

Design

Meet Bend Goods: Founder Q+A

Blending form & function with injections of fun & funkiness

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For Los Angeles based Bend Goods “blending form & function with injections of fun & funkiness” isn’t just a good tagline—it’s a business plan. Bend Goods creates wire furniture inspired by mid-century modern shapes and designs but with a subtle originality that grows with closer examination. It’s a collection that’s fresh, colorful, and consistently delightful.

Gaurav Nanda, the founder of Bend Goods, began his career as a sculptor for General Motors creating models of the interiors of cars for more than seven years. In 2010, he decided to make a change. He traded the auto industry and the Midwest for Los Angeles and the vision for Bend Goods. 360 recently sat down with Gaurav to hear about these beginnings and the rest of Bend Goods’ story.

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360: How long ago did you start Bend Goods?

Gaurav Nanda: I started the company about 10 years ago. Before that I grew up in the Detroit area and after college, I worked as a sculptor at General Motors for nearly seven years. I was sculpting the interiors and exteriors of vehicles in the design department. There came a time when it wasn't enough and I needed to branch out on my own. I already had a great interest in mid-century modern furniture—specifically the wire Bertoa Chair from the 1950s that really started that whole type of furniture. I wanted to see if I could take that in a new and original direction. So, I quit my job and started designing chairs. I've been doing it ever since.

360: In the early years, how did you get people to notice Bend Goods?

GN: I launched the company in Los Angeles soon after I left General Motors. I'd always wanted to move to the coast. Plus, it made sense for the furniture as an indoor/outdoor product to be founded in that type of climate. It was just me in the beginning. I started off doing trade shows just to get the product in front of people. Then a few publications—Design Sponge, Design Milk, Apartment Therapy, Elle Decor—they were really interested in what I was doing. That catapulted the brand. This was before social media was really a thing, so getting those endorsements was important to getting the brand out there and allowing us to grow.

360: How were you manufacturing your product at that point?

GN: In the beginning, I was designing on the computer and then having to find fabricators to make samples. Once I had those samples, it took nearly a year to find the right vendors who could manufacture the product at scale. It's very complicated and intricate. There's a lot of precise cutting and bending. Many of the wires are different shapes or lengths. Then each of those are curved at different radiuses. Everything is hand bent and hand welded. Now, we're able to create jigs to help make sure everything is the same. But it still remains very precise and time consuming. Each piece is still totally handmade and, at the same time, they've been BIFMA tested to hold more than 400 pounds.

360: How have you been able to grow the company over the years?

GN: I took a very slow approach. Our first collection was only five pieces and we made sure they were successful. We initially launched with those and then have slowly added products each year. As we've added more products, we've also been able to add more team members and so it's all felt very natural.

I also think it's helped that we're so customer centric. For instance, we're able to carry a lot of stock for easy shipping. In this day-in-age, everyone wants things immediately after they place an order. We carry stock so if a restaurant needs 20 additional chairs at the last minute, we're able to provide that for them quickly. We have a standard line of colors but can also provide custom colors. We've matched colors to logos, for example. All of our colored chairs are powder coated for indoor/outdoor use. We also do metallic versions—gold, copper, chrome—we recommend those for indoor use. It's allowed us to be very customer focused and provide a product they remember and talk about.

360: After 10 years, where are you finding inspiration for your designs?

GN: Inspiration comes from everywhere and anywhere. We might see a product need in the market and evolve and develop it. It might come from looking at different materials. We've been looking at adding wood, terrazzo tiles or retan leather to our designs. We have this chair we've recently developed called the Wooden Wire Chair that we're really excited about. We've only shown it to a few people but we've gotten really positive feedback. So, various new materials we can incorporate with the metal we're currently using is definitely something that's inspiring us. Then, we're constantly finding inspiration in the world around us from architecture, travel and just things you see every day.

360: What has you excited for the future of Bend Goods?

GN: We are very excited about this partnership with Steelcase. We're excited to continue to get our products in front of new people. I also think some of those mixed material designs we're working on are going to be successful. We've gotten some really good reactions to that.

EXPLORE BEND GOODS

Bend Goods' wire furniture is inspired by mid-century modern shapes and designs with a subtle originality that grows with closer examination.

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