

MARCH 6, 2017

These 6 Emerging Designers Are Redefining Ugly

By SU WU

A group of freewheeling young talents is crafting objects from trash, lumpy versions of the female form and deli meat-inspired fabric loafs.



Sean Donnola

Misha Kahn

In an era dominated by sleek, meticulously planned minimalism, Misha Kahn's disheveled, spontaneous maximalism feels like a swift kick. With irregular surfaces and amorphous shapes, his richly layered pieces in unorthodox combinations (bronze and trash, cement cast

Wu, Su. "These 6 Emerging Designers Are Redefining Ugly," *The New York Times Style Magazine*, March 6, 2017.

FRIEDMAN BENDA 515 W 26TH STREET NEW YORK NY 10001
FRIEDMANBENDA.COM TELEPHONE 212 239 8700 FAX 212 239 8760

into vinyl) are as cocky as Memphis, but rougher and less refined. A 12-foot-long mohair tapestry was inspired by the shape of Jell-O molds and is composed like a riverscape tableau; when the grasses from Swaziland he was using to make his enormous, cartoonish Scrappy cabinet grew too scarce due to drought, he mixed them with bits of garbage and colored sea glass, to masterful effect. “I think a lot of designers are really stubborn and feel like their job is to pursue their original idea to the end,” says Kahn, a proud supporter of the low-tech and the ad hoc. “I don’t see any merit in that.”

Born in Minnesota and now working in Brooklyn’s Bushwick neighborhood, Kahn, 27, has classified his aesthetic as “uncomfortable.” He is “always wondering if some level of visual chaos, a bit of frenzy and entanglement, can match our sort of spastic, chaotic minds and result in calmness.” In his studio, which he has described as a “weird, psychedelic jungle,” clear bins hold the makings of future projects, such as rubber bits of refuse warped by prolonged time in the ocean or plastic pellets cadged from the bag factory down the street. “Being surrounded by crap and clutter,” he says, “tells the story of your life.”

Wu, Su. “These 6 Emerging Designers Are Redefining Ugly,” *The New York Times Style Magazine*, March 6, 2017.

FRIEDMAN BENDA 515 W 26TH STREET NEW YORK NY 10001
FRIEDMANBENDA.COM TELEPHONE 212 239 8700 FAX 212 239 8760