

Wallpaper*

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Star signs: Misha Kahn creates a kaleidoscopic world at Friedman Benda

Art / 29 Feb 2016 / By John Gendall



For his new solo show at Friedman Benda in New York, 'Return of Saturn, Coming of Age in the 21st Century', artist Misha Kahn has created a space he describes as 'meant to encourage comfort with one's own mental chaos'

Gendall, John. "Star signs: Misha Kahn creates a kaleidoscopic world at Friedman Benda," *Wallpaper*, February 29, 2016.

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New York's Friedman Benda gallery plays host to two noteworthy exhibitions this month – 'Marcel Wanders: Portraits' and Misha Kahn's 'Return of Saturn, Coming of Age in the 21st Century'. The two prove to be quite the bookends: Wanders, the well-established designer whose restrained show is rendered in a dark palette becomes a foil for Kahn, who, at 26, is very much gaining a name of his own, with a very kaleidoscopic show he himself describes as something 'meant to encourage comfort with one's own mental chaos'.

The product of Kahn's imagination is a collection of everyday objects: stools, mirrors, lamps and tables. Each is brightly colored, and his choice of material steers far from convention. He has made a cabinet, for example, from banana leaves, grasses, cactus, bone and lavimisu. And it shows. *The Wild One China Cabinet* smells like a stable. The show's pièce de résistance, though, is *The Slippery Feel of Inevitability*, a hand-woven mohair tapestry that depicts a landscape made of Jell-O molds – again, brightly colored and apparently underwater.

The subtitle, 'Return of Saturn', speaks to Kahn's personal self-reflections. Pointing to astrological tradition, he explains that it takes 27 years for Saturn to return to the same position where it had been at the moment of a person's birth, making it a fruitful time to consider one's life, a place he considers himself to be now.

This is not an art-in-a-white-box kind of show. Kahn created an immersive environment, covering the floors in plywood tiles and the walls in a custom-made wallpaper depicting oranges at various stages of having been peeled. The wallpaper itself is also torn and partially peeled. 'I always thought peeling an orange was like ripping wallpaper,' he suggests. As for why he chose oranges? 'I thought they were like cosmic belly buttons. And I kind of liked the connection with the Medicis.'

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