

PRESS RELEASE

Diego Guillén Ligori presents 76 m² of 'empty space' at Marbella Design & Art

The project, a Japanese-inspired apartment with knowing nods to “The Wizard of Oz”, takes its name from the Japanese concept [ma]

After winning second prize last year, twelve Spanish and international brands wished to sponsor the interior designer this year

The region of Aragón will also have a special focus with a space featuring creations made by twelve artisans, two visual artists —Juan Carlos Callejas and Beatriz Bertolín— and a family-run company —Manuel Larraga

The Japanese concept [ma] is like a pause in time, an emptiness or gap in space necessary for growth and consciousness, and its kanji represents a door through which rays of sunlight enter; a door open to light, growth, creativity and freedom. This is the conceptual source of inspiration behind the space designed by Diego Guillén Ligori for Marbella Design & Art 2023, to be held at the Marbella exhibition and conference center from November 2 through 12.

After winning second prize last year for the best fusion of art and interior design with “Tempo”, the designer is back again at the event in Marbella with “[ma]”, a very different project yet faithful to the premise with which Diego Guillén Ligori opened his studio in Zaragoza: to design spaces for living that tell stories. The analysis of space, the combination of materials and the focus on crafts and unique pieces are once again key to this year’s design. And as the designer started to sketch the initial ideas, “Somewhere Over the Rainbow” by Judy Garland was playing in the background.

[ma], which literally means something like ‘in between’, reminds us of the importance to slowing down in order to arrive at our space and time not only with objects and actions, but also with meaning and goals. A space and time we become aware of. “The length of time

depends upon our ideas –says an oriental aphorism–, the size of space hangs upon our sentiments. Therefore, for a man whose mind is free from care, a single day will be longer than a thousand years; for a man whose heart is large, even a small room will be as wide as the space between heaven and earth.”

If absence gives meaning to life, the layout of the project is designed to demarcate empty spaces that offer space and time for life to unfold inside. We are not dealing with a three-dimensional object or a box, but rather an experiential space that takes place within the imagination of a human being: an emptiness full of sensations in which [ma] is the connection between different spaces. The important thing is not only the actual object, but what it suggests and the way it exists.

From horror vacui to amor vacui

The use of natural materials, simplicity and the integration of gardens are basic premises in this project which, though removed from the traditional interconnected spaces in Japan, proposes an open design that generates movement. A spatial organization where [ma] joins together the pieces in a group which can be modified by opening and closing large doors.

And so, this concept gave rise to a 76m² apartment which can be a whole dwelling, a guest room, a hotel suite or a games room in a villa. From each one of its entrances (one for day and another for night), our steps lead us to a polyvalent space conceived for a meeting of people, spaces and times. And although visitors do not exactly follow a yellow brick road, the project does make many knowing nods to the movie “The Wizard of Oz”, and even the tornado that blew Dorothy’s house to the land of Oz.



The center of the space is framed by seven arches, which could well allude to the rainbow Judy Garland sings about. The number seven is also associated with consciousness, wisdom, the strength of nature, the search for oneself and the ability to reach goals through passion. Therefore, it is no coincidence that it takes over the center of the space, that under it is the main upholstered piece and that our steps lead directly to this point and then continue to another four complementary spaces: a kitchen, garden, dressing room and bathroom.

In contrast to the relaxed coloring of the central space, these four complementary spaces are full of color. The kitchen is green; the garden blue; the bathroom pink; and the dressing room gold. Four spaces, four colors... parcheesi! But a parcheesi also set in the "The Wizard of Oz" with its four main characters: Dorothy, Scarecrow, the Tin Woodman and the Cowardly Lion.

12 sponsoring brands

Following twenty years in journalism, Diego Guillén Ligorí started his career as an interior designer in 2021. And while last year he gained the support of five leading Spanish and international brands in their respective sectors for his design "Tempo", this year he has attracted twelve sponsoring brands and ten collaborators.

Lladró, Laufen, Mainzu and the Artesanos de Aragón association wished to repeat the experience with the interior designer yet again this year. And they are now joined by: Élitis, Avawood, Prolicht, Hager, Cerámica a mano alzada, Manuel Larraga, Compac and Juan Carlos Callejas, the painter from Aragón. In addition, also collaborating in the project are: EliAcoustic, Escenium, Natuzzi, Grass, Wood Vega Designs, Eurobath, Pulpo, D'aqua, Montó, Tecnoclima, RCR Hermanos and Beatriz Bertolín, the artist from Teruel.

The Soft Blown collection by Lladró

For the second year running, the interior designer has chosen Lladró's latest introductions in decorative lighting to showcase them in Marbella, including the Soft Blown collection which was first presented to the public last April at the Milan Furniture Fair. The collaboration between the brand from Valencia and the Luca Nichetto studio gave rise to a series of lamps inspired by balloons and summertime, showcasing the diversity of colors it is possible to achieve in porcelain. The Lladró presence in the space is rounded off with the Ice Cream collection and dozens of pieces used to flesh out the narrative, including the High Porcelain sculpture Kabuki or The Dreamer by Laolu, which, following its presentation in New York on November 2, will go on view in Spain for the first time at [ma].

Founded in 1953, Lladró is a world-leading brand in the design, manufacturing and distribution of a wide spectrum of art porcelain creations. High-quality works made entirely by hand in Valencia, in Lladró's only factory in the world.

Laufen and its iconic collection

Laufen is a world-leading manufacturer specialized in the bathroom sector. With 130 years of experience to its credit, and present in Spain since 2012, the brand can boast 100% European fabrication and a wide network of distributors. The company's main asset is its expertise in the manufacturing of innovative sanitary products, especially in the use of ceramic. Laufen

represents a perfect symbiosis between design, quality and functionality that makes its products unique and has earned it a reputation in the premium, high-end of its sector.

Laufen caused quite a stir last March at the fair in Frankfurt with a revamp of one of its most iconic collections, IlBagnoAlessi, with a lighter design and innovative materials like Saphirkeramik, a high-performance ceramic material that is used to make gravity-defying curved washbasins. Twenty years after it was first debuted, this collection designed by Stefano Giovannoni has gone on to become a classic in bathroom design and, now, prior to its roll out in retail, it will go on view in this space designed by Diego Guillén Ligorí.

The big little format of Mainzu

Also for the second year running, the small-format ceramic covering for the project is again provided by Mainzu, a pioneer in the production of ceramic coverings. Founded in 1964 in Vila-Real, it has always been at the frontline of a sector in constant evolution, specializing in small, high-quality formats. In fact, in 1998 the company became the first in the Spanish ceramic sector to introduce a computerized control system. And 13 years ago, it introduced High Definition effects.

The interior designer has chosen some of the brand's different collections for the space, some of which were presented at the Cevisama fair in Valencia last February and others seen for the first time just a few weeks ago at the Cersaie fair in Bologna. Having said that, unlike last year, none of them is used for tiling floors. On this occasion, the small format is used for walls and furniture with different-sized pieces including 15x30 (Wynn collection), 6.5x20 (Positano collection), 10x30 (Village collection) and 20x20 (Metal Tiles and Fondant collections).

Twelve artisans from Aragón

Artesanos de Aragón is an association grouping 144 craftspeople from the region of Aragón with the primary goal of fostering, promoting and developing crafts in our society as an economic and cultural asset. Since 1987, and thanks to an agreement signed with the Department of Industry, Competitiveness and Business Development of the regional government of Aragón, it is working to focus on and lend greater value to crafts and to encourage connections and bonds between different craftspeople, and also to ensure the survival of certain trades and crafts, blurring the boundaries between crafts, design and art.

Eight artisans were involved in last year's project, creating seven different pieces in wood, ironwork, artistic glass, alabaster and weaving. This year three of the same artisans are repeating and are now joined by another nine working in various disciplines to showcase different facets of crafts from Aragón.

Eloy Collado (Fifth Pine Deco) is back again in Marbella with several carved oak pieces conceived by the interior designer for the bedroom and the dressing room.

Paz Giral is also repeating, but this time she is taking on the challenge of weaving a one-square-meter parcheesi board inspired by "The Wizard of Oz" using Japanese-style cotton fabric. A total of 720 pieces were sewn together, overlapped, to make the work.

Diego Guillén Ligorí commissioned Susana Martín (Susana Martín Vidrio Artístico) and Aneliia Trifonova (Instant Natural Art) to work together on a hanging mobile sculpture using Tiffany crystal birds and wool poppies. Measuring almost two meters high, the piece has been called “Over the Rainbow”.

Marta Danés (Cerámica Marta Danés) lives in the middle of nature and on her daily walks she gathers twigs and leaves which she uses to make bas-reliefs in porcelain. And so, the dinner service she has designed uses organic forms featuring twigs, leaves and hand-painted insects.

A lot of sketches and ideas were bounced back and forth between the interior designer and Sara Monge Zaro until they came up with the two pieces which the artisan is now presenting in Marbella: “Between Heaven and Earth 1 and 2”. Each of the two vases is composed of three exchangeable parts and can be arranged together in a single composition or separately. The two are made of an enameled stoneware 63 cm high base, a 12 cm cloud and a final stoneware piece braided with wicker, esparto and raffia, one measuring 25 cm and the other 60 cm.

The minimalist little birds dotted about the place are made by Alejandra Castro, an artisan who uses the Japanese raku technique for the finish of the pieces, thus ensuring that no two are the same.

Ana Moreno Cardiel (Carmela Cardiel), Loli Puértolas (Bendito Momento) and Víctor Calero (Calero Design) are three jewelry artisans who are taking on the challenge of creating different collections based on architecture and on the story behind the project. Cardiel took her inspiration from latticework to create a pendant, bracelet and brooch for the “Tin Man” collection, made in striped white silver. Puértolas took her inspiration from the bluebirds in Judy Garland’s signature song to design “Birds and Dreams”, a collection comprising a headpiece, a ring, a pendant and two earrings made in silver and plastic recycled from water bottles. Meanwhile, Calero uses silver, gold, natural gems, black diamonds, paraiba tourmaline and natural opals to create rings, pendants and earrings with circles and bird motifs.

Clara Blasco (Pitos y flautas) works on a daily basis to recover and highlight the rich heritage of traditional games and her personal take on skittles will now be given a space in Marbella: a game with six pins and three boules hand-carved one by one in wood from holm oak. In addition, Blasco has made the pieces for the parcheesi in wood, all painted by hand to represent the characters from “The Wizard of Oz”, as well as a rainbow construction set comprising 24 pieces inspired by Waldorf pedagogy.

The movie “The Wizard of Oz” was also the inspiration behind the pieces presented by DCuero: three merino wool hats and one plant-fiber hat created and decorated by hand for Dorothy, the Scarecrow, the Tin Man and the Lion. And a fifth hat designed to be worn by the interior designer himself during Marbella Design & Art.

Avawood, 100% European wood

Quality, design and customized attention in coverings made in 100% European wood is the leitmotiv of Avawood, a Barcelona-based brand that uses wood sourced in sustainable European forests.

Large-format wooden pieces for the central space and wood-covered walls made from small black strips (Forêt collection) which also hides a frameless door (Frameless collection). In addition, in conjunction with the team at Avawood, Diego Guillén Ligori has designed one of the project's defining elements, the large doors separating the four complementary spaces.

Élitis, craft into art

The wall covering and fabric for the project comes from Élitis, a brand whose philosophy is based on metamorphosis and innovation: to incorporate unprecedented new materials in walls, to rescue and maintain old techniques, to reinterpret art against the flow, to think without boundaries ...

The interior designer has chosen new introductions which the French brand presented at Maison & Objet in Paris that go hand in glove with this project. The wall covering chosen for the occasion comes from the Art Paper collection, a collage of handmade paper mixed with silk and mulberry craft paper. On the other hand, the fabric used to upholster the centerpiece comes from the Prestige collection, with the smooth softness of refined chenille.

Prolicht, bespoke lighting

Their infinite options in terms of size and shape means that Prolicht lamps harmonize or contrast to the interior designer's desire. Based in Tirol, Austria, the technical lighting brand works across areas like design, development and planning to create bespoke products.

At Euro luce in Milan, Prolicht presented the new Snooker model which is used here as one of the project's signature elements. Furthermore, the Code model designed by Tom Dixon was chosen to underscore the lighting in one of the areas of the space with 6,300 micro-points of light.

The know-how of Manuel Larraga

For this year's project Diego Guillén Ligori wanted to bring on board the professionalism and know-how of Manuel Larraga, a family-run company from Aragón founded in 1987 and specialized in upholstered furniture. Design, comfort and crafts go hand in hand to shape creations based on a careful choice of materials.

At the beginning of the year the interior designer asked Manuel Larraga to create the piece he had imagined for the center of the space and ever since they have worked together to turn it into a reality. Based on the Trento model designed by Larraga, Guillén Ligori has conceived a completely upholstered piece with a twofold function: on one hand, a sofa and, on the other, a bed, with bedside tables incorporated.

Latticework by Cerámica a mano alzada

Cerámica a mano alzada, a company that transforms ceramic ideas into reality, has produced the latticework for the project. It all started back in 2013 when Miguel Bartolomé set up a blog on ceramics in architecture and since then it has made everything with ceramic: latticework, paving and coverings... to help architects and interior designers integrate ceramics into their projects.

On this occasion, the interior designer has chosen a square latticework, the CLS 008 model, in natural terracotta in a sandy tone, though Cerámica a mano alzada has also developed it in another format in order to place them together.

Berker R.8 series by Hager

Founded 68 years ago in Germany, Hager continues innovating and coming up with solutions to “shape tomorrow’s electrical world”. This is the mission of Hager, one of the brands collaborating with Diego Guillén Ligori last year which has chosen to become a sponsor this year.

Besides the brand’s domotic solutions, it has also installed the Berker R.8 series which adapts perfectly to the project, given that it brings to mind the latticework installed in the space. Hager’s complete range allows the project to maintain the same design and to adapt it to the needs of the home.

Compac’s big format

Compac was the first Spanish company specializing in the fabrication and distribution of marble and technological quartz coverings. It has two centers of production for terrazzo and obsidian (Spain) and quartz (Portugal), with a joint capacity of over 4.5 million square meters annually.

The floor of the space is covered with two models of terrazzo HPS (Petra Botticino HPS and Petra Estremoz HPS), while quartz is used to cover walls and fixtures. The interior designer has chosen four colors from the brand’s most ambitious collection, the Ice collection (Viola, Green, Ink and Gold) designed by Arik Levy. Technology, design and art are fused to create something never seen before.

Passionate about texture

The artist Juan Carlos Callejas starts out from a blank canvas to start mixing colors and ideas until coming up with an end result with organic forms. Passionate about textures, his work could well be described as the fruit of an ordered disorder. Since his beginnings, his works have always played with ochre, pastel and earthy colors, and textures like fabric, cement, wood and oils, combined to create an imaginary landscape.

With over one hundred solo and group shows to his credit, and many awards and recognitions attesting to his career, Callejas’ work is can be found in the collections of banking institutions like Ibercaja, Cajastur, CAI... and also in private collections and foundations in Spain, Switzerland, Bolivia, Germany, France and USA. At Marbella Design & Art he is presenting small and large format works, full of textures and light, pastel colors mixed with earthy tones to give them greater painterly strength.

Twelve collaborating brands

On the other hand, the project also includes other brands whose collaboration is instrumental in making it possible: Escenium has made the kitchen imagined by the interior designer while

Wood Vega Designs has added the carpentry; Grass supplied all the fittings and drawers, and D'aqua the accessories and faucets.

Keenly aware of the growing concern for silence and for comfortable spaces that mitigate noise, Diego Guillén Ligorí, jointly with the Alicante-based company EliAcoustic, has designed the acoustic skies at the entrance to the space, recreating the tornado that carried Dorothy's house to Oz.

The Italian brand Natuzzi has lent its recently debuted pouffe with a novel fabric; the German brand Pulpo, the glass furniture, and Eurobath has created the bathroom mirror. On the other hand, Pinturas Montó has supplied all the paint for the space, while Tecnoclima is looking after the electrical installation and the domotic programming, and RCR Hermanos is in charge of all the construction in plasterboard, including the rainbow.

The space also has the creative input from Beatriz Bertolín, the artist from Teruel who has made an Anthology of Wild Flowers: twelve botanical illustrations with pencil, watercolors and paints on handmade Indian paper.