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Design Miami Preview | The Art of Recycling

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When Design Miami Basel opens next week in Basel, Switzerland, it's a safe bet that [Cristina Grajales's gallery](#) is going to be the only one to feature textiles made from dry cleaners' packaging. These works—which are woven from plastic bags, wire hangers, and the cardboard tubes that are often found on those hangers—are part of an ongoing project by [Suzanne Tick](#), the New York textile designer who was the creative director of Knoll Textiles from 1997-2005. While much of her career has been spent developing textiles for commercial projects, Tick has always been interested in new or unusual materials; her fiber-optic yarn weavings are in the collections of both the Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum and the Museum of Arts & Design. But the pieces made with dry-cleaning detritus, which are collectively called Salvage, had their origins in Tick's exasperation with the way those bags and hangers piled up—one day, their numbers suddenly registered as a plus.

"I'm always looking for materials that are in abundance for new weaving projects," she said. "My dad inherited a third-generation scrap metal yard, so I grew up recycling, and I looked at these things one day and thought, I should save these." Tick added that since the hangers and cardboard tubes are of a finite width, they make it easy to prepare the loom. Once Tick began turning the materials into textiles, her friends started bringing her their bags and hangers. In 2009, she sent out about 200 holiday cards, each with a small sample of the textile attached to it, and received a call from an architect at the firm NBBJ who wanted to know where to buy it by the yard. Tick explained that it was hand-woven, and the architect commissioned her to do an installation for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation offices in Seattle. Called "Refuse DC," it incorporates 3,470 hangers in a warp of sheath core vinyl, a metallic polyester thread.

For Design Miami Basel, Tick is showing "Counterbalance," a delicate piece made with the "shoulder" segments of hangers, and "Matter," which incorporates long hanger segments, cardboard tubes, and plastic bags, and which has a more luxuriant feel. Continuing in the waste-not, want-not vein, Tick is also showing two pieces made with the tissue paper that is packed around the cheeses that are shipped by the Cowgirl Creamery in California. The fact that all these materials are plentiful, Tick said, "means that I can keep experimenting. This is such a different 'mind' for me. It's like being a kid again, wandering around the junkyard. It's play for me."