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The top six installations and exhibitions to see at Design Miami/Basel 2016

By Staff Writer



Owan by Kengo Kuma

Design Miami/Basel 2016: this year's Design Miami/Basel fair opens today in the Swiss city, where a six-tonne stone meditation space, a modular armadillo and designs by Zaha Hadid are among the highlights. The collectible design fair is taking place from 14 to 19 June 2016, and will provide an opportunity to browse creative furniture and fanciful objets d'art presented by international galleries.

Many of the must-sees at the event come from the Design at Large programme of installations, this year curated by founder and editor-in-chief of Cabana Magazine, Martina Mondadori Sartogo, and themed around nature.

New exhibition platform Design Curio also promises interesting displays. Based on traditional cabinets of curiosity, it features assemblages of objects put together by designers, curators, innovators and gallerists.

Here are our picks of installations and displays that shouldn't be missed:

Owan by Kengo Kuma



Taking inspiration from Japanese tea bowls and fish scales, architect Kengo Kuma's metal screen installation is intended to be an indoor and an outdoor space at once. While the structure's thin metal shell looks like it offers little protection from the elements, it is actually lined with a waterproof membrane.

Called Owan, the structure is made from a metal referred to as a "memory alloy", which means it can be bent into new forms when heated.

Designed to be movable, the installation is part of Galerie Philippe Gravier's Small Nomad House Project, which also includes Kuma's wooden pavilion from last year's FIAC event in Paris and a stacked-box pavilion by fellow Japanese architect Sou Fujimoto.

Maxéville Design Office by Jean Prouvé



A demountable office by French architect Jean Prouvé that was until recently being used as a swingers' club has been restored for display at Design Miami/Basel.

The structure, now known as the Maxéville Design Office, began life in 1947 at the historic Ateliers Jean Prouvé in Maxéville and is being presented by the Galerie Patrick Seguin, frequent champions of Prouvé's work.

While other Prouvé creations at the site were destroyed after his departure from the company in 1953, this one remained concealed behind cladding and over time served as the atelier's design office, a plumber's office, a restaurant and finally a swingers' club called Le Bounty. [Find out more about Jean Prouvé's Maxeville 35 demountable office »](#)

Civilized Primitives by Kiki Van Eijk



Each of the objects in [Kiki van Eijk's](#) new furniture collection is modelled on branches found in the forests surrounding the Dutch designer's Eindhoven home, and cast in bronze.

From an A-frame daybed of intersecting sticks to a tall and gnarled candlestick holder, each is based on branches that have been sanded on three sides and left textured on the last – giving rise to the "civilized" and "primitive" aspects of the collection's title.

As part of the Design at Large program, the collection is displayed in an outdoor Bedouin-style tent, created using the large-scale printing processes of Dutch company Exposize. Van Eijk's Physical Interaction light sculptures, which are turned on through unusual interactions like blowing on a mobile or lighting a flint, are also on show inside.

Zaha Hadid design exhibition



The late Zaha Hadid may be best known for her architecture, but her fluid forms also translated into some memorable design objects, which are now the focus of an exhibition during Design Miami/Basel.

Included in the display is her Liquid Glacial range of acrylic stools and tables, designed to resemble ice formations, as well as her Valle shelves in slashes of black granite.

The exhibition has been put together by her firm, Zaha Hadid Architects, to commemorate her contribution to the field of design following her unexpected death earlier this year.

Stone Tea House Meditative Alcove by Masatoshi Izumi and Koichi Hara



Last month, Vietnamese architect Vo Trong Nghia said he makes his staff meditate every day to help them "resist cravings and improve concentration", after he installed a space for relaxing activity at the Venice Architecture Biennale.

The trend has continued at Design Miami/Basel, which is hosting a hulking but hollow stone cube called the Stone Tea House Meditative Alcove by Japanese sculptors Masatoshi Izumi and Koichi Hara.

Weighing in at six tonnes, minus the 18 tonnes of stone carved out from its middle, it is intended to provide a sanctuary from the busy world beyond. The installation sits within the natural surrounds of a spatial intervention titled In a Silent Space the Landscape is the Sound, designed by Enea Landscape Architecture.

Armadillo Tea Pavilion by Ron Arad



Another calming space is Israeli designer Ron Arad's Armadillo Tea Pavilion. Assembled from five moulded wood shells, it resembles the overlapping body armour of an armadillo.

Its components are modular, so it can be configured to suit different spaces, and the shells can be made in a variety of timbers depending on whether it will be used indoors or out.

The Armadillo Tea Pavilion comes from the catalogue of Revolution Precrafted, a company that aims to "democratise high-design and architecture" by providing prefab structures from more than 30 famous designers – including Tom Dixon, Marcel Wanders, Kengo Kuma and Zaha Hadid. It launched its first design at last year's Design Miami, the sister event of the Basel edition.