

Wallpaper*

"More than pretty chairs: 'Enthroned' at Jessica Silverman's gallery is a celebration of female talent"

By Julie Baumgardner

January 13, 2024



Frida Escobedo, 'Creek Chair 02', 2023 (Image credit: Timothy Doyon, Courtesy of the artist and Friedman Benda)

'Enthroned' is an exhibition at San Francisco's Jessica Silverman gallery showcasing sculptural works by outstanding female creators (on view until 2 March 2024)

In a way, 'Enthroned' at Jessica Silverman all started because of Judy Chicago, though the pioneering feminist artist is neither the focus nor even featured in this exhibition. In fact, the show isn't even about art, instead solely highlighting contemporary women designers. So how does Chicago come into play? Gallery founder Silverman and Marc Benda of Friedman Benda struck up a friendship after Benda acquired a Chicago work from Silverman a few years back.

**JESSICA
SILVERMAN**

621 Grant Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94108
jessicasilvermangallery.com +1 415 255 9508



Lara Bohinc, 'Peaches Pouffe', 2023 (Image credit: Rebecca Reid, Courtesy of the artist and Friedman Benda)

Though self-professed 'art people', Silverman and her wife, the writer Sarah Thornton, became enraptured by contemporary design when they bought an apartment in a 1962 building in San Francisco's Nob Hill, intended to live in but also a perfect showcase.

Silverman and Thornton, who just released the book *Tits Up* (available for preorder), are ardent feminists and activists, but also aesthetes, so as their design journey ramped up, it was important to furnish their space as a reflection of who they are. That led the duo towards women designers, which happens to be a standout area for Benda. 'I'm not taking jabs at anyone else, but Marc really cares a lot about supporting women and women designers,' Silverman says.

**JESSICA
SILVERMAN**

621 Grant Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94108
jessicasilvermangallery.com +1 415 255 9508



Najla El Zein, 'Seduction, m (Prototype)', 2018 (Image credit: Damien Arlettaz, Courtesy of the artist and Friedman Benda)

With feminism in mind, Silverman and Thornton 'started chatting with Marc about that, and came up with doing this exhibition together', since a focus on championing cutting-edge, thoughtful women design practitioners isn't in regular rotation. Thus, 'Enthroned' was born, and pitched originally as a show of chairs (hence the name, though don't ignore the regal undertones either). However, as discussions ramped up, the selections leaned towards designers whose 'design is really sculptural and doesn't just read as design', says Silverman, 'it doesn't just feel like stoic furniture.'

**JESSICA
SILVERMAN**

621 Grant Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94108
jessicasilvermangallery.com +1 415 255 9508



Faye Toogood, 'Spoon Chair / Moon', 2016 (Image credit: Angus Mill, Courtesy of the artist and Friedman Benda)

'Enthroned', which opened to coincide with San Francisco's FOG Design + Art fair (the latter running 18 - 21 January), stands as a statement of support and celebration, as much as it is a pull away from the tropes of masculine dominance in minimalism and domestic softness often linked to women's work. 'This is design that really is very much in dialogue with art,' explains Silverman, 'These are not typical couches or chairs, but rather sculptural objects that have functionality.'

Just who's been pulled into dialogue with each other? Off Benda's roster are the likes of Carmen D'Appollonio, Najla El Zein, and Faye Toogood, as well as damsels-in-demand such as architect Johanna Grawunder, Mexican architect Frida Escobedo, whose dripping chain furniture has earned her the 2024 Charlotte Perriand Award, and Lara Bohinc, whom Thornton discovered in the Natalie Kovacs-curated 2021 Curio section at Design Miami and acquired her 'Kissing Chair'. Bohinc's inclusions in the show are her 'Big Girl' chair and 'Peaches Pouffe', both feminised reimaginings of 1970s Italian upholstered furniture.

**JESSICA
SILVERMAN**

621 Grant Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94108
jessicasilvermangallery.com +1 415 255 9508



Barбора Žilinskaitė, 'Roommates Stool [Washed Violet]', 2020
Image credit: Timothy Doyon, Courtesy of the artist and Friedman Benda

Also featured is the dripping surrealism of Barбора Žilinskaitė, whose 'Roommates' stool is an 'open edition' of sorts, where each edition is rendered in a different colour, making each of the series more like a unique work of art. The show also highlights scene-newcomers Jay Sae Jung Oh, the ceramicist whose works such as 'Savage Planter' have been causing quite the stir over at Salon94 (which will bring Oh to FOG this year, in fact), and ibiyanε, a young studio from Martinique featured in 'The New World' exhibition at Carpenters Workshop Gallery.

'Women are still extremely under-represented in design,' Benda jumps in. "'Enthroned" is a wonderful project to bring together relevant work by a group of very talented women in such diversity of expression and background. They're usually seen in a design context while, from conceptualisation to realisation, the genesis of the works exhibited share visual artists' tools and depth of narrative,' he explains. A show where women get a seat at the table? Sounds like a page taken from Judy Chicago's 'The Dinner Party', too.

**JESSICA
SILVERMAN**

621 Grant Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94108
jessicasilvermangallery.com +1 415 255 9508



Anna Aagaard Jensen, 'Nicola', 2022 (Image credit: Daniel Kukla, Courtesy of the artist and Friedman Benda)

**JESSICA
SILVERMAN**

621 Grant Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94108
jessicasilvermangallery.com +1 415 255 9508



Carmen D'Apollonio, 'Last time I saw Paris', 2021 (Image credit: Marten Elder, Courtesy of the artist and Friedman Benda)



Jay Sae Jung, 'Oh Savage Planter', 2020 (Image credit: Courtesy of the artist and Salon 94 Design, New York)

**JESSICA
SILVERMAN**

621 Grant Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94108
jessicasilvermangallery.com +1 415 255 9508