

GANDIABLASCO rewards emerging talent in its 16th International Competition: The materialization of spatial continuum and sensory volume



GANDIABLASCO, a design platform that has promoted emerging talent since 2006, has announced the winners of its **16th International Outdoor Furniture Design Competition**. The contest, aimed at students and professionals up to 35 years old, has consolidated the concept **OUTDOORS IS THE NEW INDOORS**, seeking upholstered seating proposals whose aesthetics and technique **blur the boundaries between indoor and outdoor living**. The jury, composed of industry leaders such as the architect Belén Moneo Feduchi and the president of Gandia Blasco Group, José A. Gandia-Blasco Canales, prioritized designs that articulate a **sensitive geometry**, are lightweight, and whose choice of **materials and fillings is indispensably sustainable, recycled, or recyclable**.

Volume and References: **the new upholstered language**

The awarded projects are distinguished by their ability to dialogue with design history, proposing a soft architecture for the 21st century:



First Prize: ETERIO, the lightness that embraces
(Sancho Martín Merino, Zaragoza)

Sancho Martín Merino's armchair evokes the formal purity and continuous line of **Classic Modernism**. Its tubular and curved structure, which supports the upholstered seat, subtly recalls the **Bauhaus** line and the design of Marcel Breuer (such as the Wassily chair), where the material, in this case, the structure that embraces softness, becomes the defining skeleton of the piece. ETERIO translates that geometric discipline into an organic and contemporary sensibility.



Second Prize: ALIS, the playful micro-landscape
(Caitlin Kao, Peoria, USA)

Caitlin Kao's bench is part of the tradition of **biomorphic design** and free forms. Its rounded contours and large upholstered "tube" break with angular rigidity, evoking the **playful and sculptural aesthetic** that was popularized in the 60s and 70s with designers like Eero Aarnio or the interior design trend that sought the total integration of soft elements. ALIS is a piece that invites movement.



Runner-up: PUFF CORAL, the tactile narrative
(Enrique Soriano Muñoz, La Pobla de Vallbona, Valencia)

Enrique Soriano Muñoz's project is a tribute to **material** and **contemporary craftsmanship**. The use of the oversized knot and the strong texture immediately evokes the most recognized collections of **Patricia Urquiola**, such as MANGAS, where the braid and textile cease to be a covering to become the load-bearing and expressive structure of the piece. It is the **fusion between large-scale textile art and functionality**.



Runner-up: NOODLE ARMCHAIR, the Irreverent Gesture
(Blanca Santacruz Oehling, Zaragoza)

Blanca Santacruz Oehling's design is an explosion of **Postmodernism** and **Pop Art**. The segmented, tubular, exaggerated, and primary-color forms refer to the **radical and ironic design** of the 70s in Italy, such as the Studio Alchimia collective or some pieces by Gaetano Pesce, which use playful and even kitsch form to challenge the established. The Noodle Armchair is a **cheerful transgression**, a piece with a conceptual and very powerful wink.



This verdict of the 16th International Competition not only rewards four pieces of furniture but validates the thesis that contemporary design is moving towards a **culture of living without borders**. The projects by Sancho Martín Merino, Caitlin Kao, Enrique Soriano Muñoz, and Blanca Santacruz Oehling are a reflection of a generation that interprets sustainability and spatial fluidity not as a restriction, but as an **enhancer of creativity**. From the **geometric discipline** of ETERIO, which dialogues with the modern legacy, through the **biomorphic and playful audacity** of ALIS, to the **tactile narrative** of PUFF CORAL and the **chromatic and irreverent rupture** of the NOODLE ARMCHAIR, each proposal is a manifesto on how upholstered design can be, simultaneously, a sculptural gesture, a comfortable refuge, and a declaration of principles. GANDIABLASCO, through this curatorial platform, reaffirms its commitment to **talent capable of transforming matter into concept** and projects a future where lightness and versatility are not mere functional characteristics, but the foundations of a freer life, connected with its environment.



GANDIABLASCO

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About GANDIABLASCO

GANDIABLASCO is the outdoor furniture brand from the Gandia Blasco Group, a family owned business based in Valencia (Spain), founded in 1941 as a blankets manufacturer. In the mid-90s, José A. Gandía-Blasco Canales, the company's current President and Creative Director, introduced design in all areas of the company, focusing his interest on the development of furniture and outdoor accessories with a distinct architectural character. The expression of a lifestyle inspired by his Mediterranean roots transcended to products. Since then, the creation of simple and elegant outdoor spaces has set the company's direction. The quality of their designs and the use of luxury materials has made way for collaborations with architects and designers of international prestige. Currently, the GANDIABLASCO brand has reached more than 75 countries and is internationally recognised for the quality of its furniture and the creation of contemporary environments that reflect its passion for outdoor living.

About Gandia Blasco Group

Gandia Blasco Group is a Mediterranean family company known for its expertise in the design and edition of outdoor furniture and spaces - more than furniture, a lifestyle - and in the handcrafted creation of designer rugs. The group operates in a diversified way through its three brands: GANDIABLASCO, GAN, and DIABLA, each with its own distinctive personality. Founded in 1941 by José Gandía Blasco and originally dedicated to the manufacture of yarns and blankets, the company has stood out for a solid trajectory marked by constant reinvention and the promotion of design culture. Today, the company is presided over by José A. Gandía-Blasco Canales, a member of the second generation of the family, followed by his children Álvaro Gandía-Blasco, Vice President and Commercial Director, and Alejandra Gandía-Blasco, the group's Creative and Communications Director.

With its historical headquarters in Ontinyent (Valencia, Spain) and a presence in more than 75 countries, its main flagship stores are located in New York's Soho Design District and in the hearts of cities such as Madrid, Barcelona, and Lisbon. The company continues to expand and is constantly experimenting and innovating with renowned international designers and architects.

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