

FRIEDMAN BENDA
515 W 26TH STREET
NEW YORK NY 10001

NICOLE CHERUBINI
HOTEL ROMA
JAN 16 - FEB 21, 2026



Nicole Cherubini in her Hudson studio, 2025.

New York – Friedman Benda is pleased to present *Hotel Roma*, its first exhibition with the New York-based artist **Nicole Cherubini**. An influential figure in contemporary sculpture, Cherubini is widely known for her monumental works, which she primarily builds in clay by hand and layers with color, texture, and sculpted detail. New to her work is the inclusion of complex figurative elements which are integrated into the larger form, evoking the imaginative excess of baroque and surrealist art. This applied iconography is rich in narrative and historical reference, reflecting Cherubini's erudition both within her own discipline and beyond.

The exhibition's title, *Hotel Roma*, is typically multivalent. Cherubini has many associations with the Eternal City, ranging from ancient art to modern cinema and fashion. The direct inspiration for the title, however, is from a less expected source: the Surrealist artist Leonora Carrington's autobiographical text *Down Below* (1942), which details her experiences during the dark years of World War II, including a stay at the Hotel Roma in Madrid. Carrington is one of several writers who have inspired Cherubini's latest work, including Mary Shelley, Elena Ferrante, Natalia Ginzburg, Sibella Aleramo, and Annie Ernaux, all of whom create densely detailed chronicles of women's experience. As Cherubini says, "They use words in the same way I hope to use clay."

Anchoring Cherubini's exhibition at Friedman Benda are a trio of works that she calls the Three Graces, a classical typology that she infuses with new and vigorous life. Bypassing more familiar versions from art history (Botticelli, Canova, and many others), she has returned to ancient Socratic texts in which these allegorical figures are taken to represent acts of generosity: bestowing, receiving, and returning. Each of the three sculptures has a strong compositional personality of its own: one, for example, is conjoined to a ceramic bench over ten feet long, extending across the gallery floor. Made principally of terracotta and white earthenware, these works are polymorphous in their structural components – Cherubini remarks that they "look like the love children of Brancusi and Frankenstein" – and are completed with glazes in turquoise, amber, emerald, white, and metallic luster, recalling the palette of both Italian majolica and modernist abstract painting.

Cherubini's bricolage approach is also seen in *Butterfly*, inspired by a lyric of Erykah Badu ("Maybe we'll be butterflies / I guess I'll see you next lifetime"). With its double form, the sculpture does suggest a gorgeous, winged creature in flight, but it is also powerfully physical, a prodigious feat of forming, stacking, cutting, and conjoining. With its contrapposto stance and prominent arm-like handle, the work registers Cherubini's recent collaborative work in staging choreography; despite its scale and solidity, it is filled with implied motion. Other works in the exhibition, including a major octagonal seating sculpture and a columnar form that responds to the existing architecture of the gallery, add to the sense that a dramatic performance is underway.

About Nicole Cherubini

Throughout her career, Nicole Cherubini has been challenging conventions and expectations of sculpture through her primary medium of clay. Born in 1970 in Boston, Cherubini received a BFA in Ceramics from the Rhode Island School of Design in 1993 and an MFA in Visual Arts from New York University in 1998. Subverting form, Cherubini builds dysfunctional vessels/objects that cannot contain; she debases their traditional purpose and recasts them as new forms. The exterior of her sculptures is where Cherubini rejects compliant beauty and pushes to the edges of “too much.” Making use of space, clashing, and tipping into the uncouth is political vocabulary for Cherubini. Even her pedestals are multi-patterned and dripping with glaze. Appropriating and transgressing class signifiers of ornamentation, from fake chains to high fashion, are acts of defection. The resulting mashups are a convivium gone wild.

Her work has been featured in solo exhibitions at institutions including the Institute of Contemporary Art (Philadelphia, PA), the Jersey City Museum (Jersey City, NJ), the Nassau County Museum of Art (Roslyn Harbor, NY), the Pérez Art Museum Miami (Miami, FL), the Santa Monica Museum of Art (Los Angeles, CA), The Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery (Saratoga, NY) and University Art Museum (Albany, NY). She has participated in numerous group exhibitions at institutions including the Cranbrook Art Museum (Bloomfield Hills, MI), the Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston (Boston, MA), the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art (Kansas City, MO), MoMA PS1 (Long Island City, NY), Museo de Arte Raúl Anguiano (Guadalajara, México), the Museum of Fine Arts (Boston, MA), the Rhode Island School of Design Museum (Providence, RI), the Rose Art Museum (Waltham, MA), Sculpture Center (Long Island City, NY), the Studio Museum in Harlem (New York, NY), the Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery (Saratoga, NY), The University of Arkansas Museum (Fayetteville, AR), the Walker Art Center (Minneapolis, MN), Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (North Adams, MA), Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art (Bentonville, AR) and The West Norway Museum of Decorative Art (Bergen, Norway).

Her work is held in numerous private and public collections, such as the Cranbrook Art Museum (Bloomfield Hills, MI), the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (Cambridge, MA), the Museum of Fine Arts (Boston, MA), the Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston (Boston, MA), the Museum of Arts and Design (New York, NY), the Pérez Art Museum Miami (Miami, FL), the Rhode Island School of Design Museum (Providence, RI), the Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery (Saratoga, NY), the Progressive Collection (Mayfield Village, OH), Tishman Speyer Collection (New York, NY), and University Art Museum (Albany, NY). In 2019, Cherubini was an artist in residence at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum (Boston, MA). She is a recipient of the Louis Comfort Tiffany Grant, Art Matters Grant, NEA Travel Grant among others. Cherubini lives and works in Brooklyn and Hudson, NY.

About Friedman Benda

Friedman Benda identifies and advances key narratives that intersect contemporary design, craft, architecture, fine art, and cutting-edge technological research. The gallery promotes synthesis between leading creative thinkers and makers by creating opportunities to advance new connections within the global design community. Friedman Benda is committed to a critical view of design history. We aim to expand the design dialogue from its established sources, exploring perspectives that have previously been marginalized. Spanning five continents and four generations, Friedman Benda represents a roster of seminal established and emerging designers, as well as historically significant estates. With locations in New York and Los Angeles, the gallery's exhibitions, publications and collaborations with institutions have played a vital role in the development of the contemporary design market and scholarship since 2007. For further information please visit www.friedmanbenda.com and the gallery's Instagram [@friedman_benda](https://www.instagram.com/friedman_benda) and [YouTube channel](https://www.youtube.com/friedmanbenda).

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