



SALON 94

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Alabaster Beds, Antler Stools: Furniture Exhibition By Rick Owens



There at two wooden boxes, nailed shut, sitting in the entranceway of Salon 94, **Jeanne Greenberg Rohatyn's** gallery situated inside her townhouse on 12 East Ninety-Fourth Street. They've recently arrived from Paris along with two tons of alabaster and other imported treasures—including designer Rick Owens who has come to New York to put on an exhibition of his furniture designs, titled "Pavane for a Dead Princess."

The scene on Thursday evening is that of a gallery under construction. A plastic curtain held up with blue sticky tape shields much of the ground floor. Behind it, a fog of white dust falls around men sanding the alabaster that will become a sprawling, tomblike bed in time for tomorrow's opening. The grand installation is undeniably Owens in scale and shape but also in allusion. The designer cites **Paul Virillo's** cult architecture book, *Bunker Archaeology*, as one of his early design references. "Bauhaus temples," is how Owens describe the early 20th century Modernist bunkers captured in its pages. "I thought, 'I want to live there someday,'" he says. An alabaster bed is not too far off.

Owens's venture into furniture began when he needed benches for his first showroom. "It was intended to be a one-shot deal but developed a life of its own," he says. His approach is akin to that of his clothing design. "I interpret Madame Grès and Vionnet in leather and T-shirts," Owens explains. "It's Jean Harlow glamour to wear at home—an extreme look in un-extreme materials. It's the same for the furniture collection." Concrete, marble, alabaster, bronze, and plywood are the predominant materials in Owens's often oversize creations. "I would have loved a house full of Ruhlmann and Jean Dunand, but it's all too small [for me]," he says. He points to a piece he calls the Double Bubble, a perforated-suede pillow-topped lounge. "This is my version in black plywood: the punk-rock material of furniture."

"I like the idea of illustrating how it works," Owens says as he tours the second floor of the gallery and sees his work in situ. A Styrofoam-based piece by artist **Huma Bhabha** catches his eye ("I love Styrofoam!"), as does a pair of lion-topped chairs by **Diego Giacometti**. A few of Owens's stools stand under a **Hella Jongerius** walnut table featuring an enormous tree frog, blue enamel seeping up its leg. "He has a magic touch: avant-garde in his approach, yet completely practical. It's an unusual combination," says Greenberg Rohatyn, who produced the exhibition with Rudy Weissenberg. "His work is inscribed with a classicism and bruteness."

—Stephanie LaCava