

THE BRVTALIST

MUTANT METROPOLITAN CULTURE

FUNCTIONAL ART GALLERY (Q&A)
October 20, 2018 | THE BRVTALIST

In a crowded gallery scene, it is not too often a new concept piques our interest the way Functional Art Gallery did. When first reading about the new Berlin space which focuses on, well, functional art, I immediately fell in love with the idea. Blurring the lines between sculpture, visual art, furniture design and more, the gallery seeks to help shape the discussion between art and design and increase the presence of cutting edge design within the greater art world. Founded in 2018 by Benoît Wolfram and Javier Peres, the gallery recently staged its first exhibition, a group show which perfectly showcases the ethos of the space and what's in store for the future.

From the hypnotic lines of Thomas Barger's bright yellow day beds to the extra-terrestrial look of Orta Miklos' lighting, these pieces don't fit in to any single category. Materials also play a prominent role - French neo-futurist Théophile Blandet is interested in those which will not be able to exist in the future. His shelving and tables features plastic, a once celebrated miracle of modern manufacturing, now an environmental threat, he effectively uses the material to create beautiful works while also subverting its current value.

Just after the opening I stopped by the gallery, which is situated in a busy construction zone and (rather appropriately) across the street from furniture manufacturer Möbel Hübner, to check out the incredible space, the works in the first show and to speak with curator Benoît Wolfram. Check out our Q&A below.

The Brvtalist: What is your and Javier's background and talk about how the gallery came about.

Benoît Wolfram: Javier and I have very different backgrounds. He is a trained lawyer, who due to his great passion and love for art, started his contemporary art gallery Peres in California in the early 2000's. He moved the gallery to Berlin in 2006 and has brought attention to a number of artists who have helped shape the discourse of contemporary art for over 15 years.

I used to be in real estate in Paris before moving to Berlin last year.

The inception of the project came to us quite naturally. Both in our respective fields, contemporary art and real estate, we realized when visiting client's collections that often great collections would be paired with less interesting design. At the same time, we were both collecting very contemporary design, prototypes, and saw our interest for the field growing and growing. So we saw a real opportunity to make a business out of another one of our shared



Orta Miklos (duo b. 1993; France; Denmark). Photo courtesy of Functional Art Gallery



Théophile Blandet (b. 1993, Strasbourg, FR; lives and works Eindhoven, NL). Photo courtesy of Functional Art Gallery



Finn Meier (b. 1990, Niebüll, Germany; lives and works Stuttgart, DE) Photo courtesy of Functional Art Gallery

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passions. That's how the idea started and a few months later we opened Functional Art Gallery.

TB: How do you define what functional art means?

BW: We define functional art as design that crosses the line. It is art that has been created with the intent of function. Function is at its core but it doesn't stop there, it goes further into the realm of art. I don't think it is a new concept, however I think it is a new way of talking about it.

We chose the name because it embodies completely what we want to show and talk about. It is very descriptive but at the same time quite intriguing.

TB: Talk about the first exhibition and some of the artists you chose.

BW: We called the first exhibition "functional art". We wanted it to be an introduction to what we believe in and what we want to present. All the artists/designers in the exhibition share something in common. Like an invisible connection that just resonated with us. Everything in the exhibition shows the multiplicity and complexity of what we believe functional art is. Everything is made by the artists themselves, all the pieces are unique and they are all functional.

Two great examples are the French-Danish duo Ortamiklos and the French designer Théophile Blandet. Ortamiklos created "The white ladies" using women's stockings filled with cement and then shaped with electric cables. They created these chairs in a completely new way and are pushing the boundaries of the materials. Théophile worked with plastics that cannot be recycled. He is projecting us in a near future where plastic will be a forbidden material. He treats it as the ivory of the future and presents those amazing pieces that seem completely anachronistic.

All the pieces in the exhibition are pushing boundaries and concepts in their own way and that is what's interesting to us.

TB: What's next for the gallery?

BW: The gallery is going to be really busy in the coming months. First, there's Design Miami this December where we will present a solo exhibition of Theophile Blandet. We are creating an entire environment for the occasion and I cannot wait to show the world what he can do. We are doing a solo exhibition with Bnag this January and we are so excited about it.

We will do 4 exhibitions between January and June plus design fairs. Our goal is to always present finely curated projects that share a new vision of what contemporary design and functional art are.



Installation View, Functional Art.
Photo courtesy of Functional Art Gallery



Thomas Barger (b. 1992, Mattoon, IL; lives and works Brooklyn, NY). Courtesy of Functional Art Gallery



Greem Jeong (b. 1993, Seoul, South Korea) Photo courtesy of Functional Art Gallery

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