

# Trend materials in European furniture

Year after year, the furnishing taste of the European consumers is reflected in the products offered at the three furniture fairs in Cologne and Milan. In January 2018, at the imm cologne, visitors were able to gain a convincing overview of furniture which is particularly in demand on the German market and in the Benelux countries. The Salone del Mobile and the EuroCucina presented residential and kitchen furniture, which are highly popular in Italy and Southern Europe.

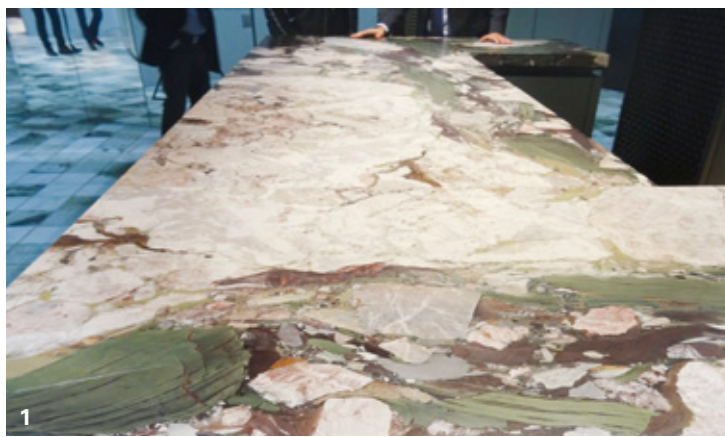
While domestic furniture is a focal point of the fair centres in Cologne (Germany) and Milan (Italy) every year, kitchen furniture makes its grand appearance at only one of the two venues annually. In April this year, in the context of the EuroCucina, the furniture industry in Milan was able to obtain an impression of what the European kitchen furniture segment has been developing for consumers. In January 2019, the leading kitchen furniture manufacturers will present themselves once again at the LivingKitchen in Cologne.

## Showcase of German taste in furniture

In January 2018, 1,272 exhibitors met at the imm cologne, approx. 70 per cent of them coming from abroad. The foreign furniture manufacturers had mostly brought programs devised for the German market, because meanwhile about 65 per cent of the furniture trade turnover in Germany is accounted for by foreign furniture.

In view of the fierce competition from imported products, German furniture manufacturers had relied upon sophisticated details and functional features: On the sideboard "jorel" by Interlübke (Germany), for example, part of the front consists of a wide-area TV screen. When the OLED TV set from LG is switched off, the screen, which is only 3.85 mm thick, looks like a furniture front made of black glass. It has the same material thickness as the black lacquered high-gloss coating of the door fronts of the furniture and ensures a seamless fusion of furniture and TV-set.

A large proportion of the furniture



exhibited at the fair also had fittings with integrated damping. The doors and drawers could be opened with the help of a push-to-open fitting for the numerous handle-free residential furniture ranges.

In the upper-market segment, thanks to sophisticated mechanisms, a gentle tapping was sufficient to close them again. The exhibitors also paid considerable attention to the question of light: In various systems, LED lighting in

1 + 2| Colourful marble varieties dominated the fair: here Berloni (1) and Euromobil (2).

Photos: Barth

furniture can be variably changed from cold to warm white, and dimmed.

## Natural and rustic

Real wood and wood reproductions continue to be popular in the European furnishing industry. Oak in all price ranges dominated at the fair

and was to be seen in rustic style and, in the solid wood segment, as so-called beam oak or wild oak. Traces of ageing, cracks, knot-holes and saw-marks were typical features. Wood tones were lighter and more natural than in previous years.

Frequently, oak was also presented in a silver-grey stained or white oiled version. In the solid wood segment, the furniture was given a handcrafted touch by means of crossgrained or relief wood applications. Also popular: a mix of wood with up to two other materials such as chrome, coloured frosted glass or lacquer. The second most important species of wood shown at the fair was walnut, which was also found in different colour tones and was not as dark as in previous years. Occasionally, in the wood reproduction segment, visitors were able to see different woods with a touch of oak about them.

Frequently, wood was also combined with uni-colour surfaces in the corpus, which in this case was mostly decorated in white or beige colours. Occasionally, the exhibitors set accents with bold colours. Colours with names like Papaya, Burgundy, Rose Quartz and Pistachio Green were also to be found. In many cases, coloured glass instead of wood adorned the fronts but sometimes also the sides of the new furniture programs. This was to be seen both in a glossy and a matt design. In addition, bronze and mirror glass were used on the fronts of the furniture.

## Marble – grand appearance

Whereas in Cologne natural stones and especially marble were shown by only a few exhibitors, marble had its grand appearance in April at the Salone del Mobile and the EuroCucina in Milan. Here, the upper-market kitchen manufacturers often presented worktops and to some extent also fronts made of marble or other kinds of stone, for example lava stone or travertine. A special feature of the marbles and natural stones shown was the colourful look and the distinctive veins. These were characterised by an interplay of colour in the beige-brown spectrum or came with blue or yellow to orange veins.

The offer was supplemented with quartz stones, sintered stones and



many ceramics. In the consumer sector mostly, marble optics were to be found. One manufacturer demonstrated the creative possibilities of digitally printed glass and, under the name "XGlass", presented complete furniture programs in natural stone optics.

The new trend materials in furniture production were offered a huge stage in Milan, where 1,840 exhibitors were present, of whom 27 per cent were from abroad. As part of the EuroCucina, 117 suppliers exhibited their latest kitchen furniture programs. The importance of this trade fair event for the international furnishing world is reflected in the number of visitors: With a total of 435,000 visitors (including the end users, who were allowed to take a look at the offer on the last two days of the exhibition), the event attracted 17 per cent more trade visitors than the similar event in 2016. Compared to the previous year's edition, at which no kitchen manufacturers were represented, as many as 26 per cent more visitors were recorded. At the beginning of the year, the imm cologne had attracted a total of 125,000 interested parties.

### Kitchen merges with residential area

In Milan, visitors were able to experience how much the kitchen blends with the living area, and how the materials and colours used make it possible to harmoniously design the complete apartment. As a result, new fitting solutions concealing the working areas of the kitchen became very important.

At the stands of almost all kitchen suppliers, visitors were able to see door fronts which can be retracted into the corpus at the side and then give access to the individual working areas of the kitchen. In the case of one supplier, a wide folding front can be electrically moved upwards simply by a movement of the hand: the upper part is folded back, enabling complete access to the contents of the cabinet.

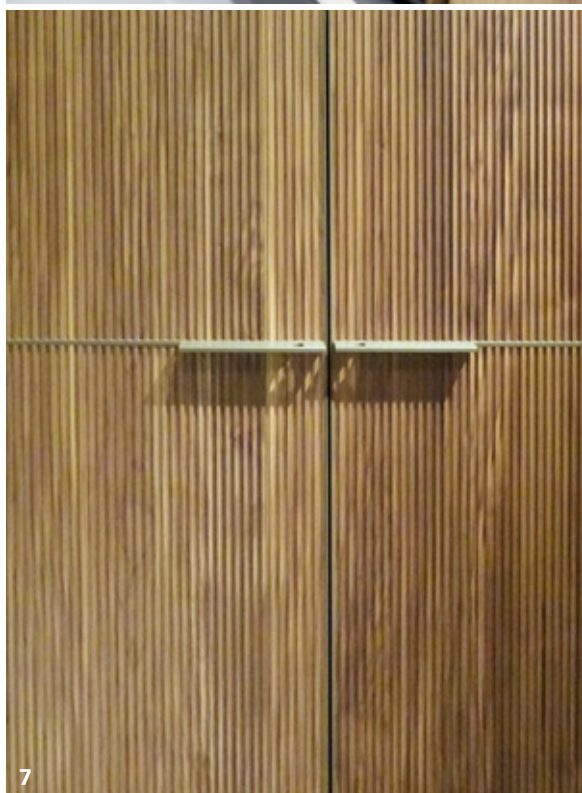
The kitchen itself was characterised by living room elements such as open shelves and glass display cases. New hinges with attachment to the bottom and top floor allow the construction of glass cupboards with metal structure so that they dispense with intermediate



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3+4| Concealed kitchen work areas: sliding doors by Veneta Cucine (3) and a huge folding flap by Valcucine (4).

Photos: Barth

5| In terms of colour, hinges are being better matched to the interior colour as seen here, by Poliform. Photo: Barth

6| Under the name "XGlass", Lago presented digitally printed glass fronts in stone optics. Photo: Barth

7| In the residential furniture segment, there were numerous wooden fronts with a rippled look, for example Canaletto Walnut by Lema. Photo: Barth

8| In addition to oak, eucalyptus wood dominated the fair, as seen here, by Complex. Photo: Barth





9|TV-screen as front: the LG television set is seamlessly integrated into the front.  
Photo: Interlücke

10+ 11| Emphasis on craftsmanship: Hartmann (11) and Wöstmann (10) are setting trends with crossgrained wood.  
Photos: Barth

12| Voglauer combines solid wood, coloured glass and metal.  
Photo: Barth

13+ 14| In Germany, wood tones are becoming lighter: white oiled oak from Team 7 (14) and Decker (13). Photos: Barth, Team 7



sides, which enhance the transparency of this furniture in the room. Even the furniture handles can no longer interfere with the ambiance, as many furniture items do without handles. The fronts are either designed as a rear side grip solution with backward beveled edges or have doors and drawers with push-to-open function. In the kitchen, the drawers were provided with both electrical and mechanical opening support. In the interior of the cupboards technology and hence the hinges can be relegated to the background as well, as they are becoming increasingly better adapted to the interior colour of the cabinet.

### Oak and eucalyptus

With oak and eucalyptus, the Italian furniture manufacturers had two real wood favourites. The colouring of the wood surface in the residential area depended on the market segment of the supplier: In the case of the upper-market manufacturers, both woods were found almost exclusively in dark colours. Oak was shown as a thermo- or smoked-oak. Eucalyptus wood has been processed almost exclusively in a dark thermo version.

In the kitchen area, oak was usually seen in bright and natural colours. Here and there, fronts made of fossil or oxidized fir wood were shown, emphasising their unique character. Elm and walnut were also more frequently exhibited than in previous years and often in dark colours. In the consumer segment, the wood tones were consistently brighter than in previous years, especially in the case of wood reproductions, where in addition to oak, elm, ash and larch were to be found.

Many wood decors had a very natural and authentic effect due to a synchronous pore structure, and in this way emphasised the rustic character of the wood. In addition, coloured surfaces in cement and filler optics were to be found with decorative haptic structures.

New manufacturing processes in the surfaces segment enable super-matt surfaces incorporating antifinger print effect. These were mainly to be seen on kitchen fronts, partly also in residential furniture programmes.

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