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## ferréol babin renders french countryside on hand-carved furniture for friedman benda show

By Kat Barandy  
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Ferréol Babin opens 'In a Landscape' at Friedman Benda

In a Landscape, the newest [exhibition](#) by [Ferréol Babin](#) at [Friedman Benda](#), brings a group of carved [wood](#) objects into dialogue with painted surfaces and ceramic inlays. Ahead of the March 6th opening in New York, designboom [spoke with](#) Babin about the works on view, tracing the way his furniture grows from the textures and routines of his life in the French countryside.

The French designer began by describing the setting that informs his process. 'I live in the countryside of France, and I'm surrounded by nature, and I think it's my main source of inspiration,' he tells designboom while walking through the installation. 'My workshop and my house are just one building. There is no boundary between my work and my private life, and there is no boundary between this and the nature around me.'



Ferréol Babin, *In a Landscape*, Friedman Benda | image © designboom (header © Pierre Le Hors, courtesy Friedman Benda)

## Wood as a Living Record

As shown throughout the exhibition at [Friedman Benda](#), much of Ferréol Babin's work begins with nearby forests. The designer works almost entirely with timber gathered from surrounding area, selecting pieces which already carry traces of time. The works at Friedman Benda present cabinets, lamps, tables, and benches whose surfaces appear carved by hand with respect for the imperfections of the grain.

'I work only with local wood coming from the nearest forests,' the [designer](#) explains. 'I take great care with the building process, but also with the inspiration. It has to be very related to my life in the end.'

For Babin, the act of carving reveals stories held within the material itself. 'Every time I look at a tree, I try to understand what is hiding behind the bark,' he continues. 'Once you open a tree, you can really read its life and its story.' Knots, fissures, and irregular surfaces remain present across the pieces on view.

Rather than smoothing them away, he leans into those marks. 'In some of my works you can see cracks or what is considered a bad part of a tree. For me it is part of the charm and the singularity of the wood. I try to enhance them.'



Ferréol Babin, In a Landscape, Friedman Benda | image © designboom

## Craft and Personal Language

The objects across Ferréol Babin's *In a Landscape* move between sculpture and furniture. Shelves slide smoothly, cabinet doors close with modern hardware, and tables maintain practical proportions. Yet their surfaces carry the spontaneity of carved relief.

Babin describes his approach as a gradual search for a personal design language. 'The more I get older, the less I am interested in what others are making,' he says. 'I see other artists' work as their own language. My goal is to build my own language.'

Historical precedents still inform that search. Babin looks often toward vernacular traditions and older forms of craftsmanship. 'We have so much to learn from them. They can be very decorative or very minimal, and they always serve a purpose and a function.'

Training in product design continues to shape his thinking. 'I enjoy rationality and functionality. I always think about how something is made and how it will last through generations.'



Ferréol Babin, *In a Landscape*, Friedman Benda | image © designboom

## **A Process Led by the Hand**

Inside Babin's workshop, drawing rarely leads the process. The works shown at Friedman Benda emerge directly from carving and adjustment in the studio.

'I usually do not draw or design the work first. I give it a shape that is just enough to communicate with the gallery.' Once the concept receives approval, he moves straight into fabrication. 'I start cutting, planing, gluing, stepping back, looking at it.'

The process carries the freedom of sculpture. 'Everything is built as if I were an artist entering the workshop with a chisel,' Babin continues, explaining how surfaces remain responsive to the moment of making. 'The carving depends on my mood. If I feel relaxed and calm, the surface will be less wavy. Sometimes accidents happen and surprises appear. It is very meditative.'

## **locally-found materials**

The exhibition introduces new experiments with painted surfaces and ceramic inlays. Babin's approach to clay mirrors his treatment of wood, grounding the material in the landscape around his home.

'I also like to work with clay,' he explains, noting the Bark Cabinet, whose pale ceramic pieces interrupt the wood surface. 'I fire it in my kiln. I integrate crushed granite that I extract from my own land.' The added stone gives the clay a granular texture that

echoes the surrounding terrain. ‘The wood comes from nearby forests, and the clay has aggregates found in the soil under my feet.’

One of the few collaborative works in the exhibition appears as the Forest Bench, a sculptural seat with an upholstered surface. ‘This is the only object where I ask someone to work with me,’ Babin says. A professional upholsterer completed the textile portion, while the wooden structure remains entirely hand shaped in his studio.



Ferréol Babin, *In a Landscape*, Friedman Benda | image © designboom

## **Between Furniture and Sculpture**

Across the gallery, objects hover between categories. Lamps read as sculptural columns, cabinets resemble carved relief panels, and seating elements suggest fragments of landscape.

‘I always try to blur the boundaries between what is a sculpture, what is a piece of art, and what is a functional object.’ The distinction holds little importance in his process, because what matters instead is composition and balance. ‘It is about placing the right piece of wood in the right place.’

That philosophy also shapes how Babin hopes visitors experience the work. He avoids tying each object to a specific landscape or narrative. ‘I work very freely,’ he goes on. ‘I try to give this sense of freedom in my work so the viewer is free enough to dream.’



Ferréol Babin, In a Landscape, Friedman Benda | image © designboom



Ferréol Babin, In a Landscape, Friedman Benda | image © designboom

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Ferréol Babin, In a Landscape, Friedman Benda | image © designboom

### **details signal the changing seasons**

Several chairs in the exhibition carry small carved birds resting along their backs. These details are inspired by the seasonal shifts which take place outside his studio windows. 'In the springtime I can see all the birds coming back around my house. I like to feed them.' Their presence signals the return of warmer months. 'It is the start of a new cycle. Nothing is finished. It is a transition.'

This way, the chairs capture the sense of time that runs through In a Landscape, as surfaces reveal the slow movement of hand tools across wood.

### **project info:**

name: In a Landscape

designer: [Ferréol Babin](#) | [@ferreol\\_babin](#)

gallery: [Friedman Benda](#) | [@friedman\\_benda](#)

location: 515 W 26th Street, New York, NY

dates: March 6th — April 18th, 2026

photography: © designboom, © [Pierre Le Hors](#), courtesy Friedman Benda