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## MARCEL WANDERS GETS FIRST-EVER SOLO GALLERY EXHIBITION AT FRIEDMAN BENDA

BY Jana Perkovic | February 19, 2016



Marcel Wanders: Tempter, 2016  
(Courtesy Friedman Benda)

New York design gallery Friedman Benda is to present the first solo gallery exhibition of Dutch designer Marcel Wanders, titled “Portraits.”

The designer was expelled from Design Academy Eindhoven and was labelled “Lady Gaga of Design” by the New York Times. His work is synonymous with an unbridled optimism and an uplifting spirit. He will express the more intimate side of his work in this exhibition, a “staging of imaginary characters interacting within a distorted fairytale.” The new works, organized according to a layered narrative, promises a depth of personal emotions rarely expressed in Wanders’ work.

Ever since his 1996 Knotted Chair for the Dutch design collective Droog brought him worldwide attention for its pairing of high-tech materials (aramid and carbon fiber cord) with a traditional technique of macramé, or hand-knotting, Wanders has been regarded as a welcome anomaly in the world of design. His work, driven by a mission to “create an environment of love, live with passion, and make our most

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exciting dreams come true,” is surprising, and sometimes polarizing, never less than daring. The Knotted Chair, which resembles a piece of netting that hangs mid-air in the shape of a chair by pure miracle, became one of the best-known design pieces of the 1990s, and helped propel Dutch design into the high regard it enjoys today.

The exhibition at Friedman Benda will form a “total environment” that includes distinct bodies of work. There are large abstract figural mirrors with carved details and cut outs, “Dysmorphophobia” 1, 2 and 3; a steel cabinet and kinetic piece “Self 2,” with a sculptural egg-shaped form balancing atop, resembling an abstract human head and physically rocking on the top surface; “Tempter,” an over-sized adult rocking unicorn cast in bronze; and “Shiqule Nuhai,” two monumentally high ceramic vases that reference Marcel Wanders’ Delft Blue collection, but with a darker sensibility, in black glaze. The exhibition will also include Wanders’ “Phoebe” video art, and hybrid lighting fixtures that were previously on view at the Stedelijk Museum.

“My design work has always been about positivity, respect, love, and trust. However, this output doesn’t fully represent me as a person,” says Wanders. “For me, it is almost important to produce work that explores a different sensitivity and addresses other aspects of my life and character, otherwise it would feel incomplete.”

Today, Wanders’ work is included in design collections of Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum in New York, MoMA, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, among others, while he has worked with brands such as Alessi, Swarovski, Puma, and Cappellini, which produced the Knotted Chair in a limited edition.

In 2001, the designer – who also has a degree in business – co-founded the Amsterdam-based brand Moooi, which has expanded in recent years to offer high-end design products to a broader market. Wanders recently branched out into architecture, joining the growing ranks of designers working on a project for a prefabricated house.

*“Portraits” will run from February 25 through April 9 at Friedman Benda, New York City.*

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