

Off-the-Charts Opulence: Design Miami Paris Kicks Off its Residency in an 18th Century Mansion

The worlds of collectible design, art, and celebrity converged for the extravagant Design Miami Paris. The baroque setting was adorned in gilded luxury design items.



Design Miami's chic locale, the L'hôtel de Maisons. Photo: Ivan Erofeev. Courtesy of Design Miami.

by **Caroline Roux** • October 17, 2024 • [Share This Article](#)

Let's start with important stuff. Design Miami Paris has to be the only fair in the world where the toilets are accessed through a concealed panelled and mirrored door in a room replete with neo-classical gilding and a richly detailed parquet floor. The washbasins are red marble. I hope that sets the tone.

Design Miami, now in its second edition in Paris, takes place in the ridiculous splendor of L'hôtel de Maisons, an 18th century mansion in the 7th arrondissement just south of the Musée d'Orsay. This year, the gallerists had really got to grips with how to install 20th century and contemporary design in its ornate, domestic interiors. Alessandro Mendini's monumental Poltrona, for example—a 2013 curvaceous but solid armchair entirely clad in mini white gold mosaic—looked quite at home, and perfectly proportioned, in the mansion's palatial entrance. It's a handy serving suggestion for its potential billionaire buyer: just put it in the hall, dear. (Mendini, out of favor for a number of anti-postmodern years, is now racing back up the price charts. So buy, buy, buy! Yours for €120,000 (\$130,668) at Galerie Kreo.)



All those Americans who didn't come to London last week certainly turned out in force on day one of Design Miami. They were scattered among the many: the decorators (India Mahdavi, Lee Mindel), the uber collectors (Maja Hoffmann), the next gen (the Arnault boys), the celebs (Natalie Portman, Owen Wilson). Wilson came and left on his own fold-up Brompton, prompting speculation as to whether he now lives in Paris, or brings his bike on the plane.

"I think they come here for French material," said Juliet Burrows, of her own people. She has a gallery in New York and LA focussed on Scandinavian ceramics and she was selling well, but not to them. Still everyone else was charmed by a pair of large-scale ceramics of fantasy animals that sit somewhere between the near-realism of Les Lalannes (available at Galerie Mitterand) and the zoological insanity of the Haas Bros. Dripping with freely applied glaze, the saucer-eyed creatures are the work of Jasmin Anoschkin, a Finnish artist who delves into childhood memories and personal experiences and pulls out these beasts—initially charming and seductive, but more deeply about the pain of being different.



There was plenty of French material, of course. Design Miami Paris is a little history lesson in French decorative arts and design, if you care to take the time. Here's the work of Jean Prouvé at Francois Laffanour's [Galerie Downtown Paris](#), representing France's first great attempt to introduce industrialization to furniture production. The original Standard chairs, made from 1934 onwards, in sturdy steel and plywood, and intended to bring good furniture to the masses, are now a must for collectors' homes and the back rooms of art galleries. So are Prouvé's prefabricated houses, designed as an emergency solution for post-war France and its colonies, now repurposed as cute cottages for HNW gardens. M. Laffanour sold a full-scale *maison demontable* from 1946 on day one for over €1m. It will make a lovely outdoor office.



Carnac House by Jean Prouvé for Galerie Downtown-LAFFANOUR at Design Miami.Paris 2024. Photo: Ivan Erofeev

Upstairs, the work of insurance guy turned designer, Jean Touret was given a big showing by [Galerie Gastou](#). Touret's mission ran counter to Prouvé's after the second world war, and he set up a workshop in the Loire village of Morolles in 1950 to celebrate tradition, hiring local craftsmen to whittle away honestly at wood in the old fashioned way. The middle and upper classes loved this rural chic, snapping it up in Galeries Lafayette. Now you can bag a table for €65,000. Touret turned to God; 1980 he designed the altar for Notre Dame; it was destroyed in the recent fire.



Works by Jean Touret were showcased by Galerie Gastou. Photos: Edouard Auffray.

The new altar at Notre Dame, to be revealed on December 6 at the holy equivalent of a vernissage, is a bronze masterpiece by Guillaume Bardet. Galerie Kreo was laying the way with a fine bronze ladder by Bardet (€40,000 here, though one sold at a Christie's charity auction last month for €150,000), a personal stairway to heaven.



Guillaume Bardet, Trait d'Union- Hyphen. Courtesy of Galerie Kreo.

Design fairs can be hard to handle—all those materials and shapes and eccentricities. But in this domestic situation, with each gallery contained by a room, a certain sanity—and visual cohesion—prevailed, in spite of the huge quantity of visitors coursing through. Jesse Lee, the fair’s new Chairman, who purchased Design Miami exactly a year ago, seemed delighted by the numbers, and by the fulsome presence of high-flying fashion folk—a seam he intends to dig into deeper. “Fashion people are getting more involved in design, and I want to bring them closer,” he said, though it has been going on for quite some time.



Estúdio Campana's "Cocoon" chairs are based upon Brazilian folklore for the Objets Nomades collection. Courtesy of Louis Vuitton.

Take Louis Vuitton whose Objets Nomades series started in 2012, in which name designers are asked to create limited edition works. New pieces by Estúdio Campana (now led by Humberto, the remaining Campana Brother) were a long way from the Campana's early inspiration of the creative chaos of Brazil's favelas and the days when they made chairs out of creepy clusters of soft toys and roughly massed batons of wood. Here, under the Vuitton regime, are revamps of the hanging cocoon chair and a Lotus flower chair, all soaring perfect petals and so friction free, it looks like a prop from a fashion store window. Still, gorgeous leather. Can't dispute it.



Salon 94's Design Miami Paris booth. Photo: Ivan Erofeev.

On the ground floor, Salon 94 was cleaning up with its late Gaetano Pesce pieces—felt chairs with cut-out faces as seasonal and grinning as pumpkins—that represent his final designs (Pesce died aged 84 in April). Don't even bother. The chairs are a limited-edition and the priced at \$10-40,000. No way there's any left. Still for design enthusiasts, it was a welcome last goodbye to a designer who played fabulously with material and color until his dying day.