

Gaetano Pesce: Age of Contaminations

October 24 – December 14, 2019



Photo courtesy Friedman Benda gallery.

New York, NY (September 3, 2019) – Friedman Benda is pleased to present a critical survey of the Italian architect, designer and visionary Gaetano Pesce, examining the pivotal period of his career from 1968 to 1992. *Age of Contaminations* brings together rarely seen iconic works from key historic collections and groundbreaking early prototypes that have been assembled over the past decade. By refusing to adhere to traditional boundaries between architecture, sculpture, and conceptual art, Pesce’s cross-contamination between genres consequentially altered the landscape of design and was a catalyst for the establishment of the contemporary studio practice.

Throughout his career, “[Pesce’s] forte has been “to give form to the form of life,” writes art historian Germano Celant, challenging how things could be made and why. Contemporaneous to the investigations of the Italian Arte Povera movement, Pesce’s radical experimentation with industrial and everyday materials such as polyurethanes and poured resins broke the mold of standardization. Inventing techniques that would produce variable results that embraced flaws and mistakes, he refused to follow the modernist ideology of regularity and perfection dominant at the time. “I wanted to make people understand that creativity resides in rejecting previously seen models, and this proceeds in the absence of repetition...It’s a first step toward creativity, inspiring people to make an autonomous gesture, a different one each time,” said Pesce during a 1991 interview.

Age of Contaminations will feature a grouping of rare Yeti Armchairs (1968), the first armchair Pesce produced, the iconic “Moloch” Floor Lamp (1970-1), his inaugural collaboration with the manufacturer Bracciodiferro, and the earliest example of his groundbreaking *Golgotha Table* (1972). Highlighting seminal projects that demonstrate Pesce’s revolutionary approach to the domestic interior, this exhibition marks the public debut of pieces from the private apartment commissioned for the Italian professor Alberto Carenza where they remained in situ for nearly five

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decades, including the eponymous monumental *Carenza Bookcase* (1972). Examples from the Paris home of photographer and collector Marc-André Hubin designed by Pesce in 1985-6, an eye-opening reassessment of space and function, will also be on view. The exhibition title references Gaetano Pesce's installation for the Museum of Modern Art's 1972 seminal group show, *Italy: The New Domestic Landscape*, curated by Emilio Ambasz. For this, Pesce constructed "Project for an Underground City in the Age of Great Contaminations," a fictionalized archeological discovery in 3000 BCE of an underground habitat from 2000 BCE. Nearly fifty years after the opening of this landmark exhibition, *Age of Contaminations* looks back on Pesce's legacy as a provocateur, rule-breaker, and an essential influence on the evolution of contemporary design.

About Gaetano Pesce

Born in 1938 in La Spezia, Italy, Gaetano Pesce graduated with a degree in architecture from the University of Venice in 1965. His multidisciplinary practice encompasses architecture, urban planning, interior design, and industrial design. Pesce's architectural projects include the Organic Building of Osaka in Japan (1990), a precursor to the 'living wall,' "in which the "co-existence of greenery, architecture, and human beings," is the concept. Perhaps his best known project is the design for the advertising agency TBWA\Chiat\Day's offices in New York (1994), a radical experimental layout that is considered the first mobile office.

Pesce has taught at several institutions including Cooper Union in New York, and the Institut d'Architecture et d'Etudes Urbaines in Strasbourg. His work is included in the permanent collections of museums worldwide such as the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, California; The Cooper Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum, New York; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Vitra Design Museum, Weil am Rhein, Germany; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, and the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Pesce currently lives and works in New York.

About Friedman Benda

Friedman Benda is a platform for key narratives that intersect contemporary design, craft, architecture, visual and conceptual art, and cutting-edge technological research. Spanning five continents and four generations, Friedman Benda represents a roster of seminal established and emerging designers, as well as historically significant estates. Since 2007, the gallery's exhibitions, publications and collaborations with institutions have played a vital role in the development of the contemporary design market and scholarship. For further information please visit www.friedmanbenda.com.

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