

Wallpaper*

Estúdio Campana presents 'Cine São José' at Friedman Benda LA

'Cine São José' by Estudio Campana opens at Friedman Benda to coincide with Frieze LA, featuring rare and significant pieces from the studio's history

By Timothy Anscombe-Bell
February 15, 2023



'Cine São José' by Campana Brothers at Friedman Benda LA, including the 'Galactica' sofa (2020), 'Fitas' buffet (2012), 'Bolotas Armchair (Apple)' (2018), 'Bubble Wrap' chair (1995) and 'Yanomami' chair (1989). (Image credit: Julian Calero)

"'Cine São José' was planned before [my brother] Fernando passed away, but it's become an homage to him, to our history and to his memory,' says Humberto Campana of his studio's exhibition at Los Angeles gallery Friedman Benda, which opens this week in line with [Frieze LA](#) art fair (and until 15 April 2023).

Brazilian designer and architect [Fernando Campana](#) passed away in November 2022, aged 61. For over 35 years, brothers Fernando and Humberto pushed the boundaries of

Timothy Anscombe-Bell, "Estúdio Campana presents 'Cine São José' at Friedman Benda LA," *Wallpaper**, February 15, 2023.

furniture design by combining unlikely, often-found materials, with an innovative look at Brazilian culture and craft traditions, becoming international stars of contemporary design in the process.

‘Cine São José’: a tribute to the Campana Brothers’ childhood cinema



Installation view including the ‘Detonado’ chair (2013) and ‘Jalapão’ chair (2022) and ‘Bolotas Armchair Apple’ (2015). (Image credit: Julian Calero)

‘Cine São José’ references the cinema in the Campana brothers’ hometown of Brotas, where they spent a significant part of their youth. ‘We grew up in the countryside, in a small, conservative area of São Paulo state,’ explains Humberto. ‘There was not much going on, but the silver screen opened our eyes to the world.’

The show chronologically traces rare pieces from the history of Estúdio Campana that are imbued with cultural, societal or personal narratives, while introducing some new works that bring together the studio’s core ideologies.



'Disney' sofa (2009). (Image credit: Fernando Laszlo)

The show's earliest piece, the 'Yanomami' chair (1989), is part of a series of rough sculptural iron seats called the 'Desconfortáveis', or 'Uncomfortables', created at a time of political upheaval as Brazil was coming out of 30 years of dictatorship. Exploring personal expression and everyday materiality, the 'Yanomami' is named after and honours the indigenous people from the northwest of Brazil. Perforations made with a blow torch reference the meandering lines that the Yanomami paint on their bodies.

A street vendor's array of children's stuffed animals inspired a much-loved collection, using plush toys stitched together as upholstery, as with the 'Disney' sofa (2009), which recontextualises unexpected materials with humour and a surrealist quality.

Key exhibition pieces show how the brothers continued to find inspiration in São Paulo's neighbourhoods, both in its found or recycled materials and in its local artisans, whose work they supported. The 'Detonado' series (from 2013) integrates reclaimed Thonet cane seating, rewoven in a patchwork, while the 'Wave' buffet (2016) is distinguished by concentric rolls of surplus cloth, including rubber and carpeting.

The 'Galactica' sofa (2020) is made from discarded Styrofoam originally created as packing for electronics and other consumer products. Diverted from landfill, this waste material is intricately joined to create a frame, with bronzed leather worked over the forms by hand. For Humberto, it is a triumph of simple, poetic solutions and creative chaos. 'It took a long time to transform and elevate Styrofoam into something that looks noble,' he says with a grin. 'We use what we find, so no piece is the same, and this creates a unique spirit. You can feel the affection and love within that object.'



(Image credit: Fernando Laszlo)



'Jalapão' chair (2022). (Image credit: Fernando Laszlo)

The new 'Jalapão' chair (2022) sees hand-embroidered discs of golden straw from the centre of Brazil, mixed with braided and stitched leather detailing and pillowy sheepskin

Timothy Anscombe-Bell, "Estúdio Campana presents 'Cine São José' at Friedman Benda LA," *Wallpaper**, February 15, 2023.

upholstery. The piece, which is equal parts surprising and beautiful, is an ode to the craftsmanship culture of their country.

‘When we started out, we didn’t want to take the road of the Brazilian Modernists,’ says Humberto. ‘We wanted to show another Brazil – a mix of cultures, techniques, materials, colours and textures that embrace imperfection, and feel human. Championing the ancestrality of the vernacular is what has always interested us, and I hope that will be our legacy.’

*‘Cine São José: 35 Years of Estúdio Campana’ is on view until 15 April 2023
Friedman Benda, 8260 Marmont Ln, Los Angeles, CA 90069*

estudiocampana.com.br
friedmanbenda.com

Timothy Anscombe-Bell

Timothy Anscombe-Bell runs Sustainable Design Collective (SDC), a Los Angeles-based design resource and consultancy, bringing together some of the brightest in modern craft-based manufacturing. He works on healthy, sustainable and green building schemes – from offices, cultural institutions, schools and universities, to hotels, restaurants and specialist retail.