

SHAPE SHIFTER

WITH HIS ARCHITECTURAL MONOLITHS AND CURVILINEAR FURNISHINGS IN BRONZE AND WOOD, A LOS ANGELES CREATIVE BLURS THE LINE BETWEEN ART AND DESIGN.

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Raised in rural Oregon and Colorado, it's no surprise that Los Angeles-based artist Stefan Bishop developed an early appreciation for wood from his father—a sculptor and “lumberjack of sorts,” he reports. “I was enthralled with the power of the tools, the massiveness and strength of the trees, and the smell of sawdust and gasoline.” That fascination would bear fruit during his time at California College of the Arts when Bishop began to create a series of geometric, totem-like wood sculptures, which still resonate in his practice today.

After the self-described “experiential learner” left school, he honed his craft in workshops in Los Angeles and Chicago. However, it is the work of the late artist Donald Judd that had the greatest influence on Bishop’s overall aesthetic. “At first it was just dizzying, bewildering, how objects so simple and pure could completely rock me to my core,” he explains. “It took years to stop trying to understand and explain the brilliance of his work and to simply absorb it.”

Since launching his own studio in 2012, Bishop has expanded his repertoire to incorporate bronze. “It allows me to make things that wouldn’t be structurally sound in wood,” he notes. In contrast to his work in wood, Bishop’s Puddle series of bronze tables have fluid lines inspired by reoccurring dreams of water, most notably a nap-time vision of golden liquid pouring down his forehead. “I saw this image of a splash that dripped down to become the base,” he says.

Regardless of medium and form, Bishop’s work possesses a common thread. “Whether they are architectural pieces or organic, flowing things, I consider my work to be abstract scale models of various landscapes and topographies of both the natural world and urban, industrial constructs,” he says, noting that he visualizes a miniature version of himself inhabiting his creations. “I don’t find answers, but I don’t really need them. My work is about the exploration.” **L**



At his Los Angeles studio in a 1920s building, Stefan Bishop (top) creates pieces that walk the line between art and design and call on the viewer or end user to make the distinction for themselves. When he is deep in a project, his focus centers on his tools and the materials in his hands. It allows him to discover different languages of shape and form emerging around him and in his mind’s eye.