

ART

# ALL FRIENDS HERE!

By RACHEL SMALL

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LAUNCH GALLERY »

"We didn't want to make artwork that was cold; we wanted it to be a warm hug." So declares FriendsWithYou, the artist duo Samuel Borkson and Arturo Sandoval III, in their new Rizzoli monograph aptly titled *We Are Friends With You*.

Unlike many pockets of the art world, FriendsWithYou isn't prone to bouts of cynicism. Based in Los Angeles, the group pushes ideas of peace, spirituality, truth, and acceptance through simple, psychedelically colored sculptures, images, and installations (the Friends' personal favorite medium). Often featuring animist underpinnings—cute anime-inspired eyes; smiling mouths; and stubby, welcoming limbs—the little characters come off very friendly indeed.

"FriendsWithYou was created to be an unconditional loving force in opposition of bad feelings and alienation," write Borkson and Sandoval, who founded FriendsWithYou in 2002. "We all share the same origin, the same feelings, and the more we understand this, we can have compassion for each other."

Out this week, their second monograph features Pharrell Williams, the boundary-breaking director Alejandro Jodorowsky, and curator Peter Doroshenko as contributors. The monograph reproduces major work, exhibited everywhere from Art Basel Miami Beach to malls in Hong Kong, from the last 12 years. To coincide with the release, FriendsWithYou also designed a limited edition lamp dubbed "Little Cloud"—in the shape of a smiling cloud, one of their signature motifs—for Paul Kasmin Gallery's retail space PK Shop.

"We hope the book is a highly accessible doorway to being FriendsWithYou; meaning let's disarm ourselves from each other and see each other as ourselves," explain the artists. "That is why the cover is a reflective material: so you can see yourself in the book and the beautiful rainbow you have inside of you."

Delving into FriendsWithYou's conceptual side, Doroshenko argues that the collective's message is based in tenants of Minimalist Art, from the idea that the artists' egos "remain in the background" as the physical shape stays simple and "pure." "We all meet on the same plane and appeal to the world as our audience," write the artists.

Williams connected with the pair through their shared gallerist Emmanuel Perrotin, and first worked with them in 2012 on his "i am OTHER" YouTube project, debuting their short film Cloudy. "These guys are more than just paintings and sculptures," says Williams. "They are really two really large proponents for experience, which is the ultimate wealth as a human being on this planet. Experience is the only thing that you can take with you when you die."

FriendsWithYou's recent success has undoubtedly been energized by Pharrell's attention, but the musician isn't about to accept thanks. "I've only tried to be the exclamation mark to your sentence," he tells them in a conversation reproduced in the book. "The exclamation mark never really gets the credit, but it does the job, which is to highlight the most important thing, and that's the sentence. That's you guys. Who wouldn't want to be friends with you?"

**WE ARE FRIENDSWITHYOU IS OUT NOW FROM RIZZOLI. "LITTLE CLOUD" LAMP IS AVAILABLE AT PK SHOP NOW.**