



Photo by Clement Pascal

AFFINITIES

*Studio Giancarlo Valle at Magen H
Gallery*

September 22nd - October 15th, 2021

Opening Reception:
Wednesday, September 22, 2021
4-7PM

Magen H Gallery
54 E 11th St
New York, NY 10003

Masks and proof of vaccination required.

Magen H Gallery is pleased to present AFFINITIES, an immersive exhibition featuring unique and limited-edition designs by Giancarlo Valle, assembled alongside the gallery's iconic French mid-century furniture and ceramics. The exhibition, which opens Wednesday, September 22nd from 4-7PM, will feature 11 works by Giancarlo Valle and over 30 vintage objects from the gallery.

Known to make detailed architectural models for his projects, Giancarlo Valle transports us into his captivating imagination of the gallery space, revealing a dialogue between his unique contemporary style and the gallery's significant French post-war designs.

As you step into the gallery, you will enter Valle's tactile world, where timeless forms will peep through the translucent screens as delicate shapes. This ephemeral blurriness only emphasizes the unexpected character of each piece, old and new, as well as Valle's overall aesthetic and creative process.

Text by Dung Ngo

Entering Giancarlo Valle's studio, you are greeted by at least half a dozen architectural models arranged on makeshift shelves. Made as studies for specific projects and populated with tiny representations of furniture and other furnishings, the scale models are carefully constructed, but they have an improvisational quality to them. They hark back to another time, when computers were not ubiquitous in design offices. "My current work is a reaction to the digital," Valle says. "For somebody who grew up on the computer, every we did was drawn in CAD. A lot of my interest since school has been a complete reaction to that."

This reaction has driven Valle to produce some of the most tactile, sensual interiors and designs in the past handful of years. Trained as an architect at one of the most theoretical programs in the country, Valle then spent his first professional years drawing steel-and-glass details at prominent architectural offices — all done on the computer. As those who have spent time with CAD (computer aided design) software knows, the results are driven by digital precision, not materials or building techniques. To disrupt the computer's relentlessly linear flow, Valle introduces the handmade back in the design process. As Valle explains about his way of working, "Building a design process that allows you to *not* know where you're going. It stems from the interest to bring a little bit more of the improvised, a jazz element, a slightly uncertain nature to the way you work."

This improvisational process yields furniture designs and interiors that have an unforced playful quality, visually familiar to the best works of the mid twentieth century. But it would be a mistake to understand Valle's designs as superficial riffs on the midcentury shapes that we know well. Valle arrived at these forms not by imitation, but by investigating the same ethos of material research and constructional methods that twentieth-century masters before him had done. As an architect, Valle also know the importance of materials and their innate behavior — and he construct his designs by pushing but also respecting their boundaries. Speaking about one of his favorite materials, Valle stated, "Ceramic, which is so unpredictable as a material, is the antithesis to digital architecture. You can't control the way it comes out; you can only put the pieces together in a certain way." Valle enters into a dialog with each material that he works with, whether it's clay, wood, or tin. Each material wants to be molded, carved, or bent in their specific way. If Valle designs evoke the tactility of a Roger Capron table or the rigor of a Le Corbusier screen, it is because the results are arrived from the same authentic trajectories, the same material investigations, but with a freshness that is unique to Valle. "Working with these materials allows for that element of surprise," Valle says. "It's easy to surprise a client because they're not part of the internal process of development, but to surprise yourself is actually incredibly hard." Each of Valle's design — whether it's a ground-up house, a living room, a simple wooden chair, or his own studio — with their affinities to materiality and traditions of innovation, both surprise and delight their visitor.