

**GALERIE NATHALIE OBADIA**

BRUSSELS

## **GAETANO PESCE**

### ***JE SUIS CONTENT D'ÊTRE ICI***

**Tuesday 26 February - Saturday 6 April, 2019**



Gaetano Pesce, (Detail) *La Guerra é Femmina ? Skin*, 2015.  
Resin, 218 × 100 cm (85 13/16 × 39 3/8 in.)  
©Studio Gaetano Pesce (photo credit : Sebastian Piras)

Galerie Nathalie Obadia is honored to present Italian artist Gaetano Pesce's first exhibition in Belgium. Born in 1939, in La Spezia, the famous architect-designer is also an inspired visual artist. Since the early 1960s, his polymorphous oeuvre has set itself apart on the international art scene by its political engagement and its experimental dimension, both of which are addressed with true freedom of style.

For his first solo exhibition in Brussels, Gaetano Pesce presents a selection of recent works (2014-2019), which he juxtaposes with several older works (1996-2007), thus covering over twenty years of artistic creation. All of the chosen works have the following in common: they are made of multicolored resin, one of the materials he first experimented with in the early 1980s and to which he has stayed faithful ever since.

When Gaetano Pesce completed his architecture studies at the University of Venice, in 1965, the discipline was still largely dominated by the international style of Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe. This geometric and cold vision of architecture, which extended to the decorative arts with the Bauhaus's functionalist research, did not suit Gaetano Pesce, who did everything in his power to distance himself from it. Early on, he developed a very different approach, one that was at once figurative, poetic and colorful: it was relatively provocative at a time when everyone swore exclusively by abstraction, minimalism and monochrome.

Based on this fundamental difference, Gaetano Pesce cultivated his singularity and built his success, which came as early as 1969, with his armchair *Up5*, created one year after the May 1968 events. It is the seminal model of his series of Up Chairs and displays all the anthropomorphic features that the artist would incessantly go back to. "This realization allowed me to express my vision of women. Always sedentary, she remains her own prisoner, in spite of herself. The shape of this armchair, which evokes the generous curves of a woman, held down by a ball and chain, allowed me to refer to the traditional image of an inmate." *Up5*, with its baroque, sensual curves and playful shapes, covered in fabrics characterized by bright and cheerful colors, humorously and ironically shifts away from the undoubtedly political and dissenting nature that was at the origin of his vision. This now-iconic armchair, which celebrates its fiftieth birthday this year, embodies the mischievous ambiguity that has always animated Gaetano Pesce's work.

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Gaetano Pesce's ongoing interest in new technologies and his experimentation with materials led him to create works, as early as 1983, made entirely of colorful translucent resin. Following his *Pratt Chairs* (1983) and his furniture collection titled *Nobody's Perfect* (2001), some of the new pieces he designed were particularly poetic. One such example is *Lagoon Table* (2012), presented at Galerie Nathalie Obadia. The title does not refer to a coral atoll. Rather, the table constitutes an ode to the water that covers the sandbanks of the Venice lagoon, recognizable here from the famous bricole, these robust wooden poles that serve as signals to direct Venetian maritime traffic.

Also exhibited are three monumental cabinets inspired by a trip to Italy in 2006. "During that trip, as always, I thought about how design should not restrict itself to the practical expression of form or decoration, but should, on the contrary, communicate the personal views of the artist and, as in this case, the content connected to the story of art in the past."<sup>1</sup> Revisited by Gaetano Pesce, this gave birth to three spectacular works: the *Mantegna Cabinet* (2006), with its shelves that play with the letters in the name of the most famous Paduan artist of the Renaissance; the *Palladio Cabinet* (2007), in the shape of a "portrait of shelves," inspired by the face of the 16th century builder of Venice's most luxurious villas; and, last but not least, the *Horse Cabinet* (2007), which transforms a horse's hindquarters into a cabinet with multiple pivoting doors, thus distorting a detail from the Crucifixion painted by Altichiero da Zevio, circa 1375, in the Oratory of San Giorgio, Padua. When referring to this last cabinet, Gaetano Pesce explains that he was inspired by the cabinet as a "timeless piece of furniture," which was "non-prescriptive, in terms of content, technique and material."<sup>2</sup>

Apart from *Skins*, a series of intriguing paintings that stand independently from the rest of his artistic production, all the exhibited works—the table, the cabinets, or even the organic vases—can be edited in up to five different color variations. However, each is considered a unique work, because of the artisanal manufacturing process. The starting point is an original drawing by Gaetano Pesce, from which a wooden prototype is realized, which is then transposed to a rubber mold. Once the resin is dyed—the results are never the same—it is poured into the mold and evened out with a spatula. The very manufacturing process, which rejects any mechanical gesture and banishes the idea of repetition, takes advantage, aesthetically, of the imperfections of the material and forms, the same way it holds randomness and uncertainty as essential artistic contingencies.

This type of formal and stylistic flippancy generates a creative universe that exudes a rare freedom and fantasy. After over forty years of creation and long freed from all stylistic conventions, Gaetano Pesce pursues his singular and engaged artistic trajectory, by waging a "systematic attack against monolithic cultures and standardization, in the name of freeing the differences,"<sup>3</sup> which the works exhibited at Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Brussels, attest to with levity and poetry.

1. Marco Casamonti, *Gaetano Pesce. Going against the current*, in AREA 119, September 21, 2014, p. 104.

2. *Op. cit.*, p. 104.

3. Silvana Annicchiarico, cited in Murray Ross, "The View from Here," March 2014.



Gaetano Pesce, *Palladio Cabinet*, 2007.  
Resin, 260 × 130 × 37 cm (102 3/8 × 51 3/16 × 14 9/16 in.).  
©Studio Gaetano Pesce (photo credit : Marzio Fulfaro)



Gaetano Pesce's portrait  
©Courtesy of Studio Gaetano Pesce

### GAETANO PESCE

Gaetano Pesce is born in 1939 in La Spezia, Italy.  
He lives and works in New-York, United-States.

#### INSTITUTIONAL MONOGRAPHIC EXHIBITIONS SINCE 1965 (SELECTION)

- 1965 *Proposal 65*, Museum of Central Finland (Keski-Suomen museo), Jyväskylä, Finland
- 1970 *Nouveaux Espaces*, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris, France
- 1975 *Gaetano Pesce, Le futur est peut-être passé ?*, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris, France
- 1979 *Project for a Skyscraper in Manhattan*, Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New-York, United-States
- 1984 *Gaetano Pesce, Architecture and Industrial Design*, Decorative and Design Museum, Montreal, Canada
- 1986 *Gaetano Pesce, 1975-1985*, Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art (MAMCS), Strasbourg, France
- 1991 *Gaetano Pesce. Multi-disciplinary work*, Tel Aviv Museum of Art, Tel Aviv, Israel
- 1992 *Gaetano Pesce. Five techniques for glass / CIRVA experiences*, Centre de la Vieille Charité, Marseille, France
- 1996 *Gaetano Pesce. Le temps des questions*, National museum of modern art, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France
- 1997 *Gaetano Pesce : Currents 69*, Saint Louis Art Museum, United-States
- 1998 *The presence of objects : Gaetano Pesce*, Decorative and Design Museum, Montreal, Canada
- 2002 *Nobody's Perfect, Gaetano Pesce for Zerodisegno*, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris, France  
*Invisible City*, XXth Triennial, Milan, Italy
- 2005 *Il Rumore del Tempo (The Sound of Time)*, Triennial - Design Museum, Milan, Italy  
*Gaetano Pesce : Pushing the Limits*, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, United-States  
*Il Rumore del Tempo (The Sound of Time)*, Vitra Design Museum, Weil am Rhein, Germany  
*H2O. Gaetano Pesce*, Modern Art Institute of Valencià (IVAM), Valencià, Spain
- 2008 *Quattro armadi e un tavolo di Gaetano Pesce*, Pink Pavillon, Curator : Derya Yücel, Bovisa Triennial, Italy
- 2011 *L'Italia in Croce di Gaetano Pesce*, Curator : Vittorio Sgarbi, Italian Pavillon, 54th Venice Biennial, Italy
- 2014 *Gaetano Pesce : Il tempo della Diversità*, National museum of 21st-century arts (MAXXI), Rome, Italy
- 2015 *Performance nell'installazione : La Cucina Luogo di Passione*, Curator : Germano Celant, Triennial – Design Museum, Milan, Italy
- 2016 *Gaetano Pesce : Molds (Gelati Misti)*, Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA), Los Angeles, United-States  
*Maestà Tradita*, Museo Novecento, Florence, Italy
- 2017 *Gaetano Pesce : Architettura e Fugurazione*, Ducal Palace of Mantua, Italy  
*Gaetano Pesce, Five techniques for glass*, Glass Museum, Murano, Italy
- 2018 *Gaetano Pesce : Il Tempo Multidisciplinare*, Palazzo della Ragione, Padua, Italy

#### INSTITUTIONAL COLLECTIVE EXHIBITIONS SINCE 1972 (SELECTION)

- 1972 *Italy : the New Domestic Landscape. Achievements and Problems of Italian Design*, Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New-York, United-States
- 1979 *Transformations in Modern Architecture*, Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New-York, United-States
- 1993 *CIRVA : le verre, une manière de faire*, Musée du Luxembourg, Paris, France
- 1995 *Mutant Materials in Contemporary Design*, Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New-York, United-States  
*Couleur et transparence, Chefs-d'œuvre du verre contemporain*, Musée national de Céramique, Sèvres, France ; Lieu d'Art et Action contemporaine (LAAC), Dunkerque, France
- 1996 *CIRVA : le verre, 10 ans de création à Marseille*, Centre de la Vieille Charité, Marseille, France
- 1997 *Designed for Delight : Alternative aspects of twentieth-century decorative arts*, travelling exhibition : Canadian Museum of History, Gatineau, Canada ; Cincinnati Art Museum, United-States ; Fine Arts Museum of Montreal (MBAM), Montreal, Canada ; Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris, France  
*Architecture et Industrie*, National museum of modern art, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France
- 2002 *The Changing of the Avant-Garde : Visionary Architectural Drawings from the Howard Gilman Collection*, Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New-York, United-States
- 2003 *Inside Design Now*, The National Design Triennial, The Cooper-Hewitt – Smithsonian Design Museum, New-York, United-States  
*US Design : 1975-2000*, travelling exhibition : Denver Art Museum (DAM), United-States ; Memphis Brooks Museum of Art, United-States ; The Bass Museum of Art, Miami, United-States ; Museum of Arts and Design (MAD), New-York, United States
- 2008 *Formless Furniture*, MAK – Austrian Museum of Applied Arts / Contemporary Art, Vienna, Austria  
*Dreamland : Architectural Experiments Since the 1970's*, Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New-York, United-States
- 2012 *9 + 1 Ways of Being Political : 50 Years of Political Stances in Architecture and Urban Design*, Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New-York, United-States
- 2013 *Pop Art Design*, Mordern Museum, Stockholm, Sweden
- 2015 *New Territories : Laboratories for Design. Craft and Art in Latin America*, Museum of Arts and Design (MAD), New-York, United-States  
*Trésors de sable et de feu. Verre et cristal aux Arts Décoratifs, XIV<sup>ème</sup> - XXI<sup>ème</sup> siècle*, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris, France
- 2017 *Une maison de verre - Le CIRVA*, International Research Centre for Glass and Visual Arts, Musée Cantini, Marseille, France

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## PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New-York, United-States  
Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New-York, United-States  
The Cooper-Hewitt - Smithsonian Design Museum, New-York, United-States  
Brooklyn Museum, New-York, United-States  
Wolfsonian – Florida International University (Wolfsonian - FIU), Miami, United-States  
Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, United-States  
Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, United-States  
Denver Art Museum (DAM), United-States  
Indianapolis Art Museum, United-States  
Fine Arts Museum of Montreal (MBAM), Montreal, Canada  
Canadian Centre for Architecture (CCA), Montreal, Canada  
Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A), London, United Kingdom  
National museum of modern art, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France  
Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris, France  
Fine Arts Museum, Lille, France  
International Research Centre for Glass and Visual Arts (CIRVA), Marseille, France  
Fonds régional d'Art Contemporain d'Alsace, Sélestat, France  
Uffizi Gallery, Florence, Italy  
Giovanni et Marella Agnelli Pinacoteca, Turin, Italy  
The Civic Gallery of Modern and Contemporary Art (GAM), Turin, Italy  
Triennial – Design Museum, Milan, Italy  
Die Neue Sammlung - The Design Museum, Munich, Germany  
Design Vitra Museum, Weil am Rhein, Germany  
Kunstpalast Museum, Düsseldorf, Germany  
Museum of Central Finland (Keski-Suomen museo), Jyväskylä, Finland  
Tel Aviv Museum of Art, Israel

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**Gaetano Pesce**  
*Je suis content d'être ici*  
26 February - 6 April, 2019

**Accrochage dessiné**  
16 March - April, 2019

**Rodrigo Matheus**  
5 April - 1<sup>st</sup> June, 2019

**10 year anniversary show**  
23 April - 23 May, 2019

**Guillaume Bresson**  
16 May - July, 2019

**Accrochage d'été**  
June - July, 2019