

Quality Inside – Made in Europe

Individualisation through material mix

Freitag, 13.09.2019

The furnishing trends in Western Europe can be seen every year at the two major furniture fairs, imm cologne in Cologne and Salone del Mobile in Milan. With more than 3,000 exhibitors, both events offer visitors an overview of new shapes, colours and materials. The increasingly individual furnishing wishes of consumers have led to a variety of materials in which wood no longer plays the main role.

The imm cologne, which takes place in the odd-numbered years together with the kitchen trade fair LivingKitchen in Cologne (Germany), offers an initial insight into the new furnishing trends every year. At both fairs (14.1.–20.1.19), 1,355 furniture and kitchen manufacturers from 50 countries presented their new models. Among the exhibitors were around 370 German suppliers, whose products offered an insight into the current taste of German furnishing. Visitor interest proved to be just as international as the range on offer at the fair: Both events – including around 50,000 end consumers – attracted more than 150,000 visitors. With a share of 52 per cent, the share of foreign visitors was higher than in previous years. At the same time, the range on offer at the furniture fair in Cologne gave a foretaste of the furnishing trends that were to be seen a few months later at the Salone del Mobile in Milan (Italy). Numerous imm cologne material trends were confirmed at the Italian furniture show. New colour and material trends were also set at the Salone. With over 2,400 exhibitors, the Milan event (9.4. to 14.4.2019) set off a firework display of innovative products for the home, the office and the bathroom. Around 1,300 suppliers gathered in the residential furniture sector.

This year the event attracted 386,236 visitors from 181 countries, including around 100,000 end consumers. The manufacturers of kitchens who only exhibit every two years at the Eurocucina trade fair and will therefore not be taking part again until 2020 (20.–26. April 2020) were not on board.

Deep matt surfaces

For this reason, visitor interest at the Cologne event was increasingly devoted to the kitchen range, which was characterised by diversity and numerous new presentations. In addition to real wood, lacquered fronts could be seen in the kitchen area, which did not appear in high gloss but with a deep matt surface. With their velvety soft feel, they resembled the laminate surfaces exhibited with an anti-fingerprint effect. Metallic surfaces in various shades were also on display. For kitchens and living furniture, thick veneers were also used, which were embossed and thus had an authentic old wood character. Compared to previous years, however, the wood surfaces were less rustic and more elegant. Oak dominated the solid wood programmes in the living area, followed by beech, which mostly appeared as ash pine or beech heartwood. More frequently than in previous years, oak was shown in the white oiled version.

Among the wood reproductions, oak was also ahead of walnut. The rusticity of the previous years also seemed to be somewhat reduced here, so that more elegant and above all lighter oak decors could be seen. Occasionally, replicas of ash and larch were shown. In addition to the authentic appearance of the decors, there was a corresponding haptic, because melamine surfaces as well as some finish foils were provided with a tactile surface structure.

In many cases only accents were set with wood and wood replicas, while other material replicas such as cement or concrete as well as stone or marble were given greater focus. Ceramics and slate were also used as materials as well as replicas. Black and almost black surfaces were eye-catching in the colours. At the

same time, light, pastel blue and green shades as well as various shades of grey were also to be found in the trade fair image.

Glass creates transparent spaces

The strong presence of open shelves in the kitchen and glass showcases in the living room was also a striking feature of the range on offer at the trade fair. Visitors to the glass showcases usually found a metal frame structure in which the sides were also made of glass and thus provided increased transparency in the room. Transparency also proved to be an important trend at the Salone del Mobile in Milan (Italy), as almost every exhibitor had exhibited wardrobes and, in some cases, home furniture with a metal structure completely clad in glass. A large part of the exhibited furniture was also not equipped with the usual cup hinges, but had hinges that were almost flush with the wall. Both in Cologne and in Milan, built-in sliding doors (pocket doors) were also on display, which can be used to conceal utility areas in the kitchen, for example, or a workplace in the kitchen area. Since the living spaces in the houses are now more open and the boundaries between kitchen and living space become fluid, areas of the kitchen can be concealed in this way.

Organic shapes

At the Salone del Mobile, the new box furniture was presented in thin material thicknesses and often in a minimalist style, while the upholstered furniture was often lavishly upholstered and with organic lines. The opposite was formed by expansive, linear upholstery programmes with low seat depths.

While dark wood colours dominated the high-value segment, the range in the mid-price segment was lighter. In the upper price segment, oak and eucalyptus veneer, often thermally treated or stained black, continued to play the main role. This year, however, furniture in light oak was added for the first time. Walnut had also gained ground. Elm was a widespread wood species, especially in the replicas. Some programmes were shown in ash veneer, which was then often varnished in open-pore colour. Exotic woods and veneers were occasionally used: Tineo wood veneer was to be found at B&B Italia (Italy), Porro (Italy) presented Pale-Moon wood (a strongly drawn ebony from Southeast Asia), MisuraEmme (Italy) showed furniture made of high-gloss ebony and Dada (Italy) made of black palm wood.

Green proved to be the trend colour for this year's salon, as this colour was exhibited both in the living area and in upholstered furniture. The palette ranged from pastel green to hunter green to a mustard shade. In the mid-price segment, however, grey tones dominated the trade fair image, while beige, brown and mud tones were the dominant colours in the high-price segment.

Marble “on top”

For numerous furnishing products, the exhibitors also played with the materials to give their models an individual look. The main role was played by marble and various reproductions of the material. While the original stone was often colour-intensive or with contrasting veins, the replicas were based on classic - Cararra marble. *Richard Barth*

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- [imm cologne](#)
- [Salone del Mobile Milano](#)

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