

CULTURE

The Design Miami/ Iss



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Hang Tight

Who says a chest of drawers has to be stationary? Ditte Hammerstrøm presents a balancing act of keepsakes with her Bunch of Boxes.

“Ditte Hammerstrøm belongs to a new generation of Danish designers taking a conceptual approach to traditional cabinet making. Her deconstructed chest of drawers swings, holding a chosen number of boxes inspired by the owner's keepsakes. The work creates movement and levity out of a conventionally solid and sedentary piece of furniture. It reminds me of netted abalone, fresh from the sea.”

—Alexandra Cunningham



This limited edition hanging cabinet, Bunch of Boxes, by Ditte Hammerstrøm, is presented by Galerie Maria Wettergren at Design Miami/.

Bright Young Things

We spotlight three international design galleries—in Paris, Seoul and Brussels—that are shaping the future of their fields.

BY JAIME GROSS



Galerie Maria Wettergren

If the first thing you picture when you think of ‘Scandinavian design’ is a mid-century chair—say the enfolding curves of an Egg chair by Arne Jacobsen—Maria Wettergren would like you to think again. In her year-old Paris gallery, Wettergren is giving contemporary Scandinavian designers their due. “The young designers have suffered some time from being in the shadow of their ancestors from the golden age of modernism,” she says. “I realized that it was time to give this new generation a space to express itself.”

Though the new guard may use cutting-edge materials like carbon fiber, laser-cut wood, and fiber optics, their work maintains a handmade quality that suggests a reverent nod to the past. “Far from being iconoclastic, they take the best of tradition to build new paradigms,” Wettergren says. “Just like the great Scandinavian designers of the 20th century, new technological methods and materials are being combined with breathtakingly beautiful handcrafts.”

This year at Design Miami/, Wettergren brings IKAT I-III Frieze, a six-meter-long fiber optic wall sculpture by Danish artist Astrid Krogh and Cellular, a limited-edition 3D-printed epoxy chair, at left, designed by Mathias Bengtsson and inspired by the way bones grow. High tech meets the handmade—welcome to the new era of Scandinavian design.

Gallery Seomi

When it opened in 1988, Gallery Seomi made a name for itself as the first gallery in South Korea to show boldfaced international artists like Donald Judd, Willem De Kooning and Gerhard Richter. While the gallery still shows work by American and European modern masters, in recent years its focus—especially when showing abroad, in venues such as Design Miami/—has shifted to Korean design.

“For a long time the international market has been focused on Western high-end designs,” says Gallery Seomi owner PJ Park. “So we took on the challenge to introduce a new way of design—reflecting our own culture, philosophy and the virtue of craftsmanship and naturalism.” The rising-star designers they show, such as Bahk Jong Sun, Bae Se Hwa and Lee Hun Jung, “are original and creative,” says Park. “They cross over the boundaries of craft, design and art and meditate on traditional ideas. But they have reinterpreted the influence of Western design and propose their own aesthetic value through a totally different grammar.”

Take Jong Sun’s minimalist wood furniture and lighting, inspired in equal parts by Scandinavian practicality, Shaker style and the simple beauty of the traditional Korean house. Or Hun Jung’s ceramic and concrete pieces, as much novel sculpture as functional pieces of furniture. Se Hwa, too, is equal parts master craftsman and design sensation, using steam-bent wood to shape sculptural benches and chairs that strive for no less than finding “the balance between ying and yang.” Heady days for Korean design indeed.



Galerie Pierre Marie Giraud

Pierre Marie Giraud opened his eponymous gallery in Brussels in 2005, spotlighting ceramic, silver and glass design. “At the time I felt the contemporary ceramic market was very disorganized and unprofessional,” he says. He thought he could do better, so he contacted his favorite artists in Europe, United States and Japan and proposed they let him show their work. The task was particularly challenging in Japan, where “ceramic is a major art, like the tea ceremony, and it is very difficult to approach artists as a foreigner. You have to build a real relationship with them and prove they can trust you. It can take years before you can have the chance to have one piece to show.”

His patience and persistence paid off. Today Giraud represents 25 international artists, and recently expanded, moving to a three-story space in a historic townhouse with an outdoor sculpture garden. He shows contemporary works that range in style from classic to iconoclastic, veering from the organic work of French artist Jean Girel (who creates his own porcelain from stones and his own glaze from wood ash) to irreverent, colorful and surrealistic pieces by Ron Nagle (whose work will feature prominently in Giraud’s Design Miami/ booth this year).

Giraud is confident the market is ready for the occasionally hard-to-categorize work he shows. “Today, many great collectors have a large range of interest—art, design, decorative arts—and they like to mix and create dialogues. For these collectors I want my gallery to be the place you can find the most beautiful and rare contemporary objects in the world.” Even better, many of the pieces he shows are still (for now!) relatively affordable.

