



Gaetano Pesce, Master Of Wacky '80s Design, Is On View Again

THE PO-MO LEGEND ENJOYS AN INFORMAL RETROSPECTIVE IN NEW YORK, AT THE AGE OF 73.



To make a gross generalization, most artists spend their careers plumbing the depths of their personal lives for inspiration. Designers, on the other hand, are thought of as universalists: they create for consensus, not themselves. Gaetano Pesce, the 73-year-old Italian architect-artist, is the rare kind of maker who does both.

Pesce has lived in New York since 1980 and has never staged a full solo show in his second hometown. He's shown individual works here and there, of course, and earlier this year, exhibited a group of resin tables modeled after bodies of water. Better late than never: This month, Pesce is the subject of L'Abbraccio, a solo exhibition at Fred Torres Collaborations. While Pesce is still making new work, the show presents five decades of his career, which gives it the vibe and coherence of a retrospective.

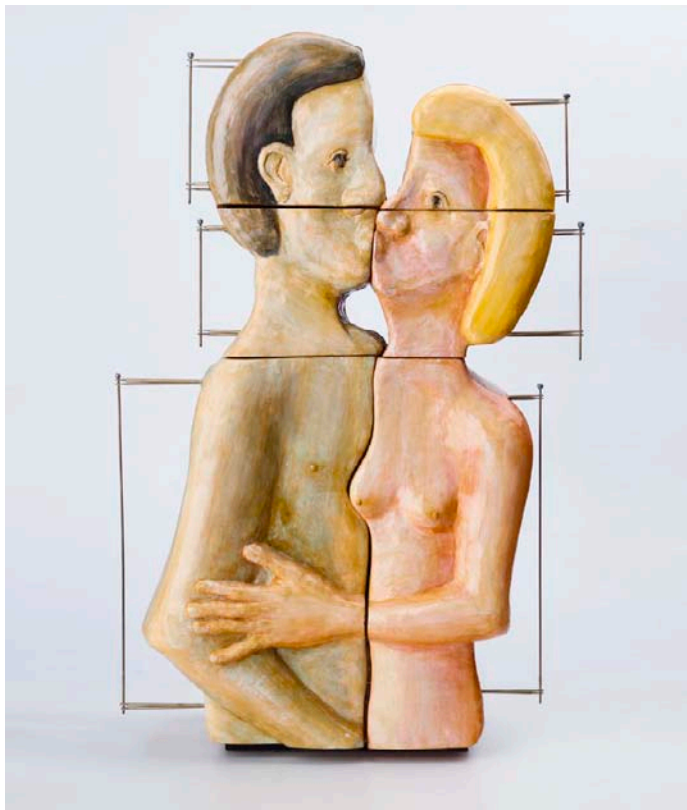
Pesce rose to notoriety in the 1980s as part of the Italian design group Memphis, which today is notorious for its raucous PoMo stylings. He tends to work with a specific material for long periods of time--resin has been a particular fascination--and is incredibly literal with his subject matter. His oeuvre is full of bookshelves about love and chairs about pain. He talks about his work with terms of street life and popular culture.

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TWO THOUSAND
AND THIRTEEN



L'Abbraccio, or The Hug, a cabinet whose front panel depicts two lovers embracing. The image up top is the cabinet, opened.

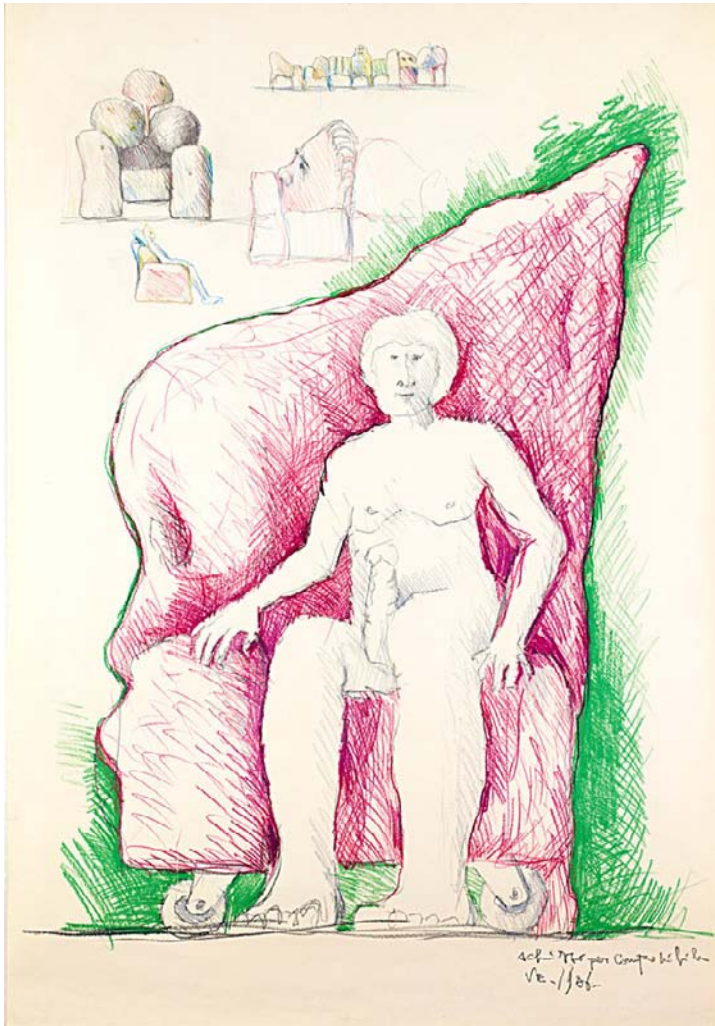
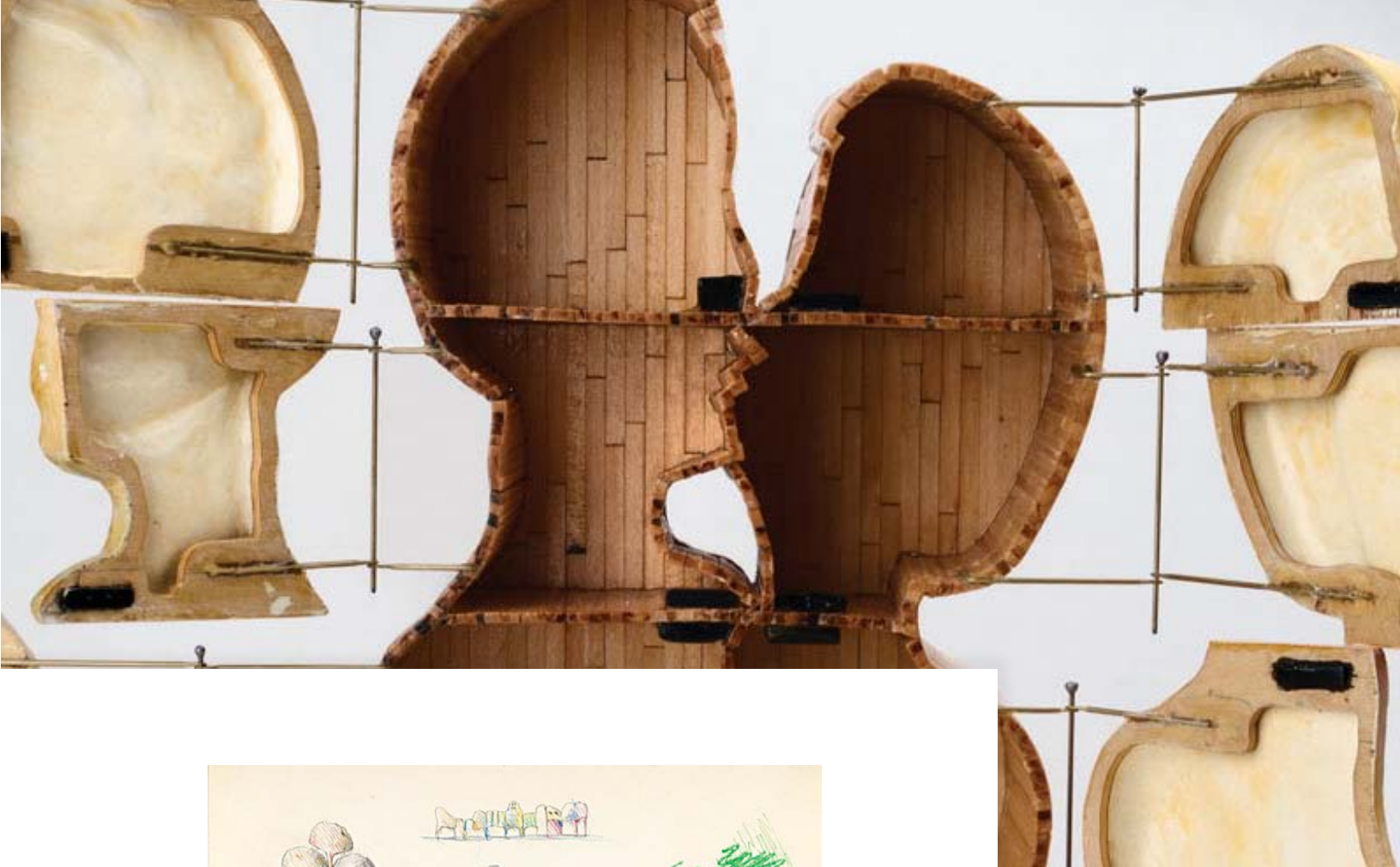
At Fred Torres, his work is organized not by chronology, but by three very appropriate philosophical categories: Eros, Philos, and Agape. In the Eros gallery, there are works about love and passion, including the titular L'Abbraccio, or The Hug, a cabinet whose front panel depicts two lovers embracing. Rare drawings, like Sketch for a Modular Sofa (which, sure, depicts a sofa but is really about the naked figure sitting on it), accompany. In Philos, there's work from Pesce's architectural days, and in Agape, we find Pesce's famed WTC Cabinet, a set of two thin resin bookshelves connected by a glimmering heart. In the hands of anyone else, this kind of literalism would be saccharine--in his, it just seems sweet.

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Sketch for a Modular Sofa depicts a sofa, but is really about the naked figure sitting on it.

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A sketch of the Oh Italy! Lamp, from 1979.

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Pesce is not a traditional furniture designer--he doesn't deal with ergonomic standards, manufacturing, or value engineering. But he is, in a way, an incredible populist: His work may never be in every home, but all of us can relate to the emotions it depicts.

Check out L'Abbraccio at Fred Torres Collaborations until May 25.



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