



**R & Company to Present *Castle Garden*,
An Exhibition of New Works by Designer Serban Ionescu**

On View April 28 - August 12, 2022

New York, NY – March 3, 2022 – R & Company is pleased to announce Romanian American artist and designer Serban Ionescu’s first solo exhibition at the gallery since formally joining its program in October 2021. Ionescu has long been interested in world making, approaching his design works as whimsical characters that he brings to life in *Castle Garden*. Named after the first immigration station in the United States, “Castle Garden” was originally a military fort and then a theater before becoming the main entry point to the U.S. for European immigrants in the 1850s. Just as Castle Garden’s functions changed over time, the functionality of Ionescu’s objects is variable, transforming based on the viewer’s desires and the location of the works. For the upcoming exhibition, the designer draws on his architectural background to create a range of large-scale structures, including “pavilions” that people can enter, allowing for a new interior experience of his work, as well as “roomscrapers”, elongated, tall sculptures that suggest a built skyline. On view from April 28 through August 12, *Castle Garden* will also include a spectrum of works, including a standout dining room table, cabinets, and chairs, and maquettes for other pavilions—all in Ionescu’s signature style.

As an artist, Ionescu is continuously finding new ways to translate his ideas and sketches into physical, sculptural form. Ionescu recalls the long-term creative impact of drawing before he was able to speak and using this as his first form of communication. After moving from Communist Romania to New York at the age of 10, he remembers being overwhelmed by the color and abundance of his adopted country while continuing to use drawing to communicate before he learned English. Ionescu’s practice is further informed by a myriad of influences from graffiti to abstract painting and punk music. These early memories and influences are clearly manifest in Ionescu’s inventive design objects, which are unrestrained by existing definitions and have an incredible potency to transport people into playful and compelling worlds entirely of his making. For his first solo show since joining R & Company, Ionescu has expanded the scale of his work while adding new forms to his oeuvre, creating a world of unfamiliar but compelling shapes and structures that will feel as though the visitor is entering a three-dimensional version of the artist’s vision, a space where the logic of design meets the boundlessness of sculpture.

Ionescu’s interest in the notion of world-making is especially pronounced in his enterable pavilions. Building on the success of *Chapel for an Apple* (2020)—an outdoor, 20-foot tall, architectural folly-like pavilion, in Hudson, NY—Ionescu has been creating spaces that can be experienced from within and can be positioned indoors or outdoors. Drawing directly from the designer’s background in architecture (he received his Bachelor of Architecture from the Pratt Institute and taught at the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute’s School of Architecture for six years), these pavilions originate as sketches which Ionescu then transforms into meticulous models—a number of which will be on view in the exhibition—that collectors can commission to be made real-size for a range of environments. The centerpiece of the exhibition, the



22 feet tall *Tower for an Hour*, is an example of one such commission for a New York City home. Offering spaces for reflection, rest, or play, these pavilions invite us to question the built environment, the interplay between interior and exterior spaces, the relationship between architecture and design, and the confluence of experience and function.

Castle Garden is a world in which objects are imbued with personalities. In this world, Ionescu's 8-foot-tall anthropomorphic mirrored figure – part of a new series of “critters” – inhabits the space while also reflecting the creative explorations of color and scale around him. His “roomscrapers” form a playful skyline that blurs boundaries between the sculptural and the functional. “My objects come to life as they perform for various spaces and viewers in different environments,” says Ionescu. “My chairs are sometimes objects to sit on and other times characters at a raucous dinner party, while a “roomscraper” oscillates between being an inhabitant of the space and a structure within it. Like an immigrant in a new world, the works change and adapt based on their surroundings.” Together, the works in *Castle Garden* feel like characters about to spark into action and reflect the artist's desire to “delve into a liminal mysterious space where objects cannot immediately be identified and are constantly transmutating”.

“We are thrilled that Serban’s first exhibition since joining the gallery will contain some of his most ambitious and creative work to date,” said Zesty Meyers, Principal at R & Company. “Serban’s work is inspired by child-like sense of wonder and grounded in incredible technique and a commitment to exceptional craftsmanship. His approach is very much the future of collectible design, in which objects are fully unbound from traditional notions of form, function, and seriality. Each work is distinct and captures Ionescu’s hand and vision as an artist. We are very much looking forward to continuing to develop market interest in his practice.”

“We have been presenting Serban’s work for several years, and we continue to be inspired by his inventiveness and the way his works move fluidly across disciplines and categories,” added Evan Snyderman, Principal at R & Company. “The sense of play and imagination that is so central to Serban’s work is something we want to amplify in the exhibition experience, so that visitors are stepping into his world and at the same time can also see how it can be part of their lived experience—to bring that joy, color, personality, and imagination into their homes or other daily spaces.”

ABOUT R & COMPANY

For over 20 years, R & Company has championed collectible design, advancing the contemporary marketplace and actively growing a global collector base and clientele. Its founders, Zesty Meyers and Evan Snyderman, are widely recognized for identifying rising talent, deepening scholarship about collectible design, and developing new avenues for growth in the industry. R & Company maintains two dynamic spaces in New York: its expansive, inaugural space at 82 Franklin Street features a rotating display of interior environments highlighting gallery designers, while 64 White Street offers an active roster of solo and group exhibitions and includes a Library and Archive of more than 4,000 books,



journals, and other materials. The gallery is committed to nurturing and sustaining the markets and careers of both emerging and established designers, as well as to maintaining and expanding commercial and academic interest in historic design. Its roster of international designers includes Wendell Castle, Sebastian Errazuriz, Rogan Gregory, the Estate of Greta Grossman, Serban Ionescu, Hun-Chung Lee, Joyce Lin, Jolie Ngo, Katie Stout, Johnny Swing, Studio Job, Joaquim Tenreiro, and Jeff Zimmerman, among many others. With its vision, passion, and expertise, R & Company serves as a critical platform for experiencing 20th and 21st-century objects and discovering innovative, rare, and significant design.

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