

THORSTEN ALBERTZ, MARC BENDA, AND JENNIFER OLSHIN

PARTNERS AT ALBERTZ BENDA AND FRIEDMAN BENDA

BY MICHAEL KLUG, PORTRAIT BY STEVE BENISTY



WHITEWALL: Marc, we have known each other since I started Whitewall in 2005. So first off, congratulations on this new evolution, starting Albertz Benda with Thorsten and continuing to do important design exhibitions at Friedman Benda with Jennifer. Second, you've told me before about how you wake up at night with new ideas and send e-mails to your artists or collaborators. What's the most exciting part of your work?

MARC BENDA: It is the constant change; it is the constant evolution; it is the constantly thinking of what could be worth more and grow. The biggest satisfaction is the long-term projects. You envision something and talk about it. You go along with someone for sometimes years and all a sudden you wake up one morning and you know tonight that you are going to see the fruits of that conversation or that investment.

THORSTEN ALBERTZ: One of the things that we strive to do and what every gallery strives to do is to foster a young career, to foster an artist and then build him from the ground up, slowly, to one day become an established artist. You also want to have some artists that are already on their way or already an established artist. That is exactly the way we are looking at our program at the moment. We have three to four artists already that are world-renowned and have an established career but have not had the chance to show in New York City. So Albertz Benda will be their platform in New York City.

WW: Can you tell us about the new partnership that results in Albertz Benda and how that will relate to Friedman Benda, if at all?

MB: Our project space, which has been going by B2OA this year, will still retain its freedom and will seasonally be one gallery or the other. Friedman Benda will exclusively focus on design and leave it open for related subjects, such as architecture and collaborations with people from the outside. And Albertz Benda is built as a program that is already scheduled for the next 18 months. The main space is being reimagined as we speak. It is being rebuilt as we speak. You will have a big surprise there. We added 1,800 feet of exhibition space. Now when people come to the main gallery, they will have their choice of two galleries, each with about 2,000 square feet on the same floor.

WW: Jennifer, how would you describe your new role at Friedman Benda?

JO: I think that my role will mirror the movement of the gallery. We are starting by going back to our roots. The first show we are going to open with is Ettore Sottsass from the fifties and sixties. That was the first show we did as Friedman Benda eight years ago, and we did the last show that Sottsass ever had in his life. It was really important for us to start with that, a kind of point of departure. And as you know, we had a program with a lot of painters, so when those painters leave we are going to fill in the space with a broader range of designers.

WW: And who will the artists be at Albertz Benda?

MB: Luckily, we are a young gallery and we are in the process of building our roster of artists. But we start with a core of seven artists and those seven

core artists cover the traditional art world. So they are from North America, Europe, and Japan, which I would consider is the classical art world. That is something that we are trying to focus on, because we have this project space downstairs, the previous B2OA's space. It will allow us to venture out into more experimental exhibits.

WW: What kinds of exhibitions do you have planned for this fall?

JO: We have a show for Paul Cockshedge in early November, where he will take on very big universal ideas. There are a couple of bodies of work that we know about, and one of them is a project that began while he was in school where he harnesses the power of freezing materials, and then as they thaw they become locked. So without the use of bolts or anything traditional, he uses temperature to create pieces.

MB: What is fascinating with that series is that it sort of addresses a lot of issues that you have in design. The main issues are aesthetics, production or the making of things, and how do you assemble things? How do they look once they are all put together? These pieces assemble materials that previously were not possible to assemble because of the physical attributes; there are certain metal alloys that just don't work. And he was able to do that now. At the same time, there are no physical marks while making these things. In essence, he has found a completely new way of making and assembling things.

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Donoghue, Katy. "Wendell Castle," Whitewall, Fall 2015.

albertz benda

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Opposite page:
Jen Ray
Untitled (Green Pods)
 2015
 Watercolor and ink on paper
 51 x 120 inches
 © David Ramsey Photography
 Courtesy of the artist and Albert Benda

Cullen Washington, Jr.
Jupiter 2
 2014
 Paper, Color-aid paper, graphite dust, tape, acrylic
 medium, canvas
 72 x 122 inches
 Photo by Adam Reich
 Courtesy of the artist and Albert Benda

Ettore Sottsass
Tantra (FF: 697)
 1968
 Stoneware
 16.34 x 13.36 x 13.39 inches
 Courtesy of Friedman Benda and Ettore Sottsass studio

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