

NATURAL SELECTIONS

From bamboo walls to horsehair upholstery, new materials derived from plants and sustainably raised animals provide infinite eco-options

BY CHRIS WILSON

PROJECT: HEMP CHAIR

MOULDED CHAIRS are typically cast in reinforced, man-made plastics, but interior designer Werner Aisslinger's version looks to the other end of the material spectrum: it's constructed from natural fibres. The Hemp Chair, which debuted during Milan design week this spring, consists of 70 per cent hemp and kenaf, a variety of jute. The fibres are combined with Acrodur, a water-based resin binder created by project sponsor BASF, and compressed under heat and pressure. "This production method is widespread in the automobile industry," writes the design team. "Natural fibre composites are often used in lightweight components such as door linings, glove compartments or rear shelves." The chair marks a turning point in the development of this technology, by celebrating the fibrous material's aesthetic qualities and structural properties. In addition to having the unique, grainy texture of felt, the cantilevered chair is strong, lightweight and stackable.



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WALL PANELS AND TILES

Decorative coverings made from such materials as bamboo, coconut palm and seashells tap rapidly renewable sources.



← **WallArt** Wavy Vaults and pebbly Gaps are the latest in this line of paintable 3-D interior wall panels made from crushed sugar cane stalks. **WW** walldecor3d.com

Smith & Fong's entire line of bamboo plywood surfacing, for cupboards, floors and other applications, can be specified as formaldehyde-free and FSC certified. **NA EU ME** plyboo.com

MOSO Made of flattened whole bamboo poles, Forest floorboards from this Dutch company are as wide as regular wooden planks and require no oil or lacquer finish. **WW** moso-bamboo.com

Mactan Mosaics handcrafts tile murals from seashells like green abalone and gold pearl oyster, for accent walls or backsplashes. **WW** motherofpearltiles.com

Studioart's sophisticated walls mix and match different colours and textures of leather, including suede, padded panels and metallic finishes. **WW** studioart.it

Omarno Along with coconut palm tiles in many designs, this London, U.K., manufacturer offers flexible, weave-textured panels for curved surfaces. **AS AU EU ME NA NZ SA UK** omarno.com