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ART IN DESIGN





CHUCK MOFFIT
ARMOR/AMOR





Tell us about your recent show at JF Chen, Armor/Amor. What was the inspiration behind the collection?

The original inspiration came when viewing a show of samurai armor at LACMA. Ritualistic objects to enter battle, crafted with a narrative and tradition. The opposing ideas of protection and vulnerability on a personal level. Even battle had a theatrical element. But grounded in process, materials and tradition.

The show incorporated an Ikebana intervention by artist Kyoko Oshiro. Please talk about the relationship between the Ikebana and your work in this show.

Ikebana is often about trying to balance opposites. I feel connected to that idea in my own work. To have Kyoko add her own layer of ephemeral explorations was a great touch suggested by Bianca Chen, who curated the show.

Please describe specific inspirations and materials for the sconces, club chair, bench and cabinet.

I wanted all of the collection to feel like came from "a future." Which I think is distinctly different than coming from "the future." The former use of future asks for a person to be present and active. I want the work to feel that it is setting the scene for something that must happen.

The San sconces: bronze arrowheads from a quill... scattered like thrown dice. The Pinnacle club chair: I understand a chair as very basic set of elements—at minimum a seat, then a back, and here armrests were added. Those three elements are planes of utility. The steel chair frame is a layered orthogonal cube, which I think of as an unarguable geometry. This approach to the frame allows the outrageous upholstery and bronze spikes to tag along and appear to be running the show. The Amor bench is an Egyptian throne that seems to hold theatrical ideas that are balanced and grounded by steel and bronze. And the Armor sideboard: I cast the doors first, thinking of the tassels and really no sense of what the case work might be. With the Armor sideboard the weight of the cast bronze doors created a problem. I do think there is a better word than "problem" to describe the situations that arise. They are cracks that open to a beautiful solution that a "no problem" journey does not allow.

How is this collection different from others you have created?

This collection was larger than my previous ones. From the beginning, I wanted to allow more sculptural objects to take part, as they help to inform my furniture work. I think of my sculpture as a collection/aggregation of my actions. A sculpture is an object to be contemplated and at minimum, a chair must function as a place to sit. The sculptures help to start a conversation between the form and the functional.

When creating pieces, is your process always the same? Do you have a ritual?

No conscious ritual, but the process is very similar. I start with many small sketches and decide which way to go. After years I still seem to fall for it every time, because all the ideas I start out with usually don't work. But the process allows me to find the ideas that do work. Often a cast-off bit from a year ago seems like it was made just for a piece I am working on, somehow out of sync in time.

When the muse doesn't immediately come to you, what do you do?

That's when the panic kicks in.... I mill around the studio long past when I should have closed the door and go for a walk with the dog. I really love sailing. I have realized that my monkey mind is scared of water. He stays on the shore and I can enjoy the wind and water.

What is your most consistent source of inspiration?

Failure and what I find after it when I seem to be lost.

Is it your hope that your furniture is considered collectible art?

My hope is that my furniture might function as a wedge that allows the people that experience it to step into a new way of being. And that the work might be a part of a narrative beyond its use as a functional object. ■ chuckmoffit.com, jfchen.com

