla El Zein

SEDUCTION

DESIGNER: Najla El Zein

EXHIBITION: *Women + Design: New Works* at the Dallas Museum of Art

CURATOR: Sarah Schleuning

It's fitting that Najla El Zein's *Seduction* sculpture debuted in 2018, a year when women's issues took center stage. Created for the Dallas Museum of Art's *Women + Design: New Works* exhibition (open through February 17, 2019), the reconfigurable work evokes the legs of a woman in repose—perhaps an odalisque. Depending on how the work's two pieces are placed, the crossed limbs can alternately appear inviting or aloof.

A young Beirut-based designer, El Zein is proving her mastery at infusing stark Modernism with emotion and eroticism. *Seduction* is the latest expression of her fascination with evocative, anthropomorphic objects: After graduating from École Camondo in Paris, El Zein gained headlines with a line of body brushes—"pleasure tools," she calls them—made of provocative materials like press-on fingernails, fake eyelashes, feathers, and hay. Last year, another project, a concrete bench titled *Distortion*, similarly elicited coos from critics, who were moved by its sleek and sensual curves.

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