

Bench by
Barrail, 2012.



Illustration for Sam
Baron's *Romantic
Benches*, 2012.

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2012.

Second Nature

For Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden, bringing urban designs into its lush landscape with four new exhibits is the natural progression for art. *By Rebecca Kleinman*

Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden is going for broke this year during Art Basel Miami Beach. Whereas its past exhibits have focused on solo artists such as Roy Lichtenstein and Yayoi Kusama, this year ambitiously expands with a new design category and four distinct shows with several artists. Despite having a lot going on, this year's themes and mediums blend beautifully with the world-class garden's 83 acres of signature cycads, palms, flowering trees, and vines, which manage to reinvent pieces that have been previously displayed in urban settings, thus making them entirely worth a second look. The time of day also presents distinct experiences, whether in dappled sunlight breaking through the canopy or in a warm glow fading into darkness.

"We've been trying to get design in the garden for years," says Lin Lougheed, a trustee who, along with Fairchild's art committee, worked on the arts program to widen the garden's audience. "When I saw a piece of seating at Cristina Grajales Gallery during New York's Armory Show, a lightbulb went off."

Grajales, who always has one of the most visited booths at Design Miami, curated "Design at Fairchild: Sitting Naturally," which commissioned seven internationally recognized artists to put a twist on traditional

seating in a garden context. She says it was a first for many of the participants to create outdoor works.

"The challenge and research of making something that could withstand the elements, from the weather to the birds, was part of the fun," says Grajales.

Artist Michele Oka Doner looked no further than South Florida's invasive Australian pine and tropical almond trees as inspiration for *Invasives*, which

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—CRISTINA GRAJALES

transforms the destructive species into useful objects in the form of mass-produced public benches common throughout urban landscapes. "Her concept coincides with Fairchild's conservation mission for an even deeper meaning," says Grajales.

Sam Baron, the director of the design department of Fabrica in Treviso, Italy—whose playful work Grajales fell for upon seeing his sausage links crafted from handblown glass, invites guests to lounge as if they were on holiday in St-Tropez. Designed for a couple, *Romantic Benches* incorporates a parasol, drink tray,

and hanging plants. "It's meant [for you] to sit back and relax, and watch the butterflies flutter by," she says.

Other works range from a day-bed as bird perch by John-Paul Philippé, an Oklahoman painter and designer in New York, to a tranquil resting spot below an elegant

chandelier from Chilean designer and sculptor Sebastian Errazuriz. The remaining artists are Gael Appler, Christophe Côme, and Pedro Barrail.

After being displayed at the Seagram Building and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York, the late John Chamberlain's sculptures reappear at Fairchild. Fabricated from industrial aluminum resembling crumpled foil, their green, copper, and silver hues, as well as fantastical but organic shapes, relate well to the surrounding Seussian tropical trees and flowers.

"We couldn't ask for better fits," says Lougheed, who also asked Cuban artist Jorge Pardo to reinstall a work originally shown at the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles. "The effect is mesmerizing.

Imagine hundreds of red, orange, and white lanterns that look like they'd be on an Ottoman ship in the Battle of Lepanto." Most viewers will liken them to pumpkins or blooming buds dangling from branches when they walk through the allée of trees-cum-exhibition space. "Jorge really matches our art-meets-design mission, since his work bridges both worlds," says Lougheed.

The exhibitions are on view during ABMB through next spring, at 10901 Old Cutler Road, 305-667-1651; fairchildgarden.org ABMB