



Gabbertas Studio's CoCo chair was the winner of a Design Guild Mark this year

# Cabinet Maker meets up with Mark Gabbertas, the eponymous founder of internationally celebrated design house, The Gabbertas Studio.

Earlier this month the British public was once again plunged into a nationwide state of excitement that has been annual now since 2010. Yes, no matter what football team you



Mark Gabbertas

support or car you drive, whether you're in school or retired, you will not have been able to escape the phenomenon that is The Great British Bake Off. Yes, adore it or merely love it intensely, we must be prepared for the bake off will start to bleed into every

aspect of our lives. Co-workers may turn up laden with piles of profiteroles, and every aisle of the supermarket will bear a sign to let you know how best to incorporate the ingredients you are walking past into something Paul Hollywood would be proud of.

But what has become more hotly contested this year than the challenges is the background of the contestants competing. While many of us are happy enough to watch any show that encourages our friends and colleagues to ambush us with baked good at every corner, others do seem to be hung up on what exactly makes an 'amateur baker'. One woman had supposedly received training as a sous-chef, while another comes from a family of professional bakers.

There are still a few weeks left in the competition before we can find out if the victor will be one who genuinely does seem to come from an

untrained background but, as always, the topic set Cabinet Maker's mind a-whirring. How much should past experience influence a future ambition, if skill is involved, and, when it comes to our own industry, is there anything holding back an individual who, though they may come from a completely un-related profession, is readily willing to commit themselves to a new craft? Luckily for us, we were able to contact one man who knows more about the subject that most, designer and studio owner, Mark Gabbertas.

After graduating from university with a degree in political philosophy, and it wasn't until he dropped out of a career in advertising that Mark started training as a cabinet maker at a workshop in London. Going on to become an apprentice at Dalston-based furniture maker Stemmer and Sharp, he eventually progressed into the design department at the business during an exciting time

at what he calls the 'forefront of the explosion of young designer makers'. Before he knew it the one time motorbike messenger had moved away from physically making the products altogether and, deciding he should quit



Sandur chair

while he still had all his fingers, decided to concentrate solely on design.

While he may have no formal design training to his name, Mark says he has never regretted coming 'the long way round' to designing. And though



CoCo chair by Gabbertas Studio for Oasiq

it can be difficult to ensure that the essence of his ideas

all the different specialists along the way and an idea necessarily

## We are very lucky with the companies we work with currently."

remains true, Mark is obviously committed to ensuring the integrity of each design he creates is never compromised, as he explains:

"The design development process can be a long drawn out affair and somehow one has to try to carry this butterfly of an idea, so easily crushed, through to completion whereby the concept still has integrity and key design principles," he tells us.

"Every project is different and the extent of variation from the original concept varies – and all the time I will be making changes and experimenting with variations on the original idea.

"The development process is a fluid one and rarely does an idea materialise in exactly the form it was originally conceived and I would be misguided if I felt that my original concept is always 100% correct... I welcome the opportunity to get input from

evolves as it becomes a commercially viable proposition."



Machar Table with Sandur dining chairs

Its estimated that at any one time, the studio will have up to 15 projects at varying stages of development, with each one destined to take up to two years, and sometimes longer, to reach completion. Mark insists that the process at the business is fundamentally guided by the conviction that furniture has the ability to influence not only how people behave and perform, but also how they interact and, most importantly, feel. Good design and manufacturing, Mark believes, has the ability to improve a person's quality of life.

Currently consisting of four team members, including Mark himself, the product designers at The Gabbertas Studio works with a number of international brands. Given the reputation of Mark and his team, who have won an incredible number of awards, from Design Guild Marks to Interior Innovation Awards, its unsurprising that there is no shortage of companies who would be interested in collaborating with the business. So how does Mark make the difficult decision of which brands to work with?

As he divulges: "We are very lucky with the companies we work with currently. We have a strong British representation and we enjoy the process of working with these companies in particular.

"However all the brands

we work with operate internationally and there is no such thing really as a purely national perspective for these companies anymore which is what makes the process interesting. The most important consideration for us is that there is a shared vision, a sense that we are both trying to achieve something special, new and meaningful. This really determines with whom we collaborate."

Most recently, The Gabbertas Studio has come together with Hainsworth, one of England's oldest woollen textile mills. Together they will present Fabricate, an exhibition of furniture and fabric that the company describes as 'celebrating the potency of bringing together tradition and innovation'. The collaboration has seen some of The Gabbertas Studio's new, recent and favourite designs reworked to explore how each ones personality is transposed by using and combining unfamiliar colours, textures and materials.

Another collaboration with Netherlands based brand Oasiq, entitled 'Exoteric Esoteric', rightfully received attention when it was exhibited during the London Design Festival last year. An experience that so enthused Mark to the event that he has once again pledged to participate this year. Appreciating the diversity of the showcase, which will take place across the capital from 19 – 27 September, Mark is especially impressed with the way the London Design Festival demonstrates the range of talent that exists in the UK today in numerous disciplines. And we can only imagine that, as he has done throughout his career, Mark will continue to encourage talented individuals from all walks of life to pursue the careers of their dreams. ■

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT  
[WWW.GABBERTAS.COM](http://WWW.GABBERTAS.COM)