

Trade secrets

Words **Camille Jackson**

Nut case

Bring a touch of tropical paradise to your walls with these new luxury panels, made from coconut shells. Usually a waste product, the shells can be used to form a sleek, smooth finish, or this tactile look to bring texture into your home. This stylish choice will also benefit the environment, as the coconut palm is an alternative to unsustainable tropical hardwoods. Available in sheets as large as 12.2x2.4m, with prices starting from £94 per sqm.

Palm panels from Omarno
(020 8870 9372; omarno.com)



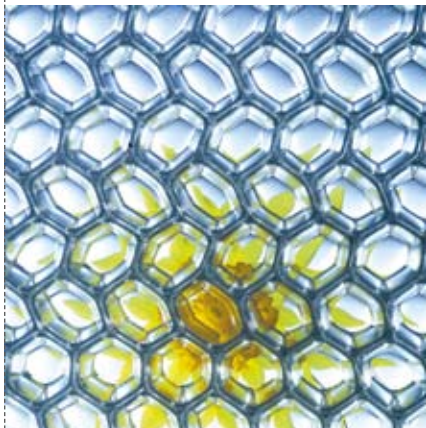
Heavy metal

You may think of steel as a cold, industrial sort of material, but prepare to change your mind. Tough cladding panels from Rimex can be used to create striking and unusual looks for domestic projects. They're available in bright, vibrant colours, textured effects and even patterns - from simple stripes to ornate swirls you'd expect to see on wallpaper. They can be used inside and out, and Rimex will supply as little as a single sheet. Prices start from £29 per sqm.

Metal cladding from Rimex Metals
(020 8804 0633; rimexmetals.com)

Cutting-edge surfaces

The Surface Design Show brings together the latest movers and shakers from its sensual world. We cast our eye over the highlights of the event...



The light fantastic

With its distinctive honeycomb pattern created by an aluminium core, translucent B-Clear from Mykon is a great lightweight alternative to glass. Previously available as flooring or wall panels, you can now buy ceiling tiles made from the material in the colour of your choice.

B-Clear costs from £550 per sqm, with ceiling tiles from £35 each.

B-Clear from Mykon
(01480 415 070; mykon-systems.com)



Resin revolution

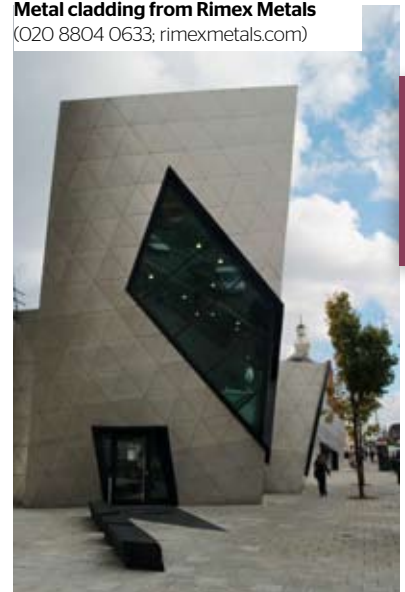
You can quite literally bring the outdoors inside with this clever product, Lumicor's Botanicals range sandwiches anything from pampas reed to prairie grass between layers of textured resin, which can then be used as wall or ceiling panels. The panels can be curved or backlit for an extra wow factor, and metal and textile ranges are available. Prices start from £528.75 per 1.22x2.44m sheet.

Lumicor distributed by Muraspec
(0870 511 7118; muraspec.com)

Quintessentially quartz

Quartz won't just be making your watch tick now it looks this good! Cosentino is bringing the earth's most common mineral out of the baroque era with its eye-catchingly colourful Life series. Perfect for kitchen countertops and flooring, Silestone is 94 per cent natural quartz and comes with patented antibacterial protection. Prices start from £470 per sqm.

Silestone by Cosentino
(0870 011 8788; silestone.com)



News

Ready, cassette, go!

Send a message to the world with these nifty metal cassettes you can use to clad your home. Clip-on cassettes in a range of finishes and sizes can be laser cut with bespoke designs so you can completely personalise your walls. Prices start from £175 per sqm excluding installation.

E&S cassettes from Umicore
(01992 822 316; es-rainscreen.com)



Rainbow bright

Give dark corners a glow with these bright glass panels from The Light Lab. Lit by coloured LEDs or fibre optics, the toughened Spectra-Glass panels can be used for floors, walls, ceilings and balustrades. Choose from one colour or a panel that shifts through a whole spectrum. From £650 per sqm.

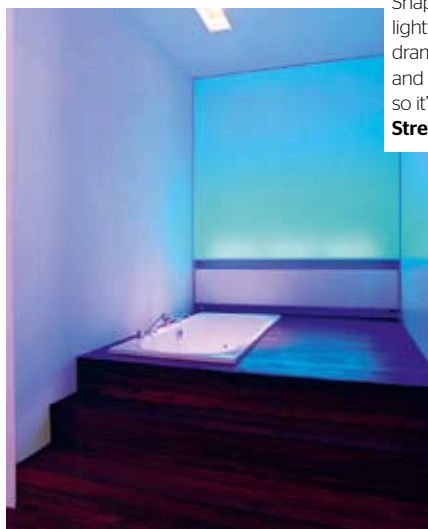
SpectraGlass from The Light Lab
(020 7278 2678; thelightlab.com)



Full stretch

Shape up your walls and ceilings with Barrisol's versatile and lightweight membrane, which is stretched and curved into dramatic shapes. It comes in a range of colours and textures, and the latest version is made entirely from recycled materials, so it's eco-friendly too. Prices start from £5787 per sqm.

Stretch ceilings from Barrisol (01276 681 000; barrisol.co.uk)



Block party

Who said bathrooms had to be white? Bring pattern into yours with these distinctive blocks, made from marble pebbles set in one of 19 colours of resin. There are over 30 types of block so you can create any shape. Prices start from about £50 for each brick.

Riverstone by Effepimarmi
(+39 05 87 64 64 04; effepimarmi.it)



Eco warriors

Showcasing the latest in sustainable design, we pick our favourite ground-breaking products from the annual Eco Build show

Breathing space

Avoid the messy and time-consuming process of plastering with these blocks which fit together using tongue and groove joints to create a breathable non-load bearing wall. Made from 98 per cent recyclable and sustainable gypsum, they save time, money and the environment. Prices start from £70.50 per sqm, including installation.

Gypsum Block by Triarch UK
(01920 823 703; triarchuk.com)



Brick by brick

Want to use traditional building materials but concerned about your carbon footprint? Minimise it with these nifty bricks by Geofusion, made from 97 per cent recycled glass. The bricks can be made to order in a colour of your choice and instead of mortar are bonded by an adhesive resin. What's not to like? The company is also launching similar recycled products including paving stones, cladding blocks and interior and exterior tiles. POA.

Geobrick by Geofusion
(0870 067 5316; geo-fusion.co.uk)



Soft solution

Beautiful, sustainable and providing a wealth of diverse design choices, timber is a perfect material for cladding your home. But hardwoods, though durable and stable enough to perform as the skin of a house, can be an expensive choice. Cheaper softwoods have previously needed chemical protection, but now Ecochoice has launched a revolutionary chemical-free treatment for cladding or decking, so you can keep your project green and affordable. From £28.20 per sqm.

PlatoWood by Ecochoice
(0845 638 1340; ecochoice.co.uk)



NEWS FLASH

Source a reputable builder online via this handy website from the Federation of Master Builders. You can search by postcode and trade to find a professional among their 13,000 members. Packed with handy hints, the website also has an impartial dispute resolution service if anything goes wrong. Visit findabuilder.co.uk for further information.