

# GUBI

PRESENTS

## THE BEETLE: MAKING OF AN ICON



# THE BEETLE: MAKING OF AN ICON

*How GamFratesi coupled craft with technology to create a classic of modern furniture design*



In 2013, GUBI and GamFratesi introduced the Beetle Chair to the world, and a modern design classic was born. Strikingly simple in form but full of personality, GamFratesi's design combined crafted details and advanced manufacturing technologies to produce something truly original: a highly versatile, extremely comfortable, and beautifully expressive dining chair inspired by the forms of nature.

*"The Beetle Chair is one of the most complex projects we had ever undertaken. Its free, organic, yet precise line is what makes it unique. One of the most significant pieces in the history of our practice, the Beetle has shaped both our careers and our design language."* Stine Gam and Enrico Fratesi, Designers, GamFratesi.

## *Craft meets technology*

The Beetle Chair's unique success as a design is rooted in its distinctive fusion of artisanal craftsmanship and technologically advanced production techniques. Like the insect that inspired it, the chair combines an almost mechanical exactitude of form with an

organic, contoured softness – a duality that mirrors the man-meets-machine story of its making.

## *Molded for movement*

One of the distinctive features of GamFratesi's inspiration, the beetle insect, is its ability to make complex movements while keeping its constituent parts rigid and defined. Echoing this, the chair's elegant 10-millimeter, single-curved outer shell, had to be capable of flexing in response to the body's micro-movements in such a way as to ensure high ergonomic performance while maintaining a strong silhouette.

The manufacturing process used to achieve this pushes thermo-plastic technology to its limits, creating a shell with a continuous curved form that is robust and firm, while retaining flexibility. The high-pressure injection-molded plastic of the Beetle Chair's outer shell exhibits a slight bend, just like a technical office chair but – thanks to variations in thickness of the shell at certain points – maintains the graceful, domestic aesthetic that so many design fans have fallen in love with over the last decade.



### *Crafted for comfort*

The unique flex of the Beetle Chair's shell allows it to offer movement-responsive support for long periods of time, enabling effortless switching between different sitting positions. This level of comfort is enhanced further in the chair's upholstered variants, which feature dual layers of foam. The lower, firmer layer is configured to maximize comfort during long periods of sitting, whereas the softer upper layer that covers it provides a feeling of indulgence and relaxation from the instant you sit down. Precision-cut to fit the shell, the foam layers perfectly cover the Beetle's hard edges, giving the upholstered chair the comfort for which the chair is celebrated.

### *Organic geometry*

The Beetle's lightness of expression is partly down to the finessed form of its legs. Tapering down from the frame below the seat to the floor, the legs have a conic shape that elevates the seat and contributes to the delicacy and refinement of the chair's silhouette. Visually softening the steel frame in this way presents a

significant technical challenge, requiring that the steel be heated and shaped to the finest degree in order to balance the legs' organic, beetle-like elegance with the engineered sturdiness of the frame.

After shaping, the legs are treated to obtain different finishes in variations of black, chrome and brass, each requiring a unique surface application to achieve flawless results. For the antique brass variant, hand-polishing delivers the distinctive vintage look.

### *Finished by hand*

While cutting-edge technology and production techniques deliver the high degree of accuracy needed to create the Beetle's extraordinary shape, the final touches that underpin its crafted identity are performed manually. After the shell has been molded, the edges are carefully trimmed by hand to refine the chair's soft contours and edges. Upholstery fabrics and leathers are individually checked and quality-tested for any imperfections, and individually inspected to ensure they are evenly stretched across the curved shell. Where the front and back panels meet, a special



ricing technique adds an aesthetic finish, with the final stitching completed by hand.

### *The design that keeps on giving*

The beauty of the Beetle is not just aesthetic; GamFratesi's design has proven extraordinarily versatile, allowing the creation of an expansive and ever-growing furniture family. Thanks to the adaptability of its original design language, the Beetle Collection has grown to include chairs for every function, as well as tables, sofas, and stools. Some variants of the Beetle Chair can even be taken outdoors, thanks to the inclusion of UV-protection additives in the plastic shell that prevents its color from fading in the sun.

The design is also ripe for customization. The Beetle's inherent versatility means it can carry bold colors and graphic patterns as well as it does neutrals and solid colors. There are countless fabric options for

upholstered variants, as well as alternatives to the conic steel legs including wood and plastic options, as well as the inclusion of castors or the addition of stackable frames.

The Beetle Chair's various material expressions include plastic, full- and semi upholstered, as well as 3D veneer, which gives the design a bold natural expression, and beautifully expresses the Beetle's timeless marriage of engineering and craftsmanship.

*"Since its launch, the Beetle Chair has become a cornerstone design for the GUBI Collection, while its creators, GamFratesi, are an important part of GUBI's designer roster. The genius of their vision is its versatility. By bringing a craftsman's eye together with the most advanced production technology, GamFratesi created a template for a whole design universe."* Marie Kristine Schmidt, Chief Brand Officer, GUBI.