

whitewall



Benda and Marcel Wanders Studio
Photo by Andrew Meredith

MARCEL WANDERS' SPOOKY YET BLISSFUL VIDEO PORTRAITS

Friedman Benda is currently presenting “*Portraits*,” Dutch designer Marcel Wanders’ new solo show, up now through April 9. For this exhibit, Wanders adopted a radical approach, staging 24 pieces in a manner closer to art than design, immersing the viewer in a distorted fairy tale where multilayered narratives interplay.

The ultra-spooky but blissful “Athanasius” portrait videos of aging, animal-like faces composed of dried up petals that, as Wanders said, have been made “from death, but it comes alive,” beautifully composed and full of subtly modulating colors. “There’s a sense of nostalgia that serves the work,” he said.

The exhibition lies on a specific equilibrium between positivity and freakish clarity that manages to stay at safe distance from gullible candor—the atmosphere is dark, yet lively, intricate though light, mysterious but evocative. The large abstract figural mirrors *Dysmorphophobia 1, 2, and 3* with carved details and cut outs create the illusion of a humorous ghostly figure animating the wall on which it is hanging.

Boutboul, Charlotte. “Marcel Wanders’ Spooky Yet Blissful Video Portraits,” *Whitewall*, March 9, 2016.

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It would seem that the unresolved, multifaceted nature of the works are an attempt to reveal Wanders contradictions in pacifying ways. “Every portrait in the collection is a portrait of me, but not only of me,” Wanders said. “They are portraits of all of us.”

Tempter, an over-sized adult rocking unicorn is cast in bronze with metal chain stirrups, imbues the room with a surreal presence where the childlike becomes colossal. *Shiqule Nuhai*, two ceramic vases of monumental height, reference Marcel Wanders Delft Blue collection, his earlier contemporary take on traditional Chinese porcelain, with a darker sensibility, using black glaze. Also, the video art and hybrid lightning fixtures *Phoebe*, which were on view previously at the Stedelijk Museum, verge on futurist absurd fashion when presented worn on models.

Since the launch of his iconic knotted rope chair, which propelled him to international stardom in 1996, Wanders cofounded and runs the design label Moooi. Working with a wide variety of clients including Cappellini, Alessi, KLM-Royal Dutch Airlines, Magis, Google, Target, and M.A.C. cosmetics, the diversity of his body of work, ranges from fashion accessories to high-end hotels, and is represented in museums around the world, notably New York’s Museum of Modern Art and the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam.

CHARLOTTE BOUTBOUL | *March 9, 2016*

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