



Physical Matters

Inspired by virtual studio visits, Hostler Burrows' latest exhibition of Danish artists celebrates tactile materials from wood to metal to textiles.

By Sophie Kalkreuth



Juliet Burrows was in Copenhagen starting a two-week tour of artist studios when the pandemic brought the world to a halt. The New York gallerist soon found herself back home at her dining table visiting studios virtually. But surprisingly, the Zoom tours she conducted with her partner, Kim Hostler, proved fruitful. “I was really surprised by the level of intimacy that was possible during those visits, and how vulnerable the artists were willing to be,” she recalls.

The artists were unguarded and freely opened the doors to their metal and wood shops and their textile and ceramic studios with a desire to share. They discussed their process in detail, showed their works in progress, and from these decidedly in-depth visits came *Matter at Hand*, an exhibition of ten Danish artists that showed at Hostler Burrows in New York last fall and opens in Los Angeles this spring.

The artists that Hostler Burrows selected share a strong commitment to their chosen material — be it glass, wood, metal or wool — and a highly developed investigative process. Some of the most intriguing works consider the matter not just as raw material, but also as nature’s building block, the substance of our observable universe.

Yuki Ferdinandsen’s hammered silver vessels follow the Fibonacci sequence— nature’s golden ratio found in pinecones, flowers and snowflakes while Maria Sparre-Petersen’s sculptures, made from recycled container glass, feature luminous, graphic patterns resembling cells under a microscope. Astrid Krogh collects seaweed by hand to create tapestries of light that mirror the patterns of galaxies, and master glassblower Bjørn Friberg makes sculptures with bold ruptures and voids that recall matter swallowed by a black hole.

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Clockwise: Works by Yuki Ferdinandsen; Implosion by Bjørn Friberg; Seaweed of the Universe by Astrid Krogh.





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Hostler Burrows New York first opened in 1998 (the satellite gallery in L.A. opened in 2019) and continues to mix vintage 20th century Scandinavian furniture with contemporary ceramic art—often from underappreciated architects and designers such as Otto Schulz and Axel Einar Hjorth. But part of the gallery’s charm is that the work is wide-ranging and eclectic, not easy to pin down.

Currently, Burrows says she’s particularly drawn to artists working sculpturally. At Design Miami/ last December, she showed pieces by Finnish sculptor Sakari Kannosto, who is known for figurative works inspired by local folklore. His latest series, *Children from the Flood*, features stone mermaids in diving helmets and iridescent glazes that manage to marry mythic whimsy with apocalyptic doom.

According to Burrows, one of the many strengths of Nordic design is probing our relationship to nature, which is an aspect she finds particularly compelling in our moment of climate crisis. “Scandinavians live so close to nature. They have a closer connection to it, and they are figuring out how to translate that connection,” she says.

Working with contemporary sculptors is particularly gratifying when the gallery can shine a spotlight on highly accomplished artists who aren’t yet known internationally. “Some of the biggest collectors in the world will come into the gallery and say ‘I don’t know what this is but I find it so moving and beautiful.’” Watching collectors share her own visceral reaction to an artist, Burrows says, “is everything.”



Clockwise: *Matter at Hand* at the NYC gallery, photo by Joe Kramm; Hostler Burrows presentation at Design Miami/ 2021, photo by James Harris.