

FRIEDMAN BENDA  
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NEW YORK NY 10001

FERNANDO LAPOSSE  
GHOSTS OF OUR TOWNS  
SEPT 7 – OCT 14 2023



*Saul, 2023*



*Totomoxtle Snake Coffee Table, 2021*

**New York** – Friedman Benda is pleased to present *Ghosts of Our Towns*, Fernando Laposse’s first solo exhibition with the gallery. Known for questioning the ethics of agriculture and production via its waste products, Laposse focuses on three materials for this exhibition: corn, agave, and avocado. Following extensive research on the repercussions of collective patterns of trade and consumption on small farming communities in Mexico, his work draws an arc between disruption and restoration, dissolution and hope. For him, “to get to the root, one must go to the soil,” and to work with fibers is to engage with all the complexities around them: environmental crisis, loss of biodiversity, community disintegration, and forced migration.

The works in *Ghosts of Our Towns* speak of a landscape that keeps changing and a social fabric that keeps tearing due to the decline of native varieties of corn, the use of herbicides, and the influx of genetically modified seeds. Here, material exploration and narrative go together and weave a story of deteriorated environments and social abandonment. Laposse’s engagement with residual materials is a reflection on a landscape that itself is residue; remainder of a knowledge that has been forgotten and forcefully erased.

Against this reality, hope is found in communities that are slowly going back to traditional ways of being, making, and producing. In 2015, Laposse founded a collaborative project and workshop in Tonahuixtla, a small village in the Mixtec region of Puebla. Stemming from a life-long relationship with the town and its people, this collaboration went beyond an initiative to counter erosion, both of the land and of the community; it was designed as a system through which to re-evaluate situations to find potential solutions. Solutions that are as grounded in principles of community restoration as they are in visual, conceptual, and material innovation. Laposse creates necessary and culturally relevant systems that result in a seamless dialogue between native materials and new craft techniques.

Pioneering the development of sisal and heirloom corn husk as contemporary design materials, this work sparks investigations about materials and their cultural significance. Fabricated in partnership with the community, *Totomoxtle Snake Coffee Table* and *Corn Kumiko* feature Laposse’s signature *Totomoxtle*, a veneer material made with husks of heirloom corn. Made with sisal, raw fibers found in the leaves of agave plants, the *Hair of the Dog*, wall mirror, and armchairs are combed and knotted by hand. Stemming from recent research on the avocado industry in Mexico, the *Resting Place* and tapestries in the exhibition are dyed with avocado pits as an homage to Cherán, a self-governing town in the state of Michoacán that has fought to protect their land and community from violence and deforestation.

For Laposse, to be involved in the entire process – from planting and harvesting to designing and fabricating – is fundamental, as “efforts to regenerate the land go hand in hand with efforts to regenerate community.” An invitation to reimagine the material possibilities of natural byproducts, *Ghosts of Our Towns* is a celebration of design as a tool to transform, repair, and change the narrative from erosion to renewal.

The exhibition *Ghosts of Our Towns* is accompanied by a digital catalogue with essays by Glenn Adamson and Mario Ballesteros.

#### **About Fernando Laposse**

Born in 1988, Fernando Laposse was trained in Central Saint Martins as a product designer. Fernando specializes in transforming humble natural materials into refined design pieces. He has worked extensively with overlooked plant fibers such as sisal, loofah, and corn leaves.

His works are the result of extensive research which culminates into objects of “endemic design” where materials and their historical and cultural ties to a particular location and its people take center stage. He often works with indigenous communities in his native Mexico to create local employment opportunities and raise awareness about the challenges they face in a globalized world.

His projects have been exhibited in the Triennale di Milano, Cooper Hewitt Design Museum, The Design Museum in London, Victoria and Albert, the World Economic Forum to name a few. His work is held in the permanent collections of the Design Museum Gent, Le centre national des arts plastiques, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and Victoria & Albert Museum. Fernando Laposse is currently living and working in Mexico City.

#### **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 five generations, Friedman Benda represents a roster of seminal established and emerging designers, as well as historically significant estates. With locations in New York, Los Angeles and Paris, 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](http://www.friedmanbenda.com) and the gallery’s Instagram @friedman\_benda and YouTube channel @FriedmanBenda.

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