



May 27–October 9, 2022

My Dear Mountains
Gaetano Pesce

Aspen Art Museum

Born in La Spezia, Italy, in 1939, Gaetano Pesce studied Architecture at the University of Venice between 1958 to 1963 and was a participant in Gruppo N, an early collective concerned with programmed art patterned after the Bauhaus. He taught architecture at the Institut d'Architecture et d'Etudes Urbaines in Strasbourg, France, for 28 years; Carnegie Mellon in Pittsburgh; Domus Academy in Milan; Polytechnic of Hong Kong; Architectural School of Sao Paulo; and the Cooper Union in New York City, where he has lived and worked since 1980. Pesce's work can be found in the permanent collections of over 30 national and international museums, including the Museum of Modern Art in both New York and San Francisco; Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York; Vitra Museum in Germany; Pompidou Center and Musée des Arts Décoratifs of Louvre in Paris; and Victoria and Albert Museum in London. His award-winning designs include the prestigious Chrysler Award for Innovation and Design in 1993, the Architektur and Wohnen Designer of the Year in 2006, and the Lawrence J. Israel Prize from the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York in 2009. Gaetano Pesce is represented by Salon 94 Design.



Gaetano Pesce, Self Portrait Cabinet (medium model), 2022.
Polyurethane resin. 9.5 × 7 × 2 in.
Photo Clemens Kois. Courtesy the artist and Salon 94 Design

The Aspen Art Museum presents My Dear Mountains, a new exhibition by Gaetano Pesce, one of the world's most influential living multidisciplinary artists and creative minds, celebrated worldwide for his provocative and experimental pursuit of material, technological and social innovation. Driven by risk-taking curiosity and radical thinking, Pesce's work is renowned for blurring boundaries between art, design, and architecture.

Pesce's career spans over fifty years and nearly every medium, moving fluidly and playfully across categorical definitions of objecthood. Making a virtue of incoherence, over the years Pesce has remained independent from the sectors of mass-industrial production and commercial distribution, prioritizing his stance as an artist and intellectual. He is interested in introducing cultural values that foster diversity and plurality rather than pleasing market trends and demands. His designs stand out for their figurative and often organic qualities.

The first chapter of My Dear Mountains brings together a selection of furniture, sculptures, drawings, and objects spanning over fifty years of production and experimentation in different techniques and mediums—from the iconic Yeti armchair drawing (1968) to a new series of Leaf Cabinets (2022) realized specially for the Aspen Art Museum. Working primarily with polyurethane resin, Pesce's designs exuberantly embrace figuration and color, challenging the physical properties of materials and valuing the aesthetic outcomes of imperfect gestures over rigorous standards. The artist plays with the unpredictable behavior of elements that can assume different densities and features. For example, in Tavolo Pezzi Feltro Table (2019) Pesce transfers the elasticity and softness of felt to a rigid, three-dimensional volume.

Breaking repetitive patterns of fabrication is at the heart of Pesce's creative vision, as seen in his landmark body of work Nobody's Perfect, first launched in 2002, which established the notion of "diversified series." Objects cast from the same mold remain individually unique as aesthetic choices are entrusted to the aleatory combination of different shades and volumes of resin in the fabrication process, creating unrepeatable colors and textures each time. Three examples of the Nobody's Perfect Chair are displayed as part of the exhibition, which also includes My Mountains (2022), a new series of unique flower vases created by Pesce for the Aspen Art Museum, inspired by the local natural landscape.

Pesce's works seek to give form to what he calls "the liquidity of our time"—a time whose nature is defined by continuous change, curiosity, uncertainty, and innovation. These principles are reflected and find expression in the use of fluid materials that allow the artist to pursue objects that, in his words, are sincere and truthful to their epoch. Featured in the exhibition are examples of two-dimensional cast-resin reliefs that Pesce calls "industrial skins." The painterly figuration of their subjects provides another outlet for the artist's interest in communicating political, social, and personal narratives through his designs.

The second chapter of My Dear Mountains will launch later this summer and feature a site-specific installation specially conceived by Pesce in response to the architecture of the Aspen Art Museum.



Proceeds from the sale of these works support the Aspen Art Museum. For additional information and sales inquiries, please contact Sheri Foreman at sforeman@aspenartmuseum.org or ask a member of staff.

List of artworks

All works by Gaetano Pesce
Courtesy the artist and Salon 94 Design



Yeti armchair, 1968
Color crayons on paper
23.62 × 39.37 in.

Many of Pesce's ideas first manifest as preparatory sketches and exploratory drawings, which provide an aesthetic and conceptual blueprint for the physical objects. Free from practical constraints, these germinal images show the full extent of the creative freedom driving the artistic process. While presenting one of Pesce's earliest designs for a couch, the Yeti armchair also reflects on the inevitability of time as a passing, mutating force—a notion that underpins much of the artist's work. Pesce's Yeti chair stands tall amidst a bare, otherworldly landscape in the company of dinosaurs, creatures whose destiny is doomed. A human footprint marks someone's fleeting presence, while birds in flight offer another image of impermanence. Casting its shadow to the ground, the Yeti armchair cannot withdraw from the flow of time either.



Swamp Coffee Table, 2015
Papier-mâché, resin, and polyurethane foam
18.5 × 51.18 × 36.22 in.

The word "pesce" means "fish" in Italian, and conjures up a playful symbol that the artist likes to introduce into many of his works as a sculptural form as well as a nod to his own name. Swamp Coffee Table is shaped like a smiley fish, whose elaborate texture evokes the greenery of marshes and is achieved through the crafty combination of resin, papier-mâché and foam.



Mountain of Hearts, 2020
Resin
15.35 × 17.72 in.

Vases are favorite functional objects in Pesce's oeuvre, providing the artist with a framework to develop and iterate different motifs. Hearts are a relatable symbol expressing love, friendship, and emotions.



Tree Vase Ciproso, 2016
Polyurethane resin and papier-mâché
39.37 × 9.84 × 9.84 in.

Inspired by the homonym tree, distinctive of Central Italian landscapes, Tree Vase Ciproso is a functional vase whose texture is achieved through the same technique as Swamp Coffee Table. Natural elements are a recurrent motif in Pesce's work—not so much as a celebration of nature per se but rather as an exploration of the idiosyncrasies and irregular qualities of the surrounding reality.



Friend Skin, 1995
Polyurethane resin
84 × 69 in.

The earliest of the three Skins exhibited here, Friend Skin belongs to an ongoing series—including lamps and furniture—portraying friends and acquaintances through design objects. Echoing Pesce’s motto that “architecture should be a portrait of those who inhabit it,” these works remark the artist’s position in favor of the use of figuration and against seriality and conformity in design, seeking to endow each creation with a unique, unrepeatable character reflecting the diversity of society.



Este Skin, 2022
Polyurethane resin
95 × 36 in.

Este Skin is the most recent—and perhaps the most painterly—of the three Skins in the exhibition. The image of a child at the window stages Pesce’s distant childhood memory of traveling with his family to the city of Este, a small town in Veneto, Italy, located in proximity of mountains. The artist recalls standing by the window to look over the local, enchanting hilly landscape—a moment of contemplation of natural beauty that vividly came back to his mind while working on his project for Aspen.



Pelle Burattino (Puppet Skin), 2019
Polyurethane resin
47.24 × 81.5 in.

In the artist’s words, “resin is the paper of our time.” Choosing this material is a way of asserting and embodying with sincerity the epoch that Pesce identifies with and belongs to. The artist approaches the bidimensional compositions of the Skins as figurative forms of storytelling which expand his radical pursuit of social and political expressions through design. In Pelle Burattino (Puppet Skin), a puppet is accompanied by a sentence in Italian, reading: “This figure supported by wires is the last one to still believe in equality...”.



Face Mirror, 2022
Polyurethane resin, mirror
77 × 27 × 1 in.

Pesce seeks to create objects that can speak and convey emotions. Belonging to a new series of mirror pieces, Face Mirror resembles a large-scale hand-mirror with anthropomorphic qualities. The beholder’s reflection enters in conversation with this happy object, which Pesce defines a “positive form” conceived to counteract and provide relief from the heaviness and suffering of the present day.



Display of materials from the artist's studio in Brooklyn

Gaetano Pesce's upcoming project for the Aspen Art Museum façade began as a drawing, which is displayed here with additional sketches for the exhibition catalogue and resin invite. The artist produces a bespoke resin invitation for each of his shows; a selection from the artist's personal archive spanning the last fifty years is presented here. For My Dear Mountains, Pesce produced a special invite design which evokes his design for the upcoming museum façade and also functions as a bracelet. . Displayed on the shelves are also the scale models handmade by the artist for the works Este Skin, Face Mirror, and Leaf Cabinet.



XXL Foot Vase, 2011
Polyurethane resin
36 × 43 × 37 in.

This iconic piece is exemplary of Pesce's experimental approach to the use of materials, and testifies to his productions being themselves forms of research into the physical properties of resin. In the case of the XXL Foot Vase, the particular resin employed allows for a twenty-five minute window before it turns rigid and becomes unworkable. It is by pushing the boundaries of what the material constraints allow that Pesce uniquely achieves this kind of aesthetic result on a large scale.



Tavolo Pezzi Feltro (Felt Pieces Table), 2019
Felt, resin base wood, resin
28.86 × 32.17 × 57.09 in.

According to Pesce, the original idea for this type of felt-based object came to him one day as he was walking down the street in New York and noticed some fabric in the gutter soaked with street water. Captured by the plasticity of the soft folds, the artist imagined the possibility of creating hard-bodied volumes using felt soaked into resin. Tavolo Pezzi Feltro is a testament to Pesce's pioneering pursuit of innovative production techniques to activate rigidity within softness.



Three chairs from the Nobody's Perfect series:

Nobody's Perfect Chair, 2022
Polyurethane resin
35.43 × 19.69 × 18.9 in.

Nobody's Perfect Chair, 2022
Polyurethane resin
37 × 20 × 19 in.

Nobody's Perfect Chair, 2022
Polyurethane resin
34 × 20 × 19 in.

Breaking repetitive patterns of fabrication is at the heart of Pesce's creative vision, as seen in his landmark body of work Nobody's Perfect, first launched in 2002, which established the notion of "diversified series." Objects cast from the same mold remain individually unique as aesthetic choices are entrusted to the aleatory combination of different shades and volumes of resin in the fabrication process, creating unrepeatable colors and textures each time.



Jeanne Chair, 2022
Polyurethane resin
30 × 17 × 20 in.

Named after Jeanne Greenberg, this chair belongs to a “differentiated series” combining rigidity and softness at once. Similar to the Nobody’s Perfect series, the Jeanne Chair is produced combining and folding flat elements that hold together, seemingly magically.



Tree Lamp, 2015-2022
Paper maché, foam, electrical
64.96 × 64.96 × 49.21 in.

Restored and reworked specially for this exhibition, Tree Lamp takes the organic forms of a tree trunk and its roots to create a chandelier attached to the gallery ceiling, as if growing through it.



Leaf Cabinet, 2022
Polyurethane resin
84 × 38.5 × 16.75 in.

The exhibition features three Leaf Cabinets in red, blue, and yellow, specially realized for *the Aspen Art Museum*. Originating from a hand-made scale model by the artist (see display 9), these cabinets develop out of Pesce’s interest in pushing the material to unknown boundaries (a “self-imposed” challenge, in his words). The resin employed for this production reaches a very high temperature during its catalyzation, nearing self-combustion. After pouring the resin into the mold, it is left to cool down with the aid of fans for over twelve hours. These shelf units become spectacular monoliths—rewards of an extreme and fearless production process.



Two Faces frame, 2021
Polyurethane resin
Two sizes:
12 × 12 × 2.5 in.
6.5 × 13 × 1.33 in.



My Mountains, 2022
Polyurethane, felt
15.75 × 6 × 6 in.
Unique in a series of 25

On the occasion of his exhibition **My Dear Mountains** at the Aspen Art Museum, Gaetano Pesce has created a limited series of 25 unique vases inspired by Aspen's natural landscape with the title **My Mountains**. Floral arrangements in the exhibition are by Eliza Ryan.



Self Portrait Cabinet (medium model), 2022
Polyurethane resin
9.5 × 7 × 2 in.



Two cabinets in the hallway:

Leaf Cabinet, 2022
Polyurethane resin
84 × 31 × 15 in.

Leaf Cabinet, 2022
Polyurethane resin
84 × 38.5 × 16.75 in.



Gaetano Pesce, Yeti armchair, 1968.
Color crayons on paper. 23.62 × 39.37 in.
Photo Clemens Kois. Courtesy the artist and Salon 94 Design



Gaetano Pesce, My Mountains, 2022.
Polyurethane, felt. Unique in a series of 25. 15.75 × 6 × 6 in.
Photo Clemens Kois. Courtesy the artist and Salon 94 Design



Gaetano Pesce, *Two Faces frame*, 2021.
Polyurethane resin, 12 × 12 × 2.5 in.
Courtesy the artist and Salon 94 Design. Photo Clemens Kois

ABOUT THE ASPEN ART MUSEUM

Accredited by the American Alliance of Museums in 1979, the Aspen Art Museum is a thriving and globally engaged non-collecting contemporary art museum. Following the 2014 opening of the museum's facility designed by Pritzker Prize-winning architect Shigeru Ban, the AAM enjoys increased attendance, renewed civic interaction, and international media attention. In July 2017, the AAM was one of ten institutions to receive the United States' National Medal for Museum and Library Services for its educational outreach to rural communities in Colorado's Roaring Fork Valley and its fostering of learning partnerships with civic and cultural partners within a 100-mile radius of the museum's Aspen location.

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Hours

Tuesday–Sunday, 10 AM–6 PM
Closed Mondays

Admission to the AAM is free
courtesy of Amy and John Phelan.

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