

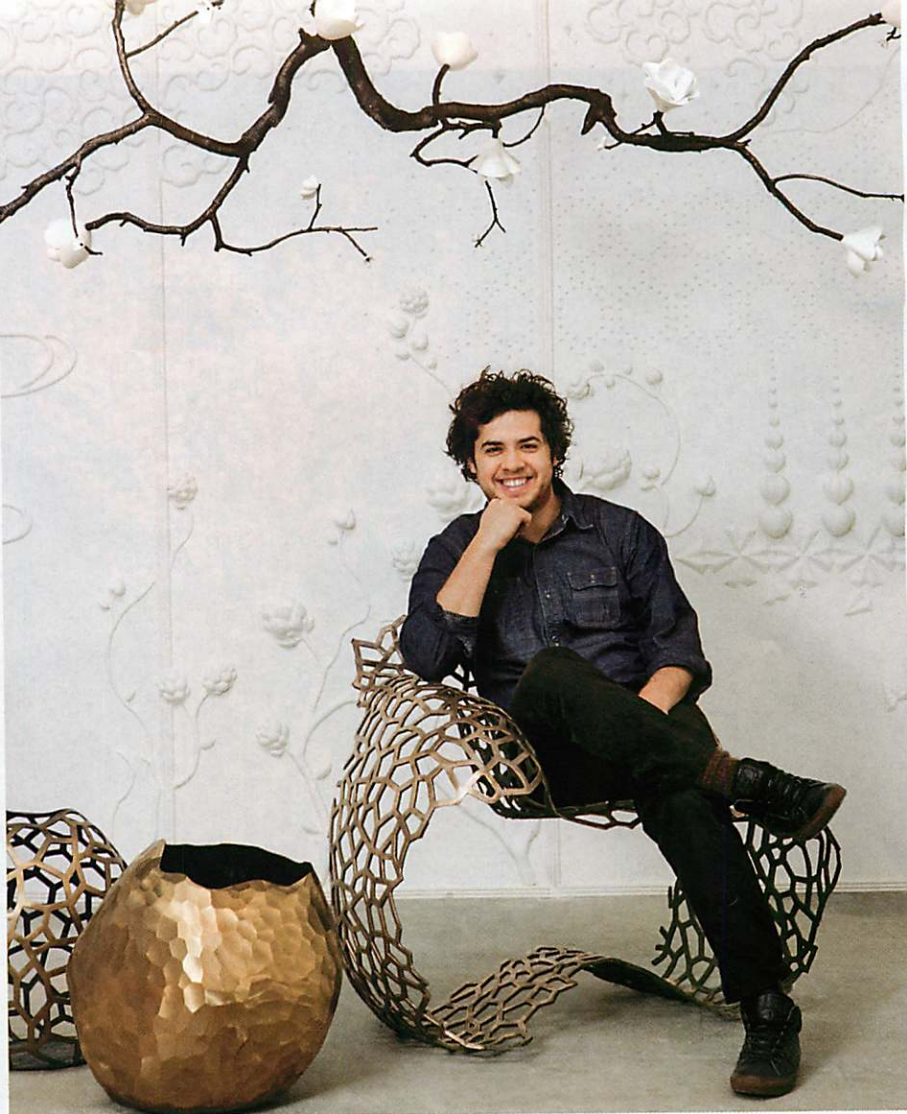
ARTISAN

NATURAL GIFTS

An expert in myriad decorative arts, David Wiseman showcases the breadth of his creative talents in a bold new exhibition

Since launching his design studio a decade ago, David Wiseman has dedicated his diverse practice to the creation of a fantastical naturalistic world. The Los Angeles artisan has covered ceilings with plaster bas-reliefs of vines that explode into delicate porcelain blossoms. He has hung glacier-inspired faceted-crystal lanterns from intricate bronze swags. And he's forged metal vases, mirrors, fire screens, and other limited-edition or unique furnishings in patterns that variously suggest clover leaves, fish scales, and honeycombs. From May 11 through June 25, the full range of Wiseman's creative output will be on display in "Wilderness and Ornament," his eagerly anticipated second solo show at R & Co. gallery in New York City.

For previous exhibitions, Wiseman often harvested details from his large-scale commissions and adapted them into individual decorative objects. Pomegranate forms he installed on a ceiling at a San Antonio home, for example, were reproduced as match strikers, while sycamore seedpods made for an atrium in a West Hollywood, California, public library reemerged as napkin rings. "This time I'm not just showing fragments but whole worlds," he says.



Wiseman grew up in Pasadena, where the proximity to nature made a deep impression. He recalls turning hollowed tree trunks into bunkers and watching his grandmother tend her orchid and fuchsia plants. He got lost in her book collection: primers on lacework and knot tying, and, most of all, Owen Jones's *The Grammar of Ornament*, the classic 19th-century

compendium of decorative patterns. "It's still my bible," he says.

Today Wiseman draws inspiration from Japanese prints and textiles, Islamic *jali* screens, and, lately, Austrian artist Dagobert Peche's designs for the Wiener Werkstätte. A result of these investigations are the ghostly plaster panels at the heart of his Manhattan exhibition. In these new works, direct representations of nature are shifted into more stylized, even abstract, forms. "A century ago artists found a way to make ornament relevant to contemporary life, before postwar standardization wiped it away," Wiseman says. "I'd like to make it relevant again." dwiseman.com and r-and-company.com

—ROB HASKELL

Above: David Wiseman with recent creations at his Los Angeles studio; the plaster wall panels will star in his upcoming show at Manhattan's R & Co. gallery. **Left:** An array of his sculptural tabletop objects.

