

Mission Miami

Seen at the scene: During the Milan Design Week in April, Marianne Goebel announced the winners of the 2011 Designer of the Future Award.

Marianne Goebel hopes to get the public excited about design. As of February, she has stepped up as the Director of the world's leading platform for limited-edition design, Design Miami/.

By Dorothea Sundergeld (copy) & Wolfgang Stahr (photos)

Basel and Miami are an ocean, half a continent and what seems like worlds apart. The compact European town on the Rhine has been shaped by the pharmaceuticals industry, Swiss understatement and a rich smorgasbord of museums, while the sprawling metropolis on Florida's Atlantic coast features gated luxury housing estates, skyscrapers on the beach and an unmistakable Latin American feel at every turn. As of February, Marianne Goebel is at home in both. She spent nine years working for Vitra in Basel and still has an apartment there. Since taking over the curatorship of Design Miami/ in February, she hangs her hat there, too. Her new job description? Twice a year, she has to get gallery owners, creative types and potential buyers excited about contemporary and historic design—in Basel in June and in Miami in December.

Marianne Goebel has big shoes to fill—those of glamorous, cosmopolitan and self-assured Ambra Medda, who co-founded the design show at age 23. With a London gallery owner for a mother, who passed on design

with her DNA, and property developer Craig Robins as a partner, she had the magic touch that could spur the gentrification of a former industrial area through the staging of a high-end event for collectors of design. Design Miami/ Basel first opened its doors in conjunction with Art Basel in 2005 and was immediately mentioned in the celebrity press in the same breath as VIP art purchasers, pool parties and record prices. In 2011, Medda has decided to part ways with her brainchild. With the art and design market one financial crisis the wiser, Craig Robins has astutely chosen as the show's new Director a marketing expert who brings a bit more Basel to Miami than the other way round.

"I'm sure you've already noticed that I'm not glamorous," remarks Marianne Goebel in her dry Viennese way that seems slightly at odds with her flashing green eyes. We meet for the interview during Milan Design Week. It's her first public appearance in her new role. Against the backdrop of the Milan cathedral, she announces the winners of the W Hotels Designer of the Fu-

ture Award, who will exhibit their work in Basel in June. She talks about how proud she is to have "inherited" the honor of conferring this still new design prize. In chatting to designers, gallery owners and journalists, she effortlessly switches between five languages. "Design matters" is her credo. "The way rooms are designed has a powerful influence over the way we treat others and ourselves," she explains. For the 35-year-old, curating a show of limited-edition designer pieces provides her with the perfect instrument for communicating that. "Through its mix of older and contemporary objects, Design Miami/ allows visitors to experience over a century of design history," says Marianne Goebel enthusiastically, "And—unlike in a museum—all of it's there to be touched." Getting this message out is important to her, especially as design is still a relatively young discipline. "The first museums for applied arts were established in the mid to late nineteenth century, although they were basically showcases for the functional objects a nation could produce." Today most utilitarian items are produced en masse and furnishings for a home are no longer bought to last a lifetime but instead just for a transitory phase in our ever-changing lives. So it's no surprise that, now more than ever, limited-edition designer objects are a booming art form. As the value of mass manufactured homeware has declined, one-of-a-kind items have risen to the fore. "There have probably always been prototypes," comments Marianne Goebel, "but the proliferation of goods produced in series has stoked desires for hand-made forms, for something unique, created for you alone."

Marianne Goebel knows from her time at Vitra just how essential the chance to play with one-off items is for designers. While there, the PR strategist developed the Home Collection in 2003 and the experimental platform Vitra Edition in 2007. She worked closely with Ron Arad, Ronan and Erwan Bouroullec, Konstantin Grcic, Jasper Morrison as well as Hella Jongerius. "With a limited edition, designers have an opportunity to try out new ideas that would be binned in series manufacture because they're too heavy, too expensive or simply not feasible," points out Goebel. "And acquiring items that are part of a conceptual development but whose artistic form is already fully resolved is also appealing to collectors because such objects foreground a striking idea, new material or formal method of expression."

But it's not just the collectors that Design Miami/ aims to attract—the show also targets the less glamorous joe public. "My aim is for everyone to experience design," says Goebel and reveals some of the highlights of the upcoming show in Basel: Two galleries will be showcasing Jean Prouvé's architecture from the forties and fifties. A precursor to prefab houses, which was designed for war refugees, will be assembled and disassembled daily during the show. "It'll be a real performance piece! And a wonderful demonstration of how ingenious the structure is," says Marianne Goebel. Contemporary works from Makkink & Bey, Nacho Carbonell, Max Lamb, Astrid

Krogh, Formafantasma and many more will also be on display. Plus, the winners of the Designer of the Future Award will premiere their latest endeavors—created exclusively for Design Miami/. Londoner Asif Khan, the Vienna-based duo Mischer' Traxler and Studio Juju from Singapore will exhibit new objects or installations in response to the topic "Conversation Pieces."

In December, Marianne Goebel will make her curatorial debut of Design Miami/ in Florida. Even though she's a European through and through, she's excited about her new second home: "Just beyond Miami lies an entire continent for me to discover—South America." //



Marianne Goebel in a discussion with renowned trend researcher Li Edelkoort and Parisian gallery owner Didier Krzentowski.



Design Miami/

Design Miami/ is one of the most prestigious forums for limited-edition design. Staged twice yearly, alternately in Basel and Miami, the shows aim to present museum-quality design to visitors. Strict selection criteria ensure that visitors get to see nothing but pieces of the highest caliber. Forty respected galleries including newcomer Galerie Doria, Modernity from Stockholm and Berlin's Ulrich Fiedler gallery have already registered to take part in the upcoming staging of Design Miami/ Basel, which will welcome visitors in Basel from June 14 to 18. For five years now, Audi has not only served as the shows' exclusive automobile partner but also made a splash as an active exhibitor.

To read more about Design Miami/ online, go to: www.designmiami.com.