

Andrea Branzi: Trees & Stones
September 11 – October 13, 2012
Friedman Benda

“Today there no longer exists any distance between the natural world and the artificial world, because the latter has become a second nature. . . . When I bring nature up against technology, I do not seek to reconcile myself with nature, but to reconcile myself with technology, by transferring into it this great plankton of mixed materials in which we live.”

- Andrea Branzi, *Branzi*, ed. Burkhardt and Morozzi

On September 11th, Friedman Benda will present *Trees and Stones*, Andrea Branzi’s first gallery exhibition in the United States. An exemplary social thinker, professor, architect, and designer, Branzi has been a fundamental influence on contemporary design in Italy and abroad since the early 1960s. Here he offers the latest works in his *Trees* series and unveils a new body of work, *Stones*, beside it.

Since his emergence at the forefront of the 1960s and 1970s Italian radical design movements, Branzi has sought to reconcile design and architecture with the challenges of contemporary society. He was among the first thinkers to consider and integrate issues of unlimited supply, the mass-production of images and products, and the over-saturation of cities with conflicting aesthetics.

Decades of thought-work and experimentation have produced *Trees* and *Stones*, gestures Branzi has honed throughout his life. With these pieces, Branzi again overcomes the strictures of Modernism and Classicism to forge more sensible and more human paths in design. He escapes any stifled aesthetics and rather than “perfect” design, makes items that are warm, aged, and transcendent. After 50 years, it is possible to recognize these confident pieces as the distillation of Branzi’s life-long endeavor.

In his latest works, Branzi unites a dichotomy of objects in modern society. The *Trees* designs allow the entry of symbolic, organic elements into a daily urban life estranged from its ties to nature. Included in the exhibition are bookshelves for which Branzi combines pieces of birch tree with metal grids and mirrors. His interventions in the metal structures create small environments, wherein man-made forms balance with the interloping trees to achieve a new harmony. Once set together, they become Branzi’s unique creation, serene and open to growth through use. These new projects share a minimalist approach and exquisite craftsmanship, and their refinement draws a high-water mark in Branzi’s illustrious career.

Andrea Branzi was born in Florence in 1938 and studied as an architect at the Florence School of Architecture, receiving a degree in 1966. From 1964 to 1974, he was a founding member of the experimental group Archizoom, which envisioned the No-Stop-City among other projects. A key member of the Studio Alchimia, founded in 1976, he went on to associate with the Memphis Group in the 1980s. Presently, he lives and works in Milan, and until 2009 was a professor and chairman of the School of Interior Design at the Politecnico di Milano.

Branzi distinguished himself as a co-founder of Domus Academy, the first international post-graduate school for design. He is a three-time recipient of the Compasso d’Oro, honored for individual or group effort in 1979 and 1987 and 1995. His work has been featured in the Venice Biennale and Milan Triennale, and he has curated the design exhibitions of the latter. He has been widely published and is frequently invited to lecture internationally,

In 2008, Branzi was named an Honorary Royal Designer in the United Kingdom and he received an honorary degree from La Sapienza in Rome. That same year, his work was featured in an installation at the Fondation Cartier, Paris. His works are held in the permanent collections of the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; the Victoria and Albert Museum, London; the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; the Israel Museum, Jerusalem; and the Museum of Modern Art, New York, among others.

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