

## SMART HOMES

# RETHINKING LUXURY: SUSTAINABLE MATERIALS



With the threat of climate change and ecological collapse making headlines, our understanding of 'luxury' is undergoing a rapid transformation. In 2022, consumers and designers are increasingly focusing not just on the craftsmanship and prestige of a luxury item - but also on the impact of its materials on both the planet and its people.

In the past two years, Google searches for 'luxury brands +

sustainability' have risen by 46 per cent, while a recent study revealed four-in-five (80 per cent) of luxury customers prefer brands that are socially responsible.

Sustainability is set to represent a huge economic opportunity for brands willing to rise to the challenge. The sustainable home décor market, for example, is expected to hit \$556.3 billion by 2031.

And innovation in this field is

already blossoming - including everything from cell-based, cultivated leather, to zero-waste wool, and more. We've seen one company using CO2-absorbing bamboo to make wall panels and flooring, while a clever waterless system by another enables textile dyeing with 90 per cent less water-waste.

We predict this trend will only grow, as more luxury brands seek to do more than just look good - but to do good, too.



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Can cutting down a tree ever be considered truly sustainable? It can if that tree has already been under water for 25 years. Tasmania is home to the world's first 'underwater forestry' operation, where submerged Tasmanian Oaks are being reclaimed and put to use. Wood from the oaks was chosen by **Snøhetta** as the primary material for its bespoke Intersection Worktable. The five-metre-long table is an eye-catching centrepiece for an office in Bondi Beach, Australia.

Tired of wooden furniture altogether? Other materials are available. **Molo** has chosen expandable paper as its material of choice for a range of stools, benches, and partitions. The paper is FSC-certified, which means it is sustainably sourced from well-managed forests. Moreover, the fire retardants and adhesives used to protect and construct the products are non-toxic. Better yet, nearly zero waste is incurred during the manufacturing process, and all the items are biodegradable and recyclable.



Once furniture is in place, lighting can further lift a space - in a sustainable way. Designer **Marjan Vaubel** has developed a solar light called the 'Sunne'. The light, which uses technology developed in partnership with Dutch energy research centre ECN, brings the look and feel of sunrise and sunset to the home. Most excitingly, the light is powered by the sunlight it evokes.



Luxury furniture can do more than elevate the aesthetics of a room - **Studio Aledoci & Co** has proved that it can also improve indoor air quality. The studio's new collection of biocompatible furniture is made with wood that emits only beneficial compounds - such as those you'd breathe in during a forest walk. The collection, which is treated with 100 per cent natural essential oil, consists of coffee, lounge, and workshop tables, as well as a sideboard, drawer, and totem.

Often it's the upholstery that gives a room its sense of opulence. And here too innovators are demonstrating there need not be a trade-off between luxury and sustainability. **Carnegie Fabrics** creates materials for furniture, upholstered walls, and wrapped panel applications. The company has always been proud of its green credentials, and the latest iteration of its 'Xorel' material—set to launch in late 2022—will be 85 per cent biobased.



For the finishing touch, look no further than the sustainably produced customisable mosaic tiles by **Artaic**. By providing a fabric swatch, photograph, original artwork, or even just a word, those seeking the perfect mosaic for their space will receive a personalised design produced by robots. What is more, the company offers sintered glass tiles that are made from recycled windshields and are free of volatile organic compounds.