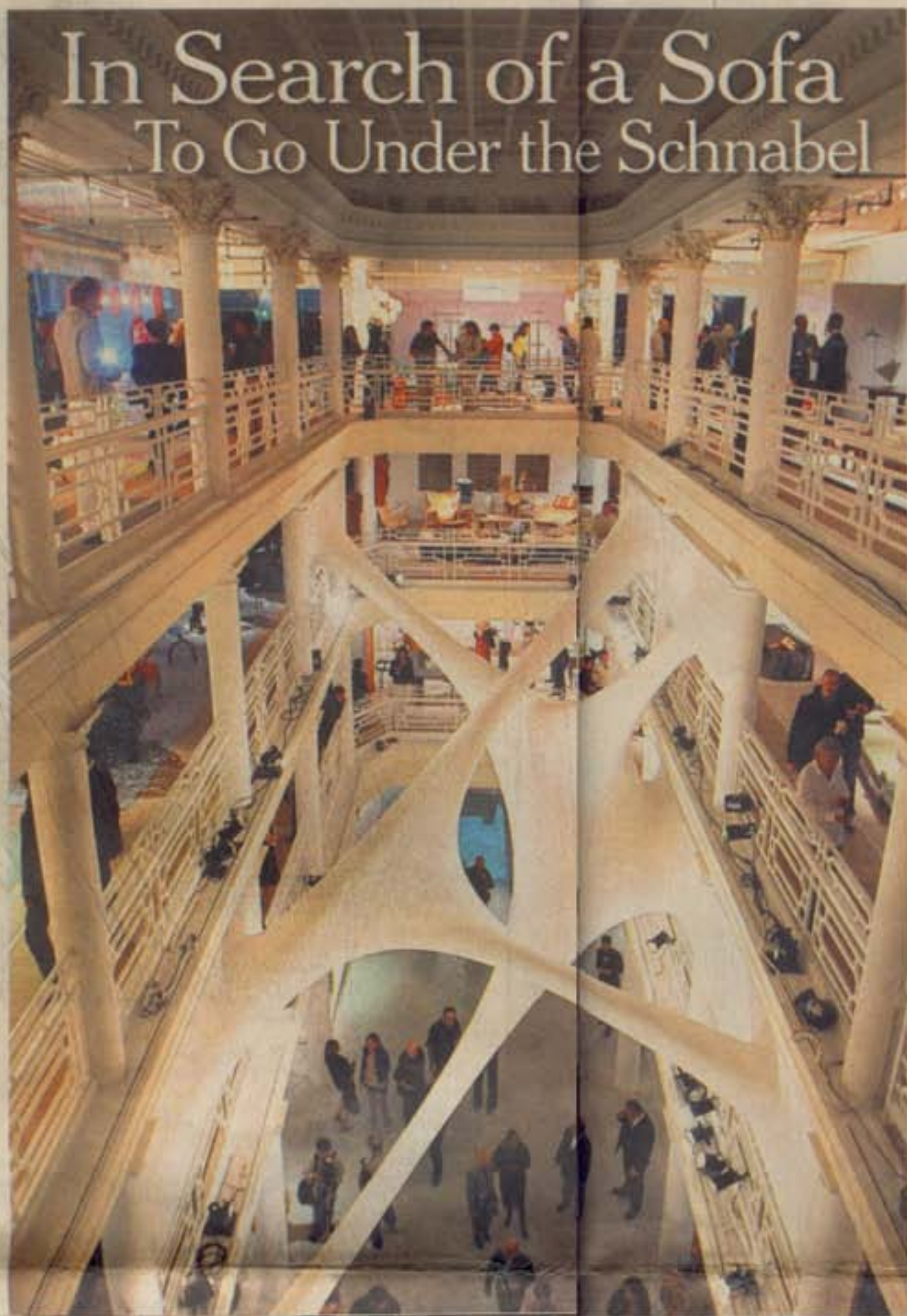


The New York Times

In Search of a Sofa To Go Under the Schnabel



Photographs by Richard Proctor for The New York Times

92 DEGREES IN THE SHADE Designers pulled their chairs up to the table at Art Basel Miami Beach, highlighting their work under a Zaha Hadid installation, left. Right, from top: April and Hugues Margen, New York dealers, with a 1962 Pierre Szekely screen; Roni Arad with his mirror installation; and a visitor, Elke Rolff, beneath a Michael Gabellini chandelier made with Swarovski crystals.

By GUY TREBAY

At Art Basel Miami Beach, furniture is an objet of desire.

The fish were tinier than one might expect, more delicate and vividly beautiful in their darting efficiency. They were also, it must be said, almost too easy a metaphor for the event that inspired their presence, the annual art and design fair and aesthetic feeding frenzy known as Art Basel Miami Beach.

"We considered using baby sharks," said Mr. Wong, one of a group of renowned designers commissioned by the crystal company to make chandeliers that were unveiled during the fair. "But for Art Basel we really wanted something that traveled to schools."

Since Art Basel Miami Beach opened in 2002, as an experimental stepchild of a venerable Swiss parent that has been a fixture on the European art circuit since the early '70's, it has rapidly established itself as the pre-eminent art fair in North America. With an estimated 35,000 visitors, 195 international galleries, a passel of lower-key and lower-budget satellite exhibitions (including the Aqua, NADA, On!art, Pulse and scopeMiami fairs) and a bewildering variety of related events, it is

also now an important migratory stop along the flight path of global collectors and fellow members of their supermoneyed, often boldface flock.

"Three years ago there were 70 NetJets jets landing here," said Dennis Leyva, the city's official entertainment industry liaison, referring to the company that leases shares in jets. Two hundred landed during the 2005 fair, which began on Dec. 1. "And that's a lot of rich people," Mr. Leyva said. With that rare cohort in mind, Art Basel Miami Beach bid to do for design in 2005 what it had already done for art, introducing Design.05, an invitational show of 15 international dealers specializing

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THE piranhas were only on loan and would have to go back to wherever lethal predators stay between gigs. For the time being, though, they were in the lobby of the newly renovated Paris Theater here, two dozen deadly fish enclosed in Tobias Wong's and Emily Bauer's tropical aquarium-cum-chandelier-cum-artwork made from jagged strands of Swarovski crystal, dangling above \$12,000 worth of jet crystal "gravel" and anomalously titled "Iceberg."