

save the rest of the canopy from being bulldozed. "This museum was headed for a train wreck before Anne-Marie and I came on board," recalls Riley (who, in 2015, launched Parallel, with John Keenen and Joachim Pissarro, a consultancy uniquely geared towards buildings for the display of art). "There was initially a plan in place designed by an architect who specialized in assisted living facilities. One totally ridiculous part of his design was a double-height artist's studio where people visiting the museum could overlook the artist working, like in a zoo."

Russell, who oversaw the entire renovation since becoming director in 2015, has big plans now that the structure is finally open to the public. Conceived as a kunsthalle, with no permanent collection, the Sarasota Art Museum opened in December with a retrospective of Brazilian-American artist Vik Muniz as well as *Color Theory*. & (b/w), a group show running until July 2020. The latter features heavyweights like Sheila Hicks and Kara Walker as well as local artist Christian Sampson, whose installation *Vita In Motu* conscripts Sarasota's main attraction: the sun. Its rays filter through colored gels projecting an ever-changing

light painting on the gallery wall — "a reminder," says Russell, "that we're on a spinning globe." — Whitney Mallett

Rare Bird

In 1926, a man named Max Stern fled hyperinflation and unemployment in his native Germany, making his way to New York City with thousands of singing canaries rustling, flapping, and crooning in their cages. The birds became lures, nestled into a building on Cooper Square, getting customers into what soon became a pet-store empire.

Almost 100 years later, a stainless-steel enclosure sits birdless in the old store, now the dieFirma gallery. *Max's Cage* (1990) is a silent siren of its own, made by Stern's daughter Gloria Kisch and on display as part of the gallery's inaugural exhibition, *...for Gloria*. Kisch, who died at the age of 72 in 2014, remains among the most undersung artists of her generation, and the proof is in the work — her early, boisterous, geometric paintings, for example, or her vast steel bells, fashioned at the turn of the 21st century, stacked and hung like beaded necklaces, large enough to remain untolled by any imaginable wind yet somehow aural when seen.

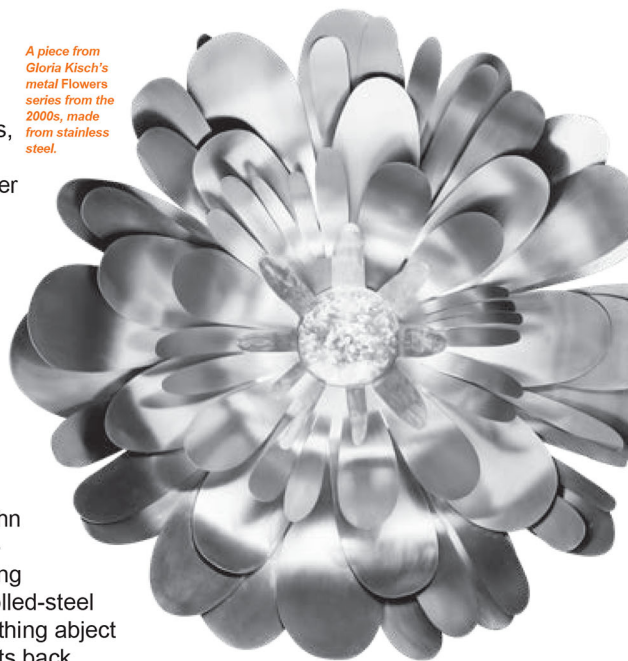


Gloria Kisch's stainless steel Doughnut Chair (1991–94) is an example of the playful nature present in her many "functional sculptures."

But it's the cage and a few other functional sculptures, selected by gallery co-founder (and Kisch's niece) Andrea Stern, that really speak to the future. *Doughnut Chair* (1991–94) melds the wit of Gaetano Pesce with the materiality of John Chamberlain — there's something Pop about its rolled-steel seat, and something abject about the way its back,

a steel arc like a half-bitten pastry, brings to mind a bedpan. Sweeter is *Remembering Sidney* (1991), a bench with candy wrappers pressed into the steel seat and back: such an object might make one's teeth ache with sentiment or back ache with poor ergonomics, but thanks to Kisch's aesthetic

and emotional rigor it escapes such sour fates. Kisch sidestepped a few destinies herself. Max's pet empire would have allowed his daughter to make a place for herself in the upper middle class, had she wanted it. But did she? She attended the prestigious Sarah Lawrence College, but chose to study



A piece from Gloria Kisch's metal Flowers series from the 2000s, made from stainless steel.

with mythologist Joseph Campbell while there; and though she accomplished the assimilationist goal of husband and kids, she cajoled them to go west so that, in 1963, she could attend L.A.'s Otis College of Art and Design — basking in the

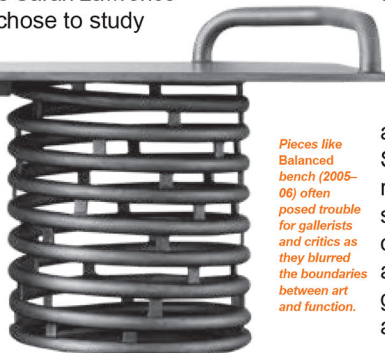


Sliding down the Mountain (1989) resembles an aerodynamic rocking chair with feet suggesting skis.

afterglow of the American Clay Revolution, and about

to see the dawn of Light and Space. One can find traces of both movements in the work she made as she transitioned from painting to sculpture after moving

to Venice Beach, with its tenuous separation of land and sea. She began making sticks out of sand, and variable gateways and luminous



Pieces like Balanced bench (2005–06) often posed trouble for gallerists and critics as they blurred the boundaries between art and function.



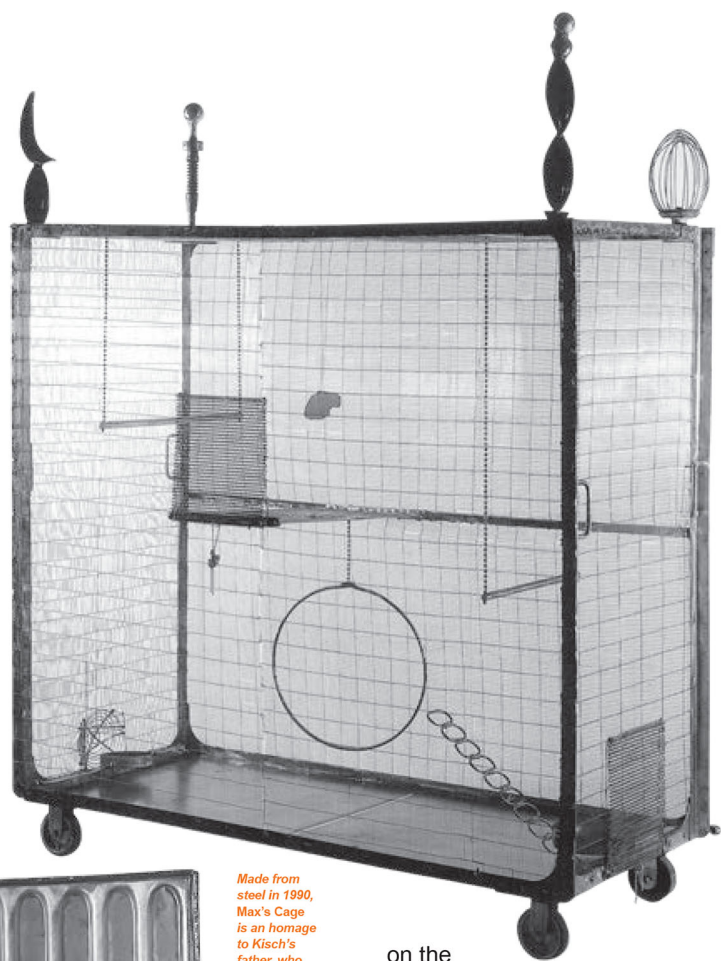
The Remembering Sidney bench (1991) has impressions of Reese's peanut butter cup candy wrappers.

For reasons political and practical, she showed mostly at women-run spaces like L.A.'s Woman's Building, though a gorgeous flyer for 1978's famed *Southern Exposure* show floats her name among

tombs, and "transitional boxes" with eerie, wobbling structures inside rigid frames, and "whisper boxes" that look like 3D Hiroshi Sugimoto photos of Donald Judd works but also don't resolve in one's gaze. They blur art and craft, object and aura, what something is and what it does.

a who's who of the boys' club, including Bruce Nauman and Ed Ruscha. In 1981, she returned to New York and set up a studio next to her father's old store, where she made big, tough work. "She was fearless, determined, a little needy, and tenacious," Stern told me as we examined a bench Kisch made there, a smooth chunk of steel compressing a coiled-up spring, all impossible potential.

When the 80s art scene busted, Kisch traveled, experiencing a singsing in Papua New Guinea, before moving in the early 2000s to a former duck farm in Long Island. Her later work is less about the built environment and more about takes



Made from steel in 1990, Max's Cage is an homage to Kisch's father, who came to the U.S. in the 1920s with thousands of singing canaries. Kisch kept her own birds at her 40-acre Long Island estate with its own metalworking and welding workshop.

on the environment itself: reeds and octopi and porcupines and huge flowers, all rendered in shining stainless steel. They are mystical, but never wishy-washy, occupants who escaped the poles of nature and nurture to become themselves. They flew the coop, like her grandfather's birds, but the cage is beautiful too.

— Jesse Dorris



The undated Thrones (left) and the Balanced bench (above) seem less ergonomic endeavor and more a sculptural study in form, a tension Gloria Kisch played with throughout her furniture-art.

