

Throwback Thursday: The Campanas' Alligator Chair Redux is Decidedly Less Cuddly

Since founding their studio in São Paulo in 1983, ahead of Brazil's newfound status as a global destination for design, brothers **Humberto** and **Fernando Campana** have garnered renown for their ability to make chairs from nearly anything they find: discarded scraps of fabric, ropes, wire, what have you. In the early aughts, they crafted banquettes from mass-produced stuffed animals — dolphins, lions, Mickey Mouses — which, besides being very cool, have come to be emblematic of their practice.



At “Concepts” — a current exhibition at **Friedman Benda** that marks their first U.S. solo show — the brothers unveiled a new version of their 2004 plush Alligator Chair crafted by an NGO that employs Brazilian women in prison. “Those plushes come from China,” Humberto told **ARTINFO**, explaining how he and his brother had sought to employ Brazilians “to interpret this and give us their vision.” What they came back with was a banquette made from realistic, leather, glass-eyed gators — more chic, albeit considerably scarier.

Zara, Janelle. “Throwback Thursday” The Campanas' Alligator Chair Redux is Decidedly Less Cuddly,” **ARTINFO**. June 6, 2013.

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Around the gallery, the brothers display a newfound use of brass paired with cowhide, glass embedded with Brazilian amethyst, and pirarucu leather taken from one monstrous Amazon river-dweller. While the surprising high sheen marks a new direction for their work, beneath this aesthetic departure, their established design ethos of locally sourced craftsmanship and material remains. “It’s not just recycling materials,” Fernando told us, “but also recycling workmanship, bringing back old traditions that are disappearing.”

“Concepts” is on view at Friedman Benda through July 3.