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STYLE

Fernando Mastrangelo: Getting Granular

By JULIE LASKY MAY 4, 2016



Fernando Mastrangelo on a bench from his Drift series, which is made of cast sand and was inspired by glaciers in Patagonia, Chile. Behind him is a mirror from the series.

Robert Wright for The New York Times

Some furniture designers favor Brazilian hardwoods; others, welded steel. The Japanese designer Shiro Kuramata was a master of acrylic. The Italian postmodernist [Ettore Sottsass](#) did wonders with Corian.

[Fernando Mastrangelo](#)? His signature material is salt.

Mr. Mastrangelo, 37, a sculptor and designer in Brooklyn, has perfected the technique of binding salt and other granulated substances like sugar, quartz crystals and coffee grounds with resin and using the mixture to make furniture. Many of his pieces have rough surfaces that look as if they've been gnawed by a plague of locusts in the most attractive way.

“I was looking for a material that could speak about life and death in one swoop,” said Mr. Mastrangelo, who was born in the United States to Uruguayan parents, raised in Monterrey,

Mexico, and worked early on as an assistant to the artist [Matthew Barney](#). He sees a paradox in salt's capacity both to preserve and destroy. It keeps shipboard grub edible and is used to mummify bodies, “but it also has this way of deteriorating anything that comes into contact with it.”

Mr. Mastrangelo has taken salt to its limits, casting it in a hypnotic 25-foot-high wall sculpture for the technology mogul Sean Parker's West Village townhouse. The project took two years, six months of which were spent on

the installation alone. Completed in 2014, it was, the artist said, a pivotal point in his career, his savory spot.

In 2014 he began producing furniture under the brand MMaterial, while issuing limited-edition designs as FMS Studio.

At the Collective design show this month, Mr. Mastrangelo is exhibiting Drift, FMS Studio work that seems to be hewed from rock. This time, don't thank salt — thank sand.

For these six pieces — including a sofa, bench and mirrors — he cast layers of blue sand in hand-carved molds to imitate the ombré effect of glaciers. (He was inspired by a 4,000-mile motorcycle journey he made with his friend the actor Boyd Holbrook, from Santiago, Chile, to Patagonia.)

But sodium chloride will be back in the game soon. Mr. Mastrangelo is planning a trip to the Dead Sea, the holy grail of salt lovers and the theme of next year's collection.



A sofa from Mr. Mastrangelo's Drift series. Cary Whittier