

New exhibitions prove there's no furniture like architect-designed furniture

At NYC's Friedman Benda gallery, a visual feast for design lovers

By Jenny Xie | Jan 23, 2018, 4:30pm EST



"Inside the Walls" features architect-designed furniture, including, shown here: a coffee table by Gio Ponti, bookcase by Charlotte Perriand, chaise lounge by Frank Gehry, and floor lamp by Philip Johnson. *Photography by Dan Kukla courtesy of Friedman Benda*

The term "architectural" is often used to describe designs that boldly deploy lines and geometry, with a 3D quality that renders them sculptural and oh-so-striking. Sometimes it's applied to clothing and jewelry, other times pastry or floral arrangements. But perhaps the discipline where "architectural" seems almost to be expected is furniture—especially if they're designed by architects themselves.

The compelling idea of architect-designed furniture is the focus of two concurrent exhibitions now showing at the Friedman Benda gallery in New York City. *Inside the Walls: Architects Design*, curated by Mark McDonald, surveys pieces by key 20th-century architects from the U.S. and abroad, including Frank Lloyd Wright, Charles and Ray Eames, Lina Bo Bardi, Ettore Sottsass, and more.

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A parade of architect-designed chairs at *Inside the Walls*.

Architects' predilection for chairs are well explored in the show. Some pieces were designed for specific interiors (archival photos are there to prove it), like Frank Lloyd Wright's hard-to-miss oak-and-yellow "Peacock chair" for the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo and a Rudolph Schindler chair and ottoman combo for the Van Patten residence in Los Angeles. Others are more exploratory with no prescribed context, such as a rare Warren Platner prototype wire chair blending the support and seat into one.

The centerpiece of the show is a series of cantilevered exterior light fixtures from Frank Lloyd Wright's 1914 Francis W. Little House in Wayzata, Minnesota. Like seeing a car indoors, these outdoor fixtures look uncharacteristically large inside the gallery, making for a perfect opportunity to examine details of the design and craftsmanship.



Frank Lloyd Wright's exterior lights for the Francis W. Little House.

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Downstairs at *No-Thing: An Exploration into Aporetic Architectural Furniture*, curated by Juan García Mosqueda, we meet a collection of newly commissioned works by nine emerging architectural firms. This group of architect-designed pieces, no less dramatic, considers creating room for each user to interact with the object.

As the press release explains, “a no-thing situates itself between its users’ varied perspectives, educations, backgrounds, organizations, group- loyalties, affiliations, ideologies, socio-economic class interests, temperaments, and the architects’ open-ended project.”

Or as Mosqueda puts it, “Within this framework, where the objects truly emerge through affect, one is urged to take not solely a passive but an active role.”



No-Thing installed at Friedman Benda.

Inside the Walls and *No-Thing* are showing at Friedman Benda, 515 W. 26th St, until February 17, 2018. Most of the pieces included are for sale.

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