

Haptic Nature

NEW WORKS BY VOUKENAS PETRIDES

17 September - 22 October 2022



Bent Half Tube Bench - Bronze | Edition of 8+2AP

It has been a busy summer in the Athens studio of Andreas Voukenas and Steven Petrides, with new works and sculptures being developed. These will be revealed for the first time at Gallery FUMI in Mayfair on 17 September. Two standing light sculptures - at a heroic 2 metres tall - are made in their trademark Gypsum plaster, polished to a marble-like finish. A coffee table and mirror have been cast in aluminum, and a standing lamp, a bench, three chairs, and twelve small sculptures have been cast in their preferred red bronze.

Both form and materiality are key in the work of Voukenas Petrides. The pair has worked together for seven years, combining their design backgrounds to create a body of furniture, mostly in plaster and bronze, imbued with strong sculptural qualities.

Voukenas studied interior architecture and product design at the University of Applied Science in Athens, and Petrides studied architecture at Columbia University in New York. It was when Petrides moved to Athens in 2014 that they met and joined forces. They now have a studio space in the southwestern suburb of Tavros where Petrides makes the plaster works with Voukenas' direction in production.

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FUMI

The cast bronze pieces are created at a foundry outside Athens, highly specialised in the traditional lost wax method. Their Athenian location is also relevant to their choice of plaster (made from gypsum mined on the island of Zakynthos) as a material, as it is often used in archaeological practice. While the work of Voukenas Petrides evolves in the Greek sunshine, it embodies memories of Pollywogs and skunk cabbage from the swamps of Massachusetts, where Petrides grew up.

To construct the light sculptures, Petrides makes forms in woven wire mesh which are then covered in the wet plaster. Once dry, the plaster is polished and treated with a sealer that is absorbed into the surface. "Plaster and light work so well together," they say. They describe the tear shaped column that identifies their lamps as emerging from the form the mesh itself prefers to take. "It creates a tripod effect, while the completed design has an anthropomorphic appeal."

The bronze seats, bench, light sculptures, table and mirror play with cylindrical or tear-tube elements, which are twisted, turned, or conjoined to make visually complex, though carefully balanced works. Cast in aluminium the table and mirror reflect Voukenas Petrides interest in seaside geologies and fractal topographies. This is work filled with bravery and bravura, made functional by the artists' architectural training.

This is more than evident in a super-scale work – a 23 metre long bar – they completed with Stelios Kois of Kois Associated Architects in 2021 for the Stavros Niarchos Cultural Centre in Athens, housed in a new building by



Light Sculpture 7 - Gypsum, LED | Unique

the Renzo Piano Building Workshop. Working first from floor plans, they moved quickly from a 1:10 model to a 1:1 plaster construction in order to achieve a continuous form that contains recesses for seating and for bar work. "As usual, we modelled the structure using a metal mesh, then covered it with plaster," says Andreas Voukenas. The final form was then cast in bronze, and craned into place on the fifth floor of the building, creating a dynamic central feature in the foundation's Delta restaurant.

FUMI founders Valerio Capo and Sam Pratt say: "We first saw their work in an image posted on Instagram by Daniella Ohad in 2018. We were so impressed by the series of organic seats in pure white plaster –so playful, yet well-thought through. Four days later, we went to meet them in Athens. We've represented them exclusively ever since. Steve and Andreas complement each other perfectly. They are both huge talents with an incredible drive. They are always pushing boundaries, doing the near-impossible and somehow making it work."

Text by Caroline Roux

Photography by Gerasimos Domenikos



Volumetric Chair 5 - Bronze | Edition of 8+2AP