

# SURFACE

## Daniel Arsham Dreams Up His Own Microcosm

The prolific New York artist reconstructs a bona fide *kunstkammer* at Design Miami/ to unveil a brand-new body of work that's unlike anything h's ever done.

By Ryan Waddoups  
December 4, 2019



Daniel Arsham's booth for Friedman Benda at Design Miami/. Photography by Daniel Kukla

This summer, Daniel Arsham put the finishing touches on perhaps his most ambitious project yet. It's a brazen statement about an artist known for reconstructing plaster life-size models of Delorean hatchbacks and making architecture melt, fold, and twist in inconceivable ways. "This has been my passion project for the past two years," says Arsham, referring to his own private residence—

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a secluded cedar-clad beach house, designed by the late Norman Jaffe, that he, his wife, and two children call home. Inside, treasures abound: a frosty Faye Toogood chair and Ettore Sottsass table lamp mingle with custom tubs, mirrors, and chairs by Snarkitecture, the firm he helms with architects Alex Mustonen and Ben Porto.

One of the house's most curious furnishings, an eclectic multi-color chaise that seems to intentionally clash with Jaffe's clean-lined modernism, was custom produced by Arsham, who never intended to show it publicly. The chaise, along with similar Jeanneret-style side chairs and lounge chairs, feature Arsham's signature fossilized visuals emblazoned on the tonal upholstery in Sharpie. These pieces caught the eyes of Marc Benda, the co-founder and creative force behind design gallery Friedman Benda. "He recently visited my studio and suggested we create a comprehensive view of this different side of my practice," Arsham recalls.



Paris Chaise Lounge I by Daniel Arsham

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Cleveland Chair I by Daniel Arsham

Fast forward to Design Miami/L, which recently kicked off alongside Art Basel Miami Beach, and Arsham has realized this vision in its totality. He teamed up with Friedman Benda to craft a show-stopping booth, clad in minty green frosted glass panes, that contains a bona fide microcosm of Arsham's hybrid live-work space. "It's a fictional combination of my office from my house and my studio," he says, pointing to a wool rug, hand-crafted in Nepal, that features a detailed blueprint of his hypothetical *kunstkammer*. It seamlessly blends items with his signature stamp—think achromatic, slightly fossilized relics of today's icons—with this previously unseen body of work, which brings a brand-new vocabulary of clean lines and muted tones into the mix.

As one can expect in a live-work space, sentimental objects make not-so-subtle nods to Arsham's private residence. A towering floor lamp, whose form nods to the smooth stones that wash ashore near his house, was sourced straight from his living room. ("My wife was like, 'where the fuck is my lamp?") Shelving units, also finished in minty green, feature decorative objects from Arsham's studio ("They're not for sale.") as well as copies of *Daniel Arsham*, his recent *Rizzoli* monograph. Will

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Arsham continue experimenting with new color tones and sculptural languages? “Who knows? I don’t really need to think about this work in the same way as my previous work,” he says. “Whenever I make art, there’s intention behind it.”



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