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Giant rhubarb tables and Virgil Abloh thrones at Design Miami Paris

The fair returns to the 18th-century Hôtel de Maisons with a vibrant melting pot of classic and contemporary creations



“It was an experiment, and one that worked 90 per cent,” says Grela Orihuela, the senior VP of Design Miami. She is talking about the American design fair’s first Parisian edition, which took place last October. (The mothership, as the name suggests, was launched in Miami in 2005.) The success of the new event can partly be measured by the reaction of those who are coming back for its second round. “This year we have 24 galleries taking part,” adds Orihuela, “and 15 of those are returns.”

Among the latter is Galerie Kreo, the cutting-edge Paris design gallery founded by Didier and Clémence Krzentowski. “For us it was fantastic,” says Clara, their 29-year-old daughter, who is beginning to influence the 30-year-old business. “The location helps. It’s full of natural light, and the house itself is a Paris gem.” Indeed, the 18th-century Hôtel de Maisons on the city’s Left Bank, which Design Miami will occupy for five days, maintains much of its historic splendour. With its wood-panelled rooms and rich parquet, it was deemed sufficiently well-appointed by the self-appointed arbiter of taste himself — Karl Lagerfeld — to be his home for a number of years.

These are the highlights:

CLOTILDE ANCARANI AT GIULIA DE JONCKHEERE

Clotilde Ancarani trained as a sculptor, but now spends equal amounts of time making art and design in her Brussels studio. In fact, her real passion is her garden, which infuses her work completely. “Plants have always been my subject,” says the 58-year-old, who searches out the most exquisite large-scale leaves to cast in bronze. “I like the contradiction between the fragility and organic properties of plants and the cold, hard characteristics of bronze as a material.”

In the garden of the Hôtel de Maisons, visitors will find her low, curly edged Gunnera Table, cast from the huge leaves of a giant rhubarb plant that was growing in a neighbour’s garden, and earlier sculptural pieces based on smaller (though still sizeable) domestic rhubarb leaves.

“I’m not consciously influenced by Art Nouveau,” says Ancarani of the 20th-century style that looked to nature for inspiration. “But I do live in Brussels, where it’s everywhere, so I probably feel its presence every day.”

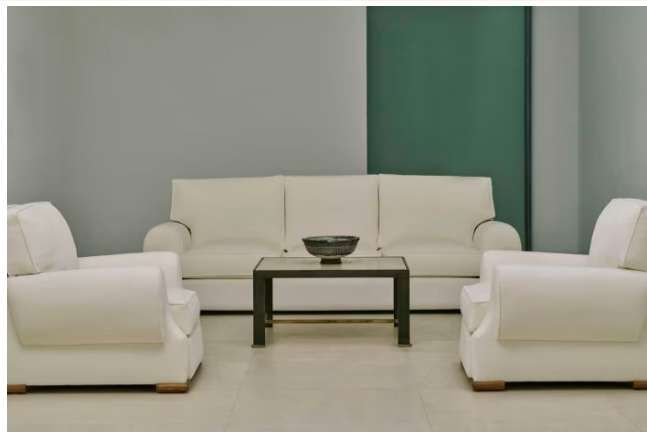


The Gunnera Table and other bronze casts by Clotilde Ancarani, on display at Giulia De Jonckheere © Courtesy of the artist and Giulia De Jonckheere

PAUL DUPRÉ-LAFON AT MAXIME FLATRY

Maxime Flatry, 32, opened his Left Bank gallery two years ago. There he specialises in the French furniture masters of the 1920s and 30s, including Jean-Michel Frank, whose pared-down aesthetic upturned the fancier rules of decorative arts in his day.

At Design Miami Paris, Flatry will show a suite of furniture by Paul Dupré-Lafon made in the 1930s — a sofa, armchairs and a table. The seating was originally upholstered in red velvet, but Flatry has chosen to replace this with a glowing white. “Dupré-Lafon’s work was as reductive as Frank’s in one way, but more expansive in another,” says Flatry. “The chairs are wide and generous and they sit low to the floor. It’s almost like car design, like a 1930s Rolls-Royce. The lines and the dimensions are so modern.”



1930s sofa and chairs by Paul Dupré-Lafon, at Maxime Flatry © Courtesy the artist and Maxime Flatry

JEAN TOURET AT GALERIE GASTOU

“Jean Touret believed in the poetry of the handmade, and the direct relationship between man and material,” says Victor Gastou, the second-generation director of the eponymous Parisian gallery. After the second world war, during which he had been taken prisoner, Touret ditched his life in insurance, and headed to the Loire Valley. There he assembled craftsmen into a guild, called the Ateliers de Marolles, and set about designing hand-crafted oak furniture that ran counter to the prevailing industrialisation of France, and mass-manufactured goods. “The work was sold in Galeries Lafayette,” says Gastou. “It appealed to a sophisticated clientele who appreciated its artisanal qualities.” The pitted “honeycomb” surfaces, created with a gouge, certainly have a very rustic appeal.

Touret resigned from the Ateliers in 1964, and carried on making his own totemic sculptures in acacia wood, which he never sold in his lifetime, some of which will also be on show. “He was inspired by Matisse and Cubism,” says Gastou. But most of all he was inspired by his faith, and continued to make a living from religious commissions.



Sideboard, chair and candle holder by Jean Touret and Artisans de Marolles, at Galerie Gastou © Edouard Auffray, courtesy the artist and Galerie Gastou

VIRGIL ABLOH AT GALERIE KREO

The American Virgil Abloh had a sadly brief life — he died in 2021, aged just 41 — but he packed a lot in. Trained as an architect, he went on to work as a fashion designer, launching his own brands Pyrex Vision and Off-White, and ultimately becoming the creative designer of Louis Vuitton’s menswear in 2018. He also DJ’d and designed furniture.

Galerie Kreo is showing one of his last works — the monolithic Tower Hills chair, which, like his fashion, synthesises luxury and the street. It’s a chunky, robust cube of a chair, made in bronze, but cast in OSB (oriented strand board, or chipboard) to give it the finish of something more disposable. “It feels right to put this throne-like piece into the mansion’s luxurious interior,” says director Clara Krzentowski. “To bring together the contemporary and the historic.”



‘Tower Hills’ chair (2021) by Virgil Abloh, cast in bronze, at Galerie Kleo © Alexandra de Cossette. Courtesy Galerie kreio

ITALIA AT DOWNTOWN +

While father François Laffanour holds the fort at Design Miami with blue-chip French names, his daughter Luna, 28, has gone rogue. She is showing a selection of historic Italian work at the nearby Hôtel de l'Industrie on Place Saint-Germain-des-Prés, which she is pairing with contemporary painting by Nicolas Mehdipour — richly pigmented abstracts and eerie figurative paintings of lost adolescents. His vibrant palette coincides with that of Italian masters such as Gaetano Pesce and Ettore Sottsass, who from the 1970s were delving into new materials and ways of living.



Work by the Italian designer Ettore Sottsass, on display at Downtown+ © Handout

Design Miami Paris, October 16-19, designmiami.com. Italia, to October 16, plusdowntown.com