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## The Conversation Piece

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Collective Consciousness

# How eBay Collective Dealers Do Art Basel Miami Beach

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Photographs by James Harris

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eBay dealers attending the year's most exciting art and design fair reveal the highlights—and what to look for in the year ahead

Part of the ultra-popular Art Basel Miami Beach, [Design Miami](#) is where young galleries and designers often “introduce their work and undertake new challenges,” says Clémence Krzentowski of Galerie Kreo. Indeed, this year a considerable part of the fair was dedicated to presenting new projects, much of which reflected a growing interest in material and technology. “The public is ready for new things and wants to experience new design, new ideas, and new aesthetics,” says Beatrice Bianco of Camp Design Gallery. “I think it’s the right time to keep the past in mind and to look forward.” This experimentation characterized the work of designers like Ronan and Erwan Bouroullec, whose new 100-meter long metal pergola installation “Nuage” weaved dramatically along the pedestrian street of the Miami Design District.



Collective dealer Maison Gerard at Design Miami 2017

Benoist Drut of New York City's (and eBay Collective's) [Maison Gerard](#) approaches the annual design fair with an open mind—he never knows what he's going to find. This year, he says, he noticed a lot of 1970s European design trends, citing Patrick Parrish's bronze booth, Monica Cecchi's tin candlesticks at Galleria Antonella Villanova, and Christopher Kurtz's [hanging sculptures](#) as some favorite finds. Of his showroom's own offerings on display, "The Sphere" by French architect and designer Maurice-Claude Vidili was a major point of interest. Designed in 1971 and part of an edition of 15 fabricated by Les Plastiques de Bourgogne, it was created in bare simplicity to encourage its inhabitants to journey to a place of self-reflection. "The collection of Gerard Haas, from the same period, made of computer parts and LEDs also generated a lot of interest," Drut says.

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Collective dealer Maison Gerard at Design Miami 2017

[Todd Merrill](#), an eBay Collective dealer with an eponymous New York City studio, felt that the design he noticed in Miami this year was wide open to really new concepts, materials, and functionality—with a focus on the handmade. “The rules are: There are no rules,” says Merrill. “The work being shown was artistic and progressive, and the materials were often new to design and varied. The consistent presence of outstanding unique work by artists in nearly every booth—even with wonderful historic material everywhere—was amazing.” Materials like foam, wood, metal, and resin are being used in new and unexpected ways and integrated with new technologies like LED lights. “The result is an infusion of art into design that does not have to be functional,” says Merrill. “Lighting has become a sculpture or an object of desire, so whether it gives off enough light to read by is not the point.”



Todd Merrill Antiques at Design Miami 2017

Merrill's booth showcased a large historic exhibition of unique work by sought-after designers like Paul Evans (a polished-steel console and pair of sofas sold on the first day), George Nakashima, and Phil Powell alongside a smaller roster of contemporary studio pieces by Niamh Barry, John Procaro, Alex Roskins, and Beth Katleman. Barry's and Procaro's LED sculptures were the most photographed items in the booth and garnered lots of interest. "The most obvious trend that I have seen this year is an appreciation for elegant, refined design," says Robert Aibel of Moderne Gallery. "There is also a very clear interest in wood, especially Nakashima, as well as David Ebner Miriam Carpenter and Wharton Esherick. The future looks more like Paul Evans than Ray and Charles Eames."