

### *Over Time*

Mami Kato / Trish DeMasi / Reynold Rodriguez

on view by appointment November 16, 2020 - January 24, 2021

Wexler Gallery at The New York Design Center, 200 Lexington Ave #413, New York, NY 10016

This exhibition examines how three artists – Mami Kato, Trish DeMasi and Reynold Rodriguez – made use of the time granted them by the unexpected changes brought by the Covid-19 pandemic. These artists, already known for producing labor-intensive, handmade artwork, were able to harness the moment to carefully refine their work or to experiment with techniques that were formerly beyond the constraints of their normal circumstances. Trish DeMasi has been able to defy previous confines of scale and space to create her largest functional ceramic works yet. Mami Kato took advantage of the many hours of solitude to create her precise and intricate sculptures. Reynold Rodriguez was able to reshape and rework his first publicly debuted series of playful and functional collectible design. A burden to some, a source of anxiety for many, the fluctuation and fluidity of time over the past eight months has been an opportunity for these three artists. They have cultivated their latest creative achievements, now exhibited together-- over time.

#### About the Artists:

**Mami Kato** is a Japanese-born artist based in Philadelphia. She graduated from Musashino Art University and Tokyo School of Art in Japan and University of the Arts in the US, where she studied oil painting and sculpture. After working as an artist in Japan for several years, she moved permanently to the US in the 1990's and has since been actively showing in both the US and abroad. One of her most recent notable shows took place at Shanghai Wutong Art Museum in 2018. Her work is represented in private, corporate, and public collections in the US, Japan, and China.

Her work begins with an abstract concept or notion and interacts with the sculptural process to give form to this as visual poetry. The material she chooses is often a tool or metaphor used to support the conceptual goal of a sculpture. Best known for her use of rice straw, Kato uses this material to not only reference her Japanese heritage, but to represent its ability to sustain life and the potential of energy to surge from the earth. Her piece entitled 'Umbilical Field' is quite literally an umbilical cord connecting the energy that springs from the earth to humankind. Her intention is to visualize the invisible order and dynamism of nature and the universe through her art-making.

**Trish DeMasi** creates abstract ceramic sculptures inspired by nature and architecture. Her work is a harmonious combination of biomorphism and rigid geometric forms. Though retaining remnants of the visual source, DeMasi pushes her sculptural vocabulary significantly, until the form becomes something mysterious and new. The sculpture and vessels are usually conceived

initially as drawings or paintings and then translated into three-dimensional ceramic works. Each piece is completely hand built in a variety of clay bodies, carved and then glazed in a restricted palate.

A graduate of Moore College of Art and Design, DeMasi has over 30 years of experience in design and advertising which serves to inform her aesthetic choices and approach to her artistic medium. Ceramics was a happy accident that has now become an obsession. "I think not having a formal education in clay has been to my advantage. I don't have any preconceived ideas or restrictions holding me back. I just enjoy experimenting and pushing the limits of the clay. I want to blur the lines between design, fine art, and craft. Labels can stifle creativity. I'm just interested in making things and living a creative life."

The handmade furniture of **Reynold Rodriguez** is infused with distinct character. He carves each piece from solid wood or plaster, approaching the material with the sensitivity and attention of a sculptor. The simple, bold forms are architectural and dynamic. Having been carved by hand, the surface contains a pleasing subtlety. The choice of material, too, adds to the character. Based in San Juan in Puerto Rico, Rodriguez uses wood that had fallen during the devastation of Hurricane Maria. The works are lively, imaginative, and sometimes humorous. The flawless confluence of elements make for a truly unique body of work.

About the Designer:

Reynold Rodríguez earned a degree in industrial design at the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) in 1993. He is the recipient of many awards, such as the I.D. Magazine Design Distinction Award in 1998 for his interior design work, and was a finalist in the Sixth Osaka International Design Competition, Japan, for his work in aerodynamic architecture. Currently, Rodríguez heads a design studio in San Juan, specializing in the design and production of furniture, interiors, and special projects.

"I study the relationship between objects and how they are made. My design ideas are expressed as narratives of the conceptualization process. The growth of our design studio, a source of creativity and production, allows us to develop projects that combine new techniques and materials, giving us the opportunity to challenge traditional standards of industrial design in Puerto Rico."