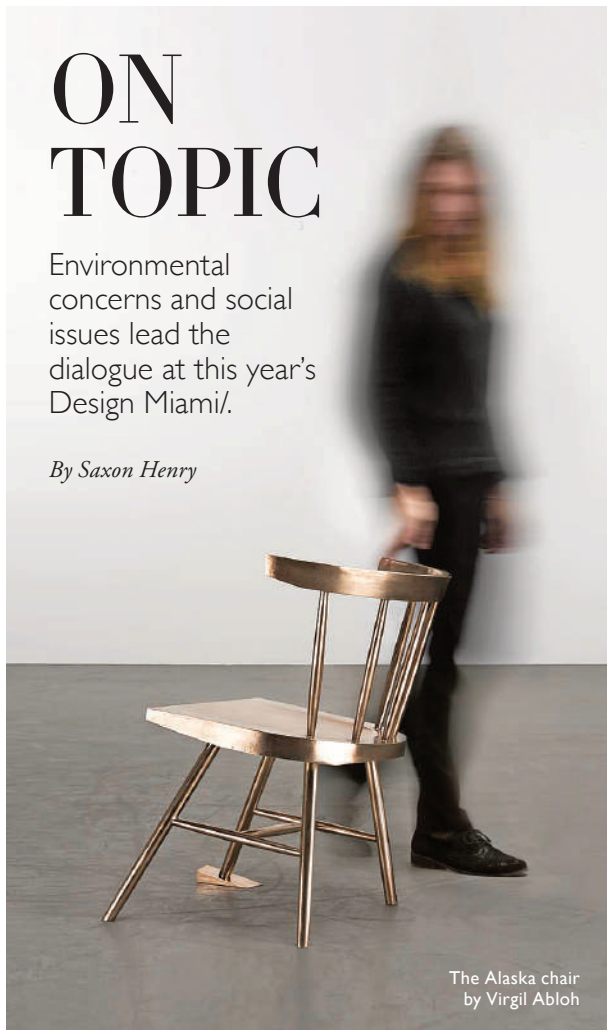


ON TOPIC

Environmental concerns and social issues lead the dialogue at this year's Design Miami/.

By Saxon Henry



The Alaska chair by Virgil Abloh

Tidal Wave Carpenters Workshop Gallery, one of Design Miami/’s core exhibitors, is espousing advocacy this year with Virgil Abloh’s Alaska chair and Alaska bench among the works it is showing. The asymmetrical creations seem to be subtly sinking like a ship might tilt as it is just being submerged. This is intentional, as the works call attention to rising sea levels in this geological age. Abloh singled out Venice with its tidal peaks that regularly flood the city as an example. The Illinois native recently had a major exhibition of his past and current work shown at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago.



Liquid Assets “Elements: Water,” a statement-centric series of experiences envisioned by Design Miami/’s curatorial director, Aric Chen, will highlight environmental awareness during the fair. Chen chose water as the focus because issues relating to it have become extremely urgent as the planet struggles, Miami’s tidal swings being a prime example. When asked what makes Design Miami/ an apt forum for highlighting urgent environmental issues, Chen was clear: “Design has always responded to the urgencies of its time. If you think of the great 20th century names that you see at the fair—Jean Prouvé, Charlotte Perriand, Enzo Mari—their work was deeply imbued with a social agenda. And that goes a long way in explaining the longevity of their work, why you see it in museums.” Chen has been seeing stronger statements about pressing issues by those creating collectible design during the past several years: “They’re tackling these head-on—not so much in terms of offering solutions to problems that are beyond the power of any designer to solve, but in using their creativity and imagination to present new potentials for how we see, think about and create the world we inhabit.”



Coral Light sculpture and Bubble armchair by Léa Mestres and William Coggin, on view at the Galerie SCENE OUVÉRTE booth at Design Miami/

Design Declarations There was a time when idea-driven creations were strictly the domain of experimental artists. Several programs unfolding during Design Miami/ this year prove that many of those who create collectible design have embraced social issues just as strongly. Participating in **Curio**, 11 galleries from across the globe will stage cabinets of curiosities, which include a diverse mix of artists expressing distinctive perspectives. Miami gallerist Mindy Solomon will exhibit *Diasporic Voices: Redefining Our Cultural Perspectives Through Design* with works by Donté Hayes, Basil Kincaid, Linda Lopez and Lee Kang Hyo, who has been dubbed the “Jackson Pollock of pottery.” Philadelphia’s Wexler Gallery will stage *Street Shrine I: A Notorious Story* by Roberto Lugo, which includes large-scale funerary urns, a ceramic teddy bear and graffiti-inspired wallpaper that evokes the makeshift memorials for gun violence victims often found on the sidewalks in the neighborhoods Lugo once called home.

Roberto Lugo (here with some of his artworks) is one of the artists in Design Miami/’s Curio program.

