

Wallpaper*

Samuel Ross' Miami Design District benches swoop in for sculptural sit-downs

Samuel Ross' Miami Design District 'Expression.Service.Essence' project comprises 12 bench designs permanently installed in the ever-evolving neighbourhood

By Adrian Madlener



(Image credit: Courtesy DACRA)

2023 has been a particularly auspicious year for British polymath Dr Samuel Ross. Among a raft of blockbuster brand collaborations, experimental fashion campaigns, and groundbreaking design exhibits, the multifaceted talent developed a paradigm-shifting [faucet for American bathroom giant Kohler](#) and debuted the culturally responsive 'Coarse' furniture collection with New York gallery [Friedman Benda](#).

Madlener, Adrian, "Samuel Ross' Miami Design District benches swoop in for sculptural sit-downs," *Wallpaper*, November 5, 2023.

Regardless of what he's working on, Ross always imbues his projects with an equal measure of decipherability and conceptual reasoning. The 'Expression.Service.Essence' project – developed for the Miami Design District (MDD) – is no different.

Samuel Ross' Miami Design District benches: 'Expression.Service.Essence'



(Image credit: Courtesy DACRA)

Permanently placed in different locations throughout the burgeoning 6.5-hectare mix-used neighbourhood, 12 emphatically 'Ross' benches bring his human-centric sensibility and sculptural aesthetic into the public sphere. For Ross, this commission is a study into the importance of such spaces.

'It is a forum of experimentation that takes shape as an optimistic, expressive, accessible form,' he says. 'Channelling and contorting the behaviours of what it is to fundamentally operate as a British sculptor or artist through seating, the public forum and explicit gestures of optimism are at the core of all 12 functional sculptures.'



(Image credit: Courtesy DACRA)

Conceived under the moniker of his industrial design studio and creative agency SR_A, the iterative designs reflect the same visual language and formal vocabulary as some of his other concepts: the deft juxtapositioning of organic and rectilinear lines; smooth and rough textures. Ross realised the designs by drawing with charcoal, Indian ink and pencil. The chalk shapes were brought to life by CNC-milling and powder-coating highly durable steel.

'The ambiguity of sculpture and furniture across this particular time, the dual properties presented, is a grey area filled with elasticity,' says Ross. 'At its core, we are discussing servitude, elation, and access, whilst counterbalancing the lightness required to ensure each form invites the viewer to become an end user.' It's rare that such esoteric ideation can reach such a broad group of people.

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(Image credit: Courtesy DACRA)

The project adds to the district's already robust offering of interactive furnishings and striking artworks – large, playfully coloured stones and kinetic swings amongst them, alongside the bulbous forms of [Lara Bohinc's 'Utopia'](#), recently unveiled for a year-long stint.

'Samuel Ross is one of the most important creatives, artists and critical thinkers working today,' says Craig Robins, president & CEO of Dacra and the force behind much of MDD's evolution over the years. 'I have followed his work for many years, and personally collect his pieces. I truly admire his ability to meld raw creativity with profound cultural insight to design pieces that inspire viewers to question. His upcoming installation in the heart of the [neighbourhood] promises to be a testament to his visionary prowess and will serve as an immersive, interactive introduction to a new audience.'

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