

Design Miami: A Brief Expedition

The limited-edition, rare and prototype furniture snapped up by buyers at the third annual Design Miami, the design showcase that overlaps with Art Basel Miami Beach, included a boomerang-shaped *Belu* bench (2007) by Zaha Hadid and Patrick Schumacher, which RoveProjects LLP sold for \$200,000, and a set of furniture by Oscar Niemeyer, designed between 1972 and 1990, which R 20th Century reportedly sold for \$200,000. Moss Gallery had the highest-priced transactions, with two of five editions of Studio Job's suite of cast bronze furniture, titled *Robber Baron: Tales of Power, Corruption, Art and Industry* (2007), selling for \$1.1 million each.

While acquisitions were on the minds of the serious shoppers among the 20,000 attendees, other visitors were taking in the experiential aspects of the show. Fairgoers could watch Tanya Aguiñiga transforming the most mundane piece of mass-produced furniture imaginable — the folding metal chair — into a cheerfully colored, softer incarnation, coating it with matted wool, soap and water. Nearby, Stuart Haygarth created an eight-foot-high, five-foot-wide chandelier from the bottoms of 1,500 water bottles donated by visitors to the fair. It was positively regal when finished, commanding the center of its light-drenched space, a testament to the glory of refuse morphed into a functional object.

Designer of the Year Tokujin Yoshioka's installation *Tornado*, on the top floor of the adjacent Moore Building, provided a crowning moment after a trek through the show's three floors of furniture offerings. The afternoon sun lent an ethereal glow to undulant mounds of clear plastic straws piled in drifts around a series of Yoshioka's sculptural creations, including several chairs and a crystal sculpture enthroned on pedestals. The Artek pavilion, dubbed "Space of Silence," was another luminous

assemblage. Japanese architect Shigeru Ban, known for an ecologically friendly approach, filled the long chamber with 100 playfully stacked, gracefully aged Alvar Aalto chairs that Artek has reclaimed from flea markets, schools, homes for the aged and garages.

Libby Sellers, a former curator at London's Design Museum, brought Grandmateria to the Loft Building, a segment of the fair that offered visitors on-the-spot interactions with emerging British talent. There was a pop-up tattoo parlor, furniture being made from soap, quirky shelves being crafted from felled trees and giant light fixtures that designer Haygarth was assembling from the taillights of industrial vehicles.

Whether the focus was acquiring, exploring or simply admiring exemplary design, the converging elements at Design Miami touched on all points. —Saxon Henry

Top Studio Job's cast bronze *Robber Baron: Tales of Power, Corruption, Art and Industry* (2007), at the Moss Gallery space.

Below left A paper chair by Designer of the Year Tokujin Yoshioka, surrounded by banks of plastic straws, formed part of his installation *Tornado* on the top floor of the Moore Building.

Below right Stuart Haygarth's chandelier made from the bottoms of 1,500 empty water bottles donated by visitors during the fair.



Photo by Red Eye Productions

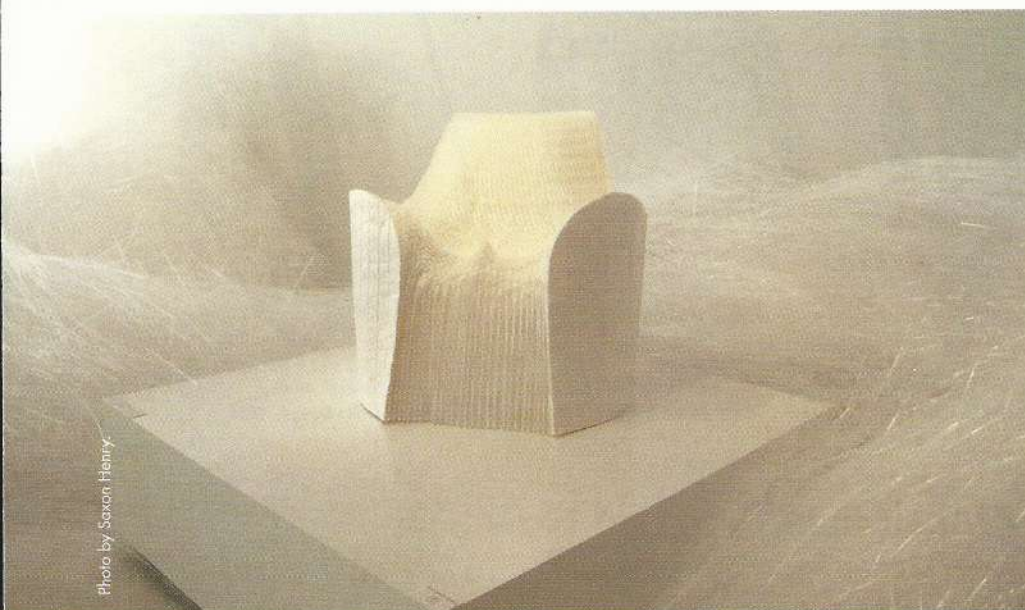


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