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DESIGN | TRENDS

The Little-Known Furniture Brand Replacing My Ikea Obsession

Straight from Spain.

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BY LYDIA GEISEL

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COURTESY OF SILVIA CEÑAL DESIGN STUDIO

Scandinavia has long been praised as the place where excess ends and cozy minimalism begins. Exercising restraint and prioritizing practicality with every decor decision they make, Nordic countries have seemingly outshined their European counterparts in the art of layered textures, soft hues, and clean design. One young designer is out to change that status quo—and she’s making her minimalist mark in Spain.

“Simple, personal, and colorful,” is how **Silvia Ceñal** would sum up her aesthetic. Born and based in San Sebastian after studying in The Netherlands, Florence, and Madrid, the furniture designer broke out on her own in 2015 to kick-start her own studio. I was immediately smitten when I first came across Ceñal’s **Macaron Lamp**—a wood fixture wrapped in cord and inspired by the sweet French confection after which it was named—on Instagram. After digging a little deeper, I discovered that her work encompassed more than just dessert-inspired lighting. Instead, I stumbled upon the same universal appeal you’d find walking through an Ikea. But in this case, it wasn’t a global retailer or brand loyalist who was trying to sell me on simpler living: It was one person with smart design in mind.

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“I always try to design functional and simple pieces and think about people’s needs,” says Ceñal. Long inspired by both Scandinavian and Japanese design, you can spot the influence in her work. “Those are two cultures I’ve always been interested in and still have more to learn from.”

Attempting to keep my fangirling to a minimum, I recently caught up with Ceñal to chat all things furniture. Minimalist or not, there’s something for every type of decorator to appreciate.

Attempting to keep my fangirling to a minimum, I recently caught up with Ceñal to chat all things furniture. Minimalist or not, there’s something for every type of decorator to appreciate.



Beka Clothing Rack for Muebles Lufe, \$62.

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For the city dweller

Adaptable, durable, and primed for storage, many of the pieces Ceñal has designed for the Spanish home furnishings company, Muebles Lufe, bare functionality in mind. Often sticking to wood structures, her sleek, small space-friendly creations for the brand have included **Beka**, a two-part clothing rack crafted from fruit crates, and **Cimas**, a layered coat rack inspired by mountainous terrain.



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Cimas Coat Hanger for Muebles Lufe, \$23.
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Ceñal's use of color shines in her small-space seating. **Bi Silla**, one of Ceñal's favorite creations, is a two-toned, L-shaped chair designed to make the sitter feel sheltered. While originally designed with a hotel lobby in mind, the nook-like seats are so fun and functional that you'd want to see them in a 100-something-square-foot apartment.



Bi Silla chairs designed for TWO SIX.
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For the lighting geek

Designed for Lithuanian home decor and furniture brand, **EMKO**, Ceñal's **Macaron light fixture** first appeared in 2016 as a pendant. It was only this year that the designer reintroduced the popular wood and cord fixture as a **floor lamp**. While we've seen wovens grace the lighting scene in the form of large basket pendants, Ceñal's threaded approach offers a fresh, textured alternative.



Cowbell Lamp for Plussmi, price upon request.
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Ceñal's **Cowbell Lamp** lends itself to a more traditionally minimalist aesthetic, though her play on texture still permeates her approach to lighting. Introducing a softer perspective to the ceramic dome, leather accents create a more modern focal point for the kitchen island or entryway.



Lau Stools for Muebles Lufe, \$12.
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For the strictly practical

Stackable chairs and ultra-functional stools are making big waves in contemporary chair design, and Ceñal's contribution to the movement does not disappoint. Based on the logic and simplicity of the number four, the **Lau stool** is a straightforward rendition of a classic seat but with the bonus ability to bundle three units together if need be. As dining room seating, the stools take the room down to the essentials, but as a bedside table or bonus living room surface, the piece can blend in with more eclectic accessories and styles.



Raspa Drawer for Muebles Lufe, \$115.
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An elevated alternative to Ikea's **Bjorksnas** chest, her **Raspa Drawer** (also created for Muebles Lufe) builds on its basic wooden structure with unexpected details like leather pulls and exposed siding.



Torei Tray for Muebles Lufe, \$14.
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For the entertainer

While Ceñal's primary focus is furniture, her **Torei Tray**—a piece directly inspired by traditional Japanese trays used for serving sushi—sets the scene for a unique display. While the subtle and simple lines are direct references to the original tray, Ceñal added a secondary platform and hemp cord handles to make the piece her own.

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Abric Armchair for Bosc, price upon request.
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For the homebody

Despite their classic shapes, her larger accent chairs and sofas play with innovation by way of upholstery.

For each of the three seating options in the **Abric Collection**, Ceñal added a horizontal seam along the oak wood legs—her own clever spin on the standard gray couch. Likewise, her cushy **Basket sofa** transforms the living room staple into a shapely statement.



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