

whitewall

DESIGN

Friedman Benda Finds a Home in Los Angeles

By Katy Donoghue
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Friedman Benda, Los Angeles, photo by Ed Mumford, courtesy of Friedman Benda.

Last November, had a soft opening for its new space in Los Angeles. Residing in a midcentury modern home, the gallery features a dynamic program from Friedman Benda’s design side and Albertz Benda’s side. Installation in a domestic space offers clients and visitors an experience like living at home with unique objects and works.

This spring, the group show “The Endless Summer” (the title references the 1966 surf documentary) is on view through March 26, with pieces by Carmen D’Apollonio, OrtaMiklos, Snarkitecture, Najla El Zein, Ini Archibong, Famakan Magassa, Faye Toogood, Samuel Ross, Estudio Campana, and more. Utilizing interiors and outdoor space, it focuses on themes of dedication and storytelling.

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albertz benda

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Whitewall spoke with the gallery's Thorsten Albertz, Marc Benda, and Kate Vogel about cultivating new connections within its own roster, as well as the greater Los Angeles community.



Thorsten Albertz, courtesy of Friedman Benda, Los Angeles.

WHITEWALL: Why expand to Los Angeles?

THORSTEN ALBERTZ: Besides a great personal affinity for Los Angeles, we've been collaborating with a lot of L.A.-based artists for quite a while. There was a constant exchange between us, so it was just a logical move to come closer to the artists that we work with. Here it makes sense to juxtapose our two programs—Friedman Benda and Albertz Benda—in a different kind of setting. It is a residential home, and it will always be presented as such with art and design juxtaposed.

MARC BENDA: Los Angeles keeps growing as a cultural center. It was a logical progression from building the programs in New York. For the design program of Friedman Benda, we've opened up such large dialogues and we've built an almost encyclopedic program, it didn't make sense that we're only showing these bodies of work in one city in the world. It is about deepening our ties with the West Coast community, because there's a huge following of design and there's a huge history of design here.

WW: Why host the gallery in an actual home?

KATE VOGEL: That was always part of the plan. This space is so conducive to showing art and design. It's about a different mode of storytelling. When you enter the house it's an opportunity for our designers and artists to express in a different way and to reach the public.



Marc Benda, courtesy of Friedman Benda, Los Angeles

MB: Here, we're able to find narratives that we couldn't find on two separate exhibition platforms, even if they are side by side. We're finding these crosscurrents within and between disciplines that are more and more becoming an important part of the contemporary dialogue.

TA: Over the last two years, a much more personal engagement with our collectors has resulted in bigger and better outcomes. And our space here is not only an invitation for our artists and designers in juxtaposition, but a challenge to us to constantly come up with new ideas of how we can engage with people. This space is intended to create a salon atmosphere. We are coming up constantly with ideas of bringing the creators and their audiences in close proximity together.

WW: How did you want to launch the space?

KV: We originally wanted a very focused presentation for our initial debut in November. We had Daniel Arsham, Faye Toogood, and Carmen D'Apollonio (who is based here). It complemented the Albertz Benda program, but there are also tensions there and that's been interesting to see. From the design side, the role of the house is that the furniture has to be functional, unlike our gallery in New York—it really has to be used. It's been a joy to see that our program lives up to that task so consistently.

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Kate Vogel, courtesy of Friedman Benda, Los Angeles.

WW: How are you seeing your collectors engage thus far?

TA: We had our first event that we called a “Housewarming Party,” which was specially catering to our L.A.-based artists and our L.A.-based collectors. The response was extremely enthusiastic. Experiencing art and design in terms of position was a huge success.

MB: There are things that we’ve never shown anywhere else. There are things that have never been seen anywhere else. We really want to explore this to the fullest. Group shows are to start out and to give an idea of the versatility of the space and a segment of the breadth of the two programs. Then we want to dive in and give the artist their dues so the public can experience solo shows.

I’m kind of a romantic in our business. I believe in the solo shows. I believe in the narratives that emerge from that and in the fact that solo shows are vehicles to bring a vision out.

WW: Is there programming you will do here you couldn’t do in New York?

MB: Our space is 1,700 square feet in New York. For a designer to fill that space is usually an insane amount of work—prototyping, envisioning. And often for designers and younger designers, it’s a scary process of having to work on such a platform. So having a space that is conducive to showing smaller or more intimate bodies of work helps the program immensely.

TA: Absolutely. Here artists can focus on one specific aspect in their work.

We're also not coming here and saying we're taking over L.A. We want to engage in dialogue here with our colleagues in L.A., and, hopefully, in the long run, present things together.