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Gagosian London to Spotlight Peter Marino

The multit talented architect and designer talks to AD about his latest endeavor

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Two of Peter Marino's bronze boxes that will go on display at Gagosian London next month. From left: Rough Stone Box, blackened bronze, 33 1/8" h × 50 3/8" w × 20 7/8" d; Tall Dragon Scale Box, blackened bronze, 57 3/4" h × 37 1/2" w × 18 3/16" d. Photo: Courtesy of Gagosian

Architect, interior designer, and collector all rolled into one, Peter Marino has long been celebrated for his considerable creations. His newest endeavors in bronze will be on display at Gagosian's London outpost in the upcoming "Fire and Water" exhibition, opening in late June. The exhibition is the latest to showcase Marino's bronze boxes, which were first presented in Gstaad, and then at the Paris Biennale des Antiquaires in 2012 and 2014, to much acclaim. The new body of work includes tiled boxes, commodes, and chests of monumental scale in gilded, silvered, and blackened bronze. "They're really sculptural and verge into the masculine," says Marino, who is the only architect besides Frank Gehry represented by Gagosian.

The inspiration for the collection first took hold a decade ago when Marino was traveling along the Turkish coast. "I was stunned by bronzes dating as far back as 350 B.C. and amazed by the very notion that work in bronze outlasted entire civilizations," explains the architect,

whose storied personal collection of French and Italian bronzes was exhibited at the London Wallace Collection in 2010.

For the new pieces, Marino was as much inspired by nature as human civilization: the surface of his "Deep Water" boxes in silvered and blacked bronze appear as rivulets of water. "I ran my thumb down to create that design," he says. "Silver picks up the light so in looking at them from different angles, they never appear the same." When it came to his "Dragon Scale" series, the ever-creative Marino took his design motif from his own dragon tattoo. The six examples on view replicate the mythical creature's scale patterns on various shapes, including a gleaming gilded bronze four-drawer commode.

Marino's boxes were as labor-intensive as they are detailed; the collection took the talented artisans at the Atelier St. Jacques—part of the Fondation de Coubertin, the French national institution for crafts, manual work and trades—over two years to produce. It's a worthwhile endeavor, though, for something that may just outlast a civilization.