

Proudly Perched

Although well known at this point in his career for sculpture-like furniture, prior to immersing himself in the discipline of creating art that is both functional and beautiful, Jean-Marie Fiori spent years as an interior painter specializing in fresco and *trompe l'oeil*.

Born in Limoges, France, in 1952, Fiori graduated from the École Nationale des Beaux-Arts in Paris and received a master's degree in fine arts from Paris Vincennes VII.

It was, in fact, his charming painted alabaster animal busts that first brought him to the attention of collectors. In addition to making them in alabaster, Fiori crafts such animals (always his primary subject matter) in marble and cast bronze.

The fantastical creatures of Fiori's imagination recall early zoological studies such as medieval bestiaries and Aristotle's *Historia Animalium*, in which observations of animal life merge with art and philosophy.

His most recent bronze furniture creations have been produced in limited and signed editions; they fuse sculptural details and figurative elements into extraordinary décor pieces with elegant, clean lines and whimsical appeal.

Humorous and original, the Sumer Cabinet (2019) is made of patinated bronze and ash wood. The cabinet

doors showcase Fiori's signature highly stylized animals, and a predatory bird stands guard, perched on top with a key dangling from its beak. "I named this cabinet *Sumer*," Fiori said, "because the bas-reliefs were inspired by the Assyrian ones I admired at the British Museum. Of course, without the cruelty and violence." He added, "My main inspirations come from the most ancient civilizations."

Fiori has done several large public commissions, including *La Tour aux Bêtes* on the island of Mallorca in 1997, *Dolmen de Serris* for the town of Marne-la-Vallée in 1999, a series of zodiac figures for the Paris Mint in 2000, and—by invitation of the Chinese Official Committee of the World Expo in Shanghai in 2010—outdoor sculptures interpreting traditional Chinese animal motifs.

He was awarded the Édouard-Marcel Sandoz Prize in 2009 and exhibited at the Museum of the 1930s, which is located in the Paris suburb of Boulogne-Billancourt, in 2012. Fiori's work is found in numerous private collections internationally and has been shown at art fairs including *PAD Paris Art + Design*, *Masterpiece Fair* in London, and *Universal Expo* in Shanghai.

Fiori's Sumer Cabinet is being shown at the Twenty First Gallery in New York.



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