

Trend report on imm cologne and LivingKitchen



Key facts

- **imm cologne**, one of the world's leading furniture and interior design trade fairs, presents new and surprising international home trends and numerous marketable innovations at the beginning of **every year**.
- 2011 edition takes place from **January 18th until January 23rd** featuring the premiere of **LivingKitchen**, the new international kitchen event in Cologne for trade visitors **AND** public visitors.
(opening times: 09.00 a.m. – 06.00 p.m.)
- More than **120,000 visitors** expected to witness over **100,000 furniture articles** presented by more than **1,200 exhibitors** from **49 countries** on **300,000 sqm.** during both fairs.

imm cologne + LivingKitchen
18.- 23.01.2011

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Traditionally, a considerable portion of furniture sales is generated in winter. Considering the harsh weather we're experiencing this time round, that seems perfectly understandable. What better place to be than your own four walls when it's raining, snowing or blowing a storm and anything but pleasant outside. The less hospitable the weather, the more important it is to feel nice and snug in your own home – a totally consistent logic that was practised by our ancestors before us and is by no means uncommon in the animal kingdom. Hibernating means scrutinising everything again, noticing the greying walls and old furniture – reason enough to brave the foul weather and take a trip to the furniture store. When it comes to design and tastes, today's consumers enjoy an incredible degree of freedom. The products available from the German and international furniture industry have liberated themselves from doctrines and standardisation.

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This is giving rise to an increasingly pronounced interior style that we call "new German Gemütlichkeit". Its character reconciles the cool with the playful – a development encouraged by the fact that people want their homes to be a demonstration of their multifaceted personalities. In the current and coming season, this tendency is being aided and abetted by the "pimp my home" mindset. Revamping one's own four walls isn't just chic, thanks to the varied and versatile possibilities it's in as well. In the past a cuckoo clock was the only option, these days it is just one of 30 different clock variants. In furniture retail, the "peripheral" areas of interior design are playing an increasingly important role. A never-before-seen variety of cushions, wallpapers, accessories and carpets are providing energetic support for the "pimping" trend. Which is why the imm cologne 2011 will be showing an increasing number of products from the vast category of "decorative accessories and fixtures". Nevertheless, furniture is and always will be the true hero of interior design.

The home is becoming the focal point of our social lives

One thing is certain: people's homes are becoming increasingly important to them. Today we spend around 90 percent of our time indoors. New studies show that the home is evolving into the focal point of our social lives and increasingly replacing visits to pubs or restaurants. Communication tools like smartphones, netbooks and tablet computers are of course contributing to the trend to retreat within one's own four walls as well. But without personal contacts, without visits from friends who come to share a delicious meal or watch the football match, life simply isn't complete. And if you're going to spend that much time at home, you want a habitat that's good for the soul.

New products and trends for 2011

As in previous years, the Association of the German Furniture Industries (Verband der Deutschen Möbelindustrie) conducted a trend survey amongst exhibitors in the run-up to the imm cologne 2011. The most important trends and tendencies in furniture and interior design for the new 2011 season are described below.

Sustainability via resource efficiency

Page

3

In principle, good design and good quality are the top priority for any new piece of furniture. Both factors are entrance tickets for the market. "Sustainability" is becoming an increasingly important component of the quality factor. There is a growing demand for solid wood furniture, and furniture sales staff are increasingly likely to be asked which materials have been used to make a certain piece. People are becoming increasingly sensitive in their approach to resources. The industry is coming up with more and more material mixes that can be separated into mono-materials at the end of their lifecycle. This consumer attitude is rooted in the health issue. It thus comes as no surprise that material honesty is playing an ever more important role in furniture construction. People's understanding of health is becoming increasingly holistic. Despite or perhaps precisely because of the way our civilisation is progressing, we are realising that wellbeing depends on both body and soul. People are seeking organic options in the food sector, nature in their leisure activities and sustainability in consumer goods. We are at the outset of a major green line craze.

Shapes

Upholstered furniture is getting smaller again. But the functions are here to stay. Folding a certain element down and changing the original purpose isn't just fun, it makes good sense too. The collections still feature big sectional seating arrangements too, of course, but the industry is aiming to cater to people with less space available to them as well. For the most part, that means smaller single-person households and export markets – particularly countries with less living space per capita, like China and Japan.

Wall units are standard. Individually configurable highboards, lowboards or display cabinets can provide the right option for every taste and are the preferred location for flatscreen televisions. As a result, contemporary wall units tend to be slender so as to enhance the impression of spaciousness.

Colours

Page

4

White will remain the megatrend colour for furniture. White can be combined with any other colour and is reticent, almost neutral. In the face of so much white, expressive plain colours are being used to create accentuation in the form of scatter cushions, accessories or walls painted in powerful hues. The retro patterns currently available from wallpaper designers or other colourful designs are an equally good fit with white furniture. The motto: don't be afraid of colour, as long as the combination is pleasant! When it comes to monocolour covering fabrics, blue shades from petrol all the way to mint are particularly popular, as is the vast spectrum of natural hues. The latter are also very much in demand for the surfaces of storage furniture or kitchen cabinets. Occasionally, the 1970s are experiencing a revival in the form of orange and apple-green shades. Finally, black – the classic of the 1980s – is making a comeback in the upholstered furniture segment, as well as for storage furniture.

Patterns

Stripes, floral fabrics, abstract graphics: in terms of patterns, covering fabrics are presenting an extremely diverse face. Ornamentation is another popular theme for opulent patterns. The haptic experience plays a major role as far as fabrics are concerned. Rather than being smooth, many fabrics are featuring a relief-like texture that issues an irresistible invitation to take a seat and nestle down. The user becomes one with the piece of furniture he happens to be sitting or lying on. Snuggling continues to play an important role.

Surfaces

There is a very definite tendency towards material honesty. And when it comes to being honest, natural materials are best. The trend is towards glass, stone, wood and certain metals like stainless steel. In the coming season, glass will be a popular material for the fronts and doors of kitchen cabinets, wall units and wardrobes. We will be seeing thick glass for table tops and satin glass for translucent cabinet doors. Veneered or solid stone is being used for work surfaces. Precious materials with a surface that is pleasant to the touch are experiencing a boom. Leather will also be playing a more important role in the coming furniture season. Usually as a cover for upholstered furniture, of course,

but also as an inlay for drawers or tabletops. Up to a point, however, the use of leather will be restricted by marked price increases.

Page
5

Wood

Good old oak is experiencing a veritable boom. Whether it's used for tables, beds or cabinets, oak is modern because it is being left in its original mellow colour and no longer being stained in dark, rustic hues. Walnut will maintain its important status. It radiates a sense of value and elegance. High-grade cherry with its delicate, reddish hues is playing a prominent role. Usage of domestic wood, including fruitwood, is becoming more important to buyers. The lighter colour spectrum continues to include beech, maple, ash, alder and birch.

Light

The light bulb is slowly disappearing from the household and being replaced by state-of-the-art LED luminaires. LEDs have the advantage of being highly energy-efficient, not getting hot and having a very long life. As a result, the furniture industry is making increasing use of LEDs, for example in display cabinets, as shelf or cabinet lighting or edging for sideboards. And LEDs are being used for popular accessories like fairy lights too. The latest development towards less expensive, organic light-emitting diodes, or OLEDs for short, allows manufacturers to produce not just ultra-thin screens but large-area lighting for shelf panels or large-area ambient lighting. Good light and energy-efficient light sources – often concealed and shining as if by magic – are a top trend that is here to stay.

LivingKitchen

The kitchen is very much alive. Professionalisation is a trend that has long since arrived. Workflows can be optimised via the meaningful allocation of furniture and light is being targeted to illuminate worktops and eating areas. When it comes to electrical appliances, or so-called white goods, energy efficiency is a major theme. A growing number of consumers are becoming increasingly aware of the need to save both energy and water – partly because it is easy on the wallet, but also because it is easy on the environment. Energy-efficient and quiet kitchen appliances will be tomorrow's norm. In the next kitchen furniture

season, we will also see a shift towards a simple, unostentatious design vocabulary. Simple means elegant and unobtrusive – the kind of style you never get tired of looking at. And that's a good thing, for kitchens are extremely durable consumer goods. The latest trend in the kitchen sector is towards open shelving and lots of glass for cabinet doors, work surfaces and wall tiles. The live-in kitchen is the most conclusive proof of all that the various areas of the home are merging and people's expectations of their interiors are changing.

Barefoot and patent shoes

Home is life and life is change. The things we surround ourselves with have to adapt to our changing needs and aspirations. When it comes to interiors there have always been changes, some of them slow, others rapid, some that endure and others that disappear as fast as they came. The "either-or" model of the past is being replaced by an emphatic "both-and" approach. Anything goes, and interiors are no exception.

Megatrends are impacting the way we live

The new millennium has seen the emergence of new social, economic and political issues that are affecting people very strongly. The big social megatrends such as individualisation, health, changing family structures, demographic change and globalisation are having an impact on our industry too. These days, furnishing a home means breaking down the old, traditional boundaries, putting the television in the kitchen, turning the dining table into a communication centre, putting the bathtub in the bedroom. Rooms are increasingly merging with one another. The "kitchen-dining-living" areas are becoming one and the "bedroom and bathroom" areas are gradually converging. Old furniture is being combined with new, winter barbecues are a viable proposition and, at a stretch, the hallway can be turned into a disco.

All things considered, "Disappearing Boundaries" is a very good description of this trend. In the past, people used to ask themselves what belongs in a living room. These days the question is this: What do I want to put in my living room? What do I want it to say about me? Those are the boundaries we will be dealing with in future.

*Source: Association of the German Furniture Industries / Verband der Deutschen
Möbelindustrie e.V.*

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