



# From Spain with Design: A conversation about Spanish design



In the context of the exhibition “From Spain With Design – Essence,” this conversation explores the contemporary design landscape in Spain — its global impact, key voices, and future.

This conversation delves into the many dimensions of contemporary design, with a special focus on the dynamic and evolving design landscape in Spain. The discussion will explore the role of Spanish designers both within the country and on the international stage, highlighting their contributions, challenges, and global impact.

The panel features distinguished voices in the field: María Nicanor, Director of the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum; Juan José Castellón, a prominent Spanish architect and professor at Rice University; and Gloria Escribano, representing READ (Spanish Network of Design Associations), a key organization promoting and connecting design professionals across Spain.

Together, they will reflect on the present and future of design through a Spanish lens—examining how creativity, sustainability, and cultural identity shape design practices today. The event complements the *From Spain With Design – Essence* exhibition, which showcases some of the most innovative and awarded Spanish design work across product, graphic, and spatial design.

## GUEST SPEAKERS

### María Nicanor

María Nicanor is the director of Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum in

DESIGN  
WASHINGTON

Thu, April 24, 2025

### Venue

Spanish Cultural Center, 2801 16th St  
NW Washington, DC 20009

[View map](#)

### Admission

Free. [RSVP required.](#)

### More information

[From Spain with Design](#)

### Credits

Presented by READ in collaboration with the Cultural Office of the Embassy of Spain in Washington, DC.



New York. An architecture and design curator and historian, she is passionate about public access to culture and rethinking the traditional roles of museums by experimenting with new storytelling formats that connect cultural institutions with civic life.

Previously, Nicanor had been the executive director of the Rice Design Alliance, the public programs and outreach arm of the Rice School of Architecture at Rice University in Houston. She was also the inaugural director of the Norman Foster Foundation in Madrid and a curator at the Design, Architecture and Digital Department of the Victoria & Albert Museum in London. Before that, Nicanor had spent most of her career at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York, where she held several positions, including associate curator of architecture and urbanism and co-curator of the BMW Guggenheim Lab project. During her last years at the Guggenheim, Nicanor was also part of the team leading the international architecture competition for the Guggenheim Museum in Helsinki.

Originally from Spain, she holds a bachelor's degree in art and architectural history and theory from the Autónoma University of Madrid, which she partly completed at the Sorbonne University Paris, and a master's degree in museum and curatorial studies from New York University.

### **Juan José Castellón**

**Juan José Castellón** is an architect (ETSA Barcelona, 2003), Master in Emergent Technologies & Design (Architectural Association London, 2011), and a Doctor of Sciences from the Swiss Institute of Technology (ETH Zurich, 2018). Castellón's research focuses on the implementation of innovative material processes and structural systems in architecture and on the integrative and ecological design of building infrastructures. Through his work at Rice University located in Houston (USA) and his collaborative practice, xmade, located in Basel (Switzerland) and Barcelona (Spain), he explores the materialization and sustainable design of contemporary structures and building envelopes.

As co-founder and co-director of xmade Switzerland, he has been part of the design and development of projects by xmade in collaboration with renowned international practices such as Barozzi Veiga, Ted'A, Jose Maria Sanchez Garcia, or Alberto Campo Baeza. Some of these projects, including the Swiss Embassy Building in Seoul, the Cantonal Museum of Fine Arts in Lausanne, the Bündner Kunstmuseum in Chur, the School in Orsonnens, or the Bauhaus Museum Dessau, have been broadly published and acknowledged with international awards such as the Korean Architecture Excellence Award, the Fritz-Höger-Award, or the RIBA Award for International Excellence. As an independent architect, Castellón has collaborated with international firms such as FOA (London), Abalos & Herreros (Madrid), SHoP Architects (New York), and Herzog & de Meuron (Basel). Before joining Rice University, he also taught at the ETH Zurich and the Barcelona Institute of Architecture.

### **Gloria Escribano**

Gloria Escribano holds a degree in Philology. A cultural manager and journalist, she specializes in culture, architecture, and design, as well as cultural marketing.



Since 2007, she has coordinated the Ibero-American Design Biennial (BID) and the BID Meeting on Design Education, both organized by DIMAD, the Design Foundation of Madrid, at the Central de Diseño in Matadero Madrid. She is also an editor and project manager at ROOM Diseño, a design and architecture publication, where she has coordinated initiatives such as the FoodDi project, organized in collaboration with Roca Madrid Gallery, among others.

For more than 35 years, she has been dedicated to developing, managing, and leading socio-cultural and artistic projects, as well as creating content strategies related to communication and production. She has taken part in cultural projects with public institutions and private companies, where she was responsible for communication, project creation, development, and direction. As a journalist, she has collaborated for over thirty years with various media outlets in Spain and Latin America. Originally from Argentina, she has lived in Spain since 1989.