

DEMISCH DANANT

Press Release

CELEBRATING THE BAROQUE AND FANTASTICAL, NEW WORKS BY MARIA PERGAY TO GO ON VIEW IN NEW YORK CITY

Maria Pergay: Wonder Room

November 17, 2016 – February 11, 2017

Demisch Danant
30 West 12th Street
New York City

New York, NY... Beginning November 17, 2016, Demisch Danant will present *Maria Pergay: Wonder Room*, the first exhibition of works by the legendary French designer and tastemaker to spotlight a key element of her oeuvre: an intense engagement with the exotic and the baroque. Pergay has long been revered for her pioneering postwar adaptation of steel into disciplined but sensual domestic furnishings, many of which are now regarded icons of 20th century modern design. But throughout her career, Pergay has also consistently employed the most outré natural specimens, rarefied traditional craft techniques, and fantasy narratives in an output that suggests magical realms or cabinets of curiosities. Her works can be seen as a series of *wunderkammers* rich with precious stones, found oddities, references to ancient Egypt and



Maria Pergay. *Table Galet*, 2016

Pompeii, and surprising details that hint at distant provinces. Through major new furniture designs, as well as important archival pieces, accessories, and never before seen drawings from her personal sketchbooks, Demisch Danant's exhibition will celebrate the 'wonder room' that is the world of Maria Pergay.

Coinciding with the designer's 86th birthday, *Maria Pergay: Wonder Room* will remain on view through

February 11, 2017, at the gallery's new space at 30 West 12th Street in the heart of the Greenwich Village Historic District in New York City. The exhibition is accompanied by the first publication ever focused upon Pergay's design sketches.

About the Exhibition

Wonder rooms, or cabinets of curiosities, emerged in mid-16th century Europe as displays in cabinets and vitrines with multiple compartments. These repositories were filled with all types of natural specimens, art, and rare treasures in combinations intended to inspire wonder and stimulate creative thought. Much like modern day museums, wonder rooms told stories about a collector's passion not only for objects but also for exploration and for collecting itself. For her latest exhibition, Maria Pergay has designed five new works, each its own veritable wonder room.



Each single table or cabinet is a *tour de force*, housing through its composition and painstaking construction a selection of natural and hand-crafted elements, oddities, and personal memories. In the grouping of these works, Demisch Danant itself becomes a wonder room of precious objects.



Maria Pergay. *Table Marie Antoinette*, 2014

Among the highlights of the show is Pergay's pair of *Cabinet Borgia* (2016), powerful functional works reminiscent of Renaissance furniture. Each cabinet features carved black Gabon ebony handles adorned in precious bone specimens and hand-forged, ironclad armature protecting

intricate interiors. The *Table Galet* (2016) showcases fossilized ammonite and rare river stones embedded in a stainless steel top shaped to mimic flowing water. And the *Table Marie Antoinette* (2016) is a luxurious receptacle for a slice of Marie Antoinette's historic oak tree, originally planted at Versailles in the 17th century and felled by the epic storms that swept France in 1999.

Complementing these new works are vintage designs from the 1970s through early-2000s that trace the designer's penchant for the fantastical and connect the six decades of her career. These include a collection of small silver objects and one-of-a-kind lamps created by the designer presented along with her *Caviar Cabinet* (2005) in an enclosed space suggesting a *wunderkammer*.

About Maria Pergay

Born in Moldavia, Maria Pergay (b. 1930) opened her first shop in the Place des Vosges in 1960 and designed small objects in silver and special pieces on commission for fashion houses including Christian Dior and Jacques Heim. In 1968, Maria Pergay presented her first collection of stainless steel furniture at Galerie Maison et Jardin, including the now-iconic *Flying Carpet Daybed* (1968) and *Tambour Table* (1968). This seminal exhibition established Pergay as one of the most innovative French furniture designers of her time, a visionary who almost single-handedly

transformed stainless steel from a commercial industrial material into a principal component of modern furniture. Pergay has exhibited and has embarked upon significant commissions for Pierre Cardin, the World Trade Center in Brussels, the Royal Family of Saudi Arabia, and other esteemed clients. In her 86th year, after a half-century of creation, Pergay continues to surprise both herself and her collectors.



Maria Pergay. *Cabinet Borgia*, 2016

About Demisch Danant

Demisch Danant was founded in 2005 by Suzanne Demisch and Stephane Danant. The gallery specializes in twentieth century French design with an emphasis on the late 1950s through the 1970s and represents the work of Maria Pergay, Pierre Paulin, Joseph-André Motte, Pierre Guariche, Michel Boyer, Antoine Philippon and Jacqueline Lecoq, and René-Jean Caillette. Curated exhibitions on historical work are presented within environments that reference architecture and interiors of the era.

The gallery also features exhibitions concerning the intersection of architecture, design and art, including the work of Sheila Hicks, Felice Varini, Krijn de Koning, and César.

Demisch Danant is dedicated to research and scholarship on French design and has authored and published monographs including *Antoine Philippon and Jacqueline Lecoq* and *Maria Pergay: Complete Works 1957-2010*. Current projects include a comprehensive monograph on seminal designer Joseph-André Motte, and a new book about the architectural commission works of artist Sheila Hicks.

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