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24-PAGE
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Thomas Demand and Anders Byriel (seated) at Byriel's home in Ebeltoft, Denmark, with Pleats (on wall) by the Danish artist duo AVPD

FINDERS KEEPERS

conceptual art

Seeing the world differently is the collaborative crux for an avant-garde artist and an enlightened patron, says Emma Crichton-Miller. Portrait by Mikkel Heriba

The collecting adventure that Anders Byriel and Thomas Demand embarked upon together 11 years ago began quite by accident – the results of which have reached far beyond the conventional accumulation of treasures.

Byriel (pictured above right) is the CEO of the visionary Danish furniture textile brand Kvadrat, which had over

€100m in turnover last year. It was his father who co-founded the business, and since it opened in 1968, artist collaborations have been a core feature. But Byriel also collects privately, mostly contemporary sculpture and photography. Demand, meanwhile, is a contemporary artist who creates works using sculpture and photography. He builds life-size models from paper and cardboard, reconstructing scenes that are often taken from newspapers and other

sources. These are then photographed from angles that confound both a sense of scale and orientation, while tantalising with their verisimilitude. Demand then destroys the paper model, so that the photograph becomes the only record of this event. Although there are aspects of the work that can be purchased – his artworks sell at auction and from his galleries, Matthew Marks Gallery in New York and Sprüth Magers in Europe, for prices ranging from

£3,000 to well over £300,000 – the essence of the work is conceptual.

The relationship with Byriel was born out of the collector's commitment to creative collaboration, and Demand's recognition that here was someone with a genuine desire to help contemporary artists realise their visions. Demand has encouraged Byriel to become, rather than simply a collector, an enlightened patron of contemporary conceptual art – often of pieces that are not focused on actual objects at all. Byriel says of Demand, "I call him my pioneer, my scout, my muse. He has been an advisor and an inspiration."

Through Demand's intercession, Byriel has worked with artists as distinguished as Olafur Eliasson (represented by Neugerriemschneider in Berlin and Tanya Bonakdar Gallery in New York), Rosemarie Trockel (Gladstone Gallery and Sprüth Magers),



Clockwise from above:
The Path Series by Olafur Eliasson. **White Cube Installations** by Jesper Rasmussen. **Black Label** by Thomas Demand

Roman Signer (Hauser & Wirth, among other galleries) and, most recently, the Italian born, LA-based Piero Golia (now represented by Gagosian), to create landscapes, performances or architectural installations – many involving textiles – which are site-specific and may last just an afternoon or a month. Some of these leave no trace beyond the photographs or videos taken to document them and the memories in people's minds.

These endeavours are often, as Eliasson has defined them, not so much discrete art works as “devices for the experience of reality”. Demand insists that, “Not being permanent is part of the idea. Do not underestimate the impact of a myth.” As Byriel puts it, “For me, this is the avant-garde, the merging of architecture with contemporary life: it is the type of art that creates questions about our existence.” Together, Demand and Byriel have established a programme of patronage that they expect to unroll for at least the next 10 to 15 years. Each project requires a budget that typically starts at €100,000 depending upon its complexity. Byriel has bought works for

both his private collection and for the business, for €200,000 or more a piece.

The pleasure, for Byriel, is to see the world differently. He builds his collection through personal relationships: “I like to meet artists. And when I meet young artists I always ask who has inspired them. That is good navigation.” His private collection features images from Demand's renowned *Black Label* series (pictured above) and Eliasson's sought-after early *Path Series* (1999) – one edition sold at Phillips in 2012, achieving £68,450 (pictured top left) – photography by Roman Signer, as well as work by Scandinavian artists including Ann Lislegaard, Miriam Bäckström,

Søren Lose and Jesper Rasmussen (*White Cube Installations* pictured below). These range all the way from narrative and atmospheric landscape photography through to architectural projects and animation, and complement other work he owns by American artists Ed Templeton and Raymond Pettibon, German photographer Marc Räder and Danish artist Nils Erik Gjerdevik.

The pair first met when Demand was exhibiting at the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, in Humlebæk, Denmark, in 2000. Byriel showed an interest

Urquiola and Doshi Levien: “It is an extremely cool, lean company.”

In 2007, Demand introduced Byriel to Olafur Eliasson, who required textiles and moveable seating for the Serpentine Gallery Pavilion that he designed with Kjetil Thorsen. That project has evolved into a long-term partnership with Eliasson, which led, in 2008, to Byriel inviting the artist to work with landscape architect Günther Vogt on creating work in the 10-hectare grounds surrounding the Kvadrat headquarters in Ebeltoft, on the east of Jutland. *Your Glacial Expectations* represented Byriel's first commission. Since then he has commissioned Roman Signer to create *Tuch* and *Bogen*, two performance works



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in the landscape at Ebeltoft, complete with explosives, and, to mark the opening of Kvadrat's headquarters in Paris in 2012, he invited the Swedish artist Miriam Bäckström to make an interactive piece, *See What You've Made Me Do*, using a technology called “luminous textile”.

Meanwhile, under Byriel's leadership, Kvadrat has continued to work with Demand on his shows – providing fabric as part of the exhibition design for his solo show at the Neue Nationalgalerie in Berlin in 2009; it was also behind *Saal*, a site-specific installation for the Städel Museum in Frankfurt. Byriel is quite clear that although his private collecting has been transformed by his corporate support, they are separate things: “On a corporate level I see myself as a patron. But on a private level, I think of myself as a collector with personal relationships with the artists. I am on a mission, and I hope never to have to sell the work.” He confesses, however: “My challenge now is that I have two houses that are very nearly full. So I will have to start lending art out so that it can all be on display.” ♦ *Thomas Demand is represented by Matthew Marks Gallery, 523 West 24th Street, New York, NY 10011 (+1212-243 0200; www.matthewmarks.com), and Sprüth Magers, Oranienburger Strasse 18, D-10178 Berlin (+4930-2888 4030; www.spruehmagers.com) and branch.*

in collaborating. Demand recalls, “He was a very young, dashing man and he seemed very open.” It was not until 2003, however, that they began to work together. Demand had his first major museum show at Bregenz, in Austria, and, with his usual meticulous attention to detail, turned to Kvadrat for help in devising a curtain to shield his film, *Trick*. Demand was overwhelmed by the generosity of Byriel's response (“He was totally behind the project”) and impressed by the culture at Kvadrat, where, under Byriel's direction, the company has undertaken many ambitious collaborations with designers such as the Bouroullec Brothers, Patricia