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The Natural Shift to Green Design

Environmentalism becomes mainstream

By Jean Feingold

When Tim Button of Stedila Design Inc. in New York began describing himself as a green designer in 1999, people would ask why he didn't use blue. So he secretly selected green products not just because they were green but because they were beautiful. Now that green design has become a trend, "there's no subterfuge," he said. "I can tell people I'm doing it, and they understand and appreciate it. Several clients came to me because I do green design."

Why Be Green?

Button sees green design from a dual perspective. "There's green that won't harm the environment and then there's green that's not going to hurt you, so hopefully you can satisfy both of those," he explained.

There has been an evolution in thinking about what is green. "First there was recycled content, bamboo and fluorescent lighting, among other things," noted *Metropolis* magazine Editor in Chief Susan S. Szenasy. "Today we know these choices

The Visionaire

One recent project done by Button was The Visionaire, a 32-story, 292-unit building at 70 Little West Street, which he said may be the greenest condominiums in the world. An array of green products was used here, both in the common areas and in the model unit.

They include Sherwin-Williams low-VOC paint and wall coverings including cork from Innovations and Carnegie. The blue wall in the children's playroom is 3 Form resin recyclable. Flooring was done in FSC oak floors from Kultur Flooring, Bentley Carpets, Antiquarius vegetable dyed carpets and To Markt recycled rubber. Lutron solar shades and fabrics from Carnegie and Twill cover the windows. The master bath features glass tile and fixtures from Waterworks with dual-flush Toto toilets.

Recessed lights have LED bulbs for long life and low energy consumption. The spa's reception desk is made of kirei board. Cabinets and some furniture were made of reclaimed and sustainable wood by UHURU Furniture. Upholstered furniture by Sandringham features FSC frames and organic fill.



Rendering by DBox.



represent complex issues." She points out that recycling can be energy intensive and wasteful; bamboo, a highly renewable natural resource, can be

constructed with toxic glues; and fluorescent bulbs, which are energy-efficient, contain mercury, a poisonous substance.

New Green Materials

Green products and materials are now increasingly available and lower priced, which Button attributes to improved technology and increased demand. "There are materials that are absolutely stunning that I use in the highest level of residential that are made of sorghum stems," he said. The stems, a waste product remaining after the plant is pressed for syrup, are made into kirei boards. He likes them for cabinets. There are many companies making high-quality paint that is low in volatile organic compounds (VOC) or based on soy, including Aura and Ecospec. Recycled carpets made of old carpet fiber, once suitable only for use in commercial applications, are now appropriate for residential use as well. After their 15- to 20-year lifespan they can be recycled again. Button has used wall coverings made of honeysuckle vine and paper in a commercial building.

Some traditional materials have always been green. "Linoleum is very green," Button said. "It's made of linseed oil and jute." Cork, used mostly for flooring and wall covering, is bark peeled from trees that continue growing. Wood flooring certified by the Forestry Stewardship Council (FSC) has been sustainably harvested, grown sustainably or not clear cut. Button cautions there is potential for abuse here because demand may grow too large.

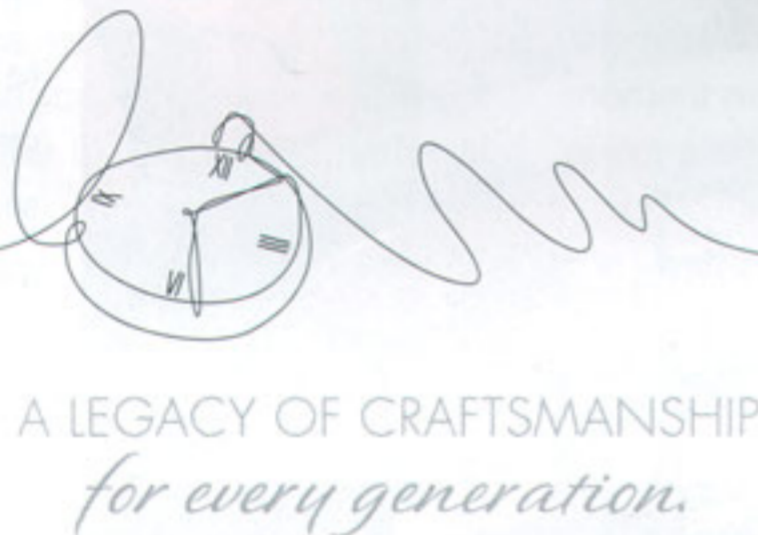
Green design looks at more than what a product is made of. "Manufacturers, especially in the contract furniture industry, are tuned into green design and have smart programs such as design for disassembly whereby a product can be easily taken apart and its parts reused," Szenasy said. In addition to an increasing number of reclamation programs, she said there is recognition that green design must be linked with social sustainability. "If your beautiful wool rugs are woven by children, these rugs are certainly green, but they do not sustain the local community who makes them," she noted.

What It Takes To Be Green

For a product to be considered green, it must have "recycled content, clean and socially-conscious manufacturing

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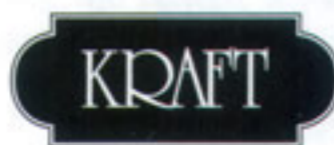


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