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Fairs Switzerland

Collectors make their move at design fair

More than 100 lights, classic pieces and specially commissioned chess sets fill the booths

By Nicole Swengley. From [Art Basel daily edition](#)
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Peter Marigold's Log Chess Set, 2012, with Gallery Libby Sellers (G19)

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It is strange to watch the opening moves in a game of chess at a design fair but this is happening daily at Design Miami/Basel (until 17 June). And it is a sign of gallerists' confidence that London's Gallery Libby Sellers (G19) was emboldened to commission limited edition chess sets from contemporary designers specifically for the fair.

"Collectors come knowing they will see the best and most interesting work available," said Libby Sellers, the gallery's owner. Sets priced between £1,500 and £45,000 by designers including Rolf Sachs and Fredrikson Stallard were still seeking purchaser/players as we went to press.

The preview on Monday was attended by 5,000 visitors (up 10% on last year), including the Swiss collector Maja Hoffmann, the Miami-based collectors Don and Mera Rubell, fellow American Peter Brant, Abdullah Al-Turki, the creative director of the non-profit art organisation Edge of Arabia, and Dasha Zhukova, the Russian-born, London-based collector.

A strong showing of historic design prevails, with first-time participants Franck Laigneau (G24) and Galerie Dutko (G13), both from Paris, joining returning 20th-century specialists such as Galerie Chastel-Maréchal (G30), which sold six key pieces, including Jean Royère's "Croisillon" furniture from 1947. Galerie Downtown-François Laffanour (G34) sold a pair of Royère "Ours Polaire" (polar bear) armchairs for €300,000 and a rare Jean Prouvé "Air France" dining table for a figure "close to €100,000". Sales from the New York gallery Hostler Burrows (G11) included two 1950s chairs and a limited edition sofa by Kerstin Hörlin-Holmquist (\$50,000 for the set). "We're really pleased," Kim Hostler said. "There are fewer requests for discounts this year and the mood feels upbeat."

Contemporary works

One indication of the fair's strength is a renewed focus on contemporary work. New pieces presented for the first time include Reinier Bosch's Via Luce LED wall chandelier—the Dutch designer's first venture into glass—and Eefiene Bolhuis's Barley, a 2011 installation of hand-made copper and brass barley spikes, both at the Dutch gallery Priveekollektie Contemporary Art and Design (G28).

"This year's show sees an injection of contemporary pieces while remaining true to the fair's roots by presenting a great number of historic works," said Marianne Goebl, the director of Design Miami/Basel.

Several first-time exhibitors have chosen to show new contemporary work. Galerie Maria Wettergren (G03) of Paris is showing Mathias Bengtsson's silver-covered "Cellular Chair" and Monolithe, a sculptural marble fountain by the Swiss designer Helmut Eigenmann.

The move is clearly paying dividends. New York's Salon 94 (G15) sold Two Prong, 2012, a marble bench by Rick Owens, for €125,000, and two unique Betty Woodman ceramics pieces for an undisclosed price. Another newcomer, Galleria O (G22) from Rome, sold "Anthropophagic", a bronze and faux fur sofa (edition of 12) by the Brazilian Campana brothers for €60,000.

The returning contemporary specialist, Carpenters Workshop Gallery (G32), sold ten pieces at Monday's preview including Studio Job's "Taj Mahal" table (edition of eight, €36,000) and two "Fitas" buffets by the Campana brothers (edition of eight, €48,000 each). Further sales by the gallery on Tuesday included two Andrea Branzi "Tree 5" wall-shelves (edition of 12, €80,000). New York's Cristina Grajales Gallery (G21) sold a chandelier (edition of three) by Sebastian Errazuriz for \$28,000 as well as ten "Occupy Chairs", 2012, by the Chilean-born, New York-based designer for \$3,500 each. The gallery also picked up a commission for an Errazuriz table. An American collector bought Arik Levy's "Knot Form" marble table (edition of three, asking price €35,000) from Priveekollektie (G28).



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“Confidence is coming back,” said Loic Le Gaillard of Carpenters Workshop Gallery. “Last year it took time, but sales were confirmed on the spot at this year’s vernissage.” And US dealer Todd Merrill (G23) felt that the increased collectors’ preview hours “made a real difference. It’s less of a crush and we’ve had a steady flow of interest throughout the day,” he said. Merrill sold Paul Evans’s unique Sculpture from 1970 for \$50,000.

Dealers are particularly championing the period from 1950 to 1970. Milan’s Nilufar Gallery (G02) sold a pair of armchairs (€45,000), a pair of coffee tables (€18,000) and a pair of stools (€16,000), all by Giò Ponti. The New York gallery Demisch Danant (G08), which is devoting its booth to the French designer Maria Pergay, sold a 1968 “Ring” chair for €45,000, a 1970 lounge chair for €45,000, a pair of wall sconces for €48,000 and a pair of mid-1970s Plexiglass pieces for €35,000.

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