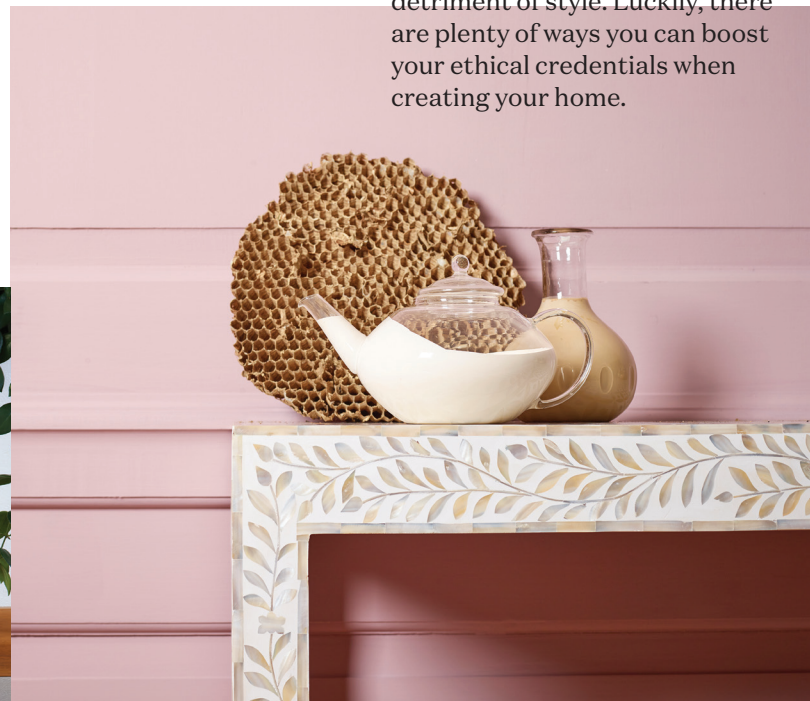


good living

Interiors writer Hannah Cork shares the homeware brands which are ticking the ETHICAL BOXES, from using RECYCLABLE MATERIALS to ECO-FRIENDLY manufacturing methods



Ethical is a word we often hear in fashion, but as with all topics catwalk related they soon filter down to interiors and now we are contemplating how to incorporate an 'ethical' attitude into our homes as well as our wardrobes. Homeowners with integrity and intelligence want to do the right thing - for the environment and the planet as well as for the craftspeople and designers, and for the animals, the children and the refugees (that's quite a list!) - but not to the detriment of style. Luckily, there are plenty of ways you can boost your ethical credentials when creating your home.



Environmentally Friendly

Cork is a great option for interiors as it's natural, lightweight and impermeable. It's also biodegradable, naturally renewable and recyclable. The handmade cork cushions by Mind The Cork (mindthecork.co.uk), which I've styled into many shoots, are simple, stylish and add a really unexpected texture to your sofa.

For the past 10 years Edward Bulmer (edwardbulmerpaint.co.uk) has been developing non-toxic paint formulations, deemed both safer and healthier than standard alternatives. It's made from raw materials such as plant extracts, chalk, earth minerals and linseed, as opposed to petro chemicals.

At Unto This Last (untothislast.co.uk) you can watch the designers making beautiful furniture and lighting from birch plywood - which has been sourced from FSC-certified Latvian forests - in their open central London workshop.



Carbon Footprint

Nearly all furniture has a high carbon footprint due to its transportation over long distances. The solution? Buy as local as possible, or at least within the UK. My favourite UK designer makers that I often work with include: Cornwall based Tom Raffield (tomraffield.com) for stunning lighting made from sustainably sourced wood, using the method of steam bending; Fallow Design (fallowdesign.co.uk) in North Yorkshire, which makes beautiful intuitive furniture using time-honoured skills; Tamasyn Gambell (tamasyngambell.com), who screen prints gorgeous graphic fabrics for her bespoke homeware range in South London. She uses water-based pigments, and has low production runs to minimise waste and surplus.



Anti Plastic

We cannot ignore the images of the ocean's plastic 'islands'. Thankfully, the push to reduce our plastic usage is in full force. Engineers at Pentatonic (pentatonic.com) design cushions from plastic bottles. But it doesn't stop at plastic. They also fashion drinking glasses from cracked iPhone screens and clothes hangers from old clothes.

Cruelty Free

The number of vegans in Britain has risen by more than 360 per cent over the past decade. Homeware brands are now getting on board with the vegan way of life by vetoing materials like leather, suede, wool, silk, feathers or down. Simple swaps include choosing synthetic filled duvets, pillows and cushions over feather or down. Natural Bedding (naturalbedroom.co.uk) also ensure the use of pesticides, insecticides, synthetic fertilisers, and synthetic textile chemicals is radically reduced so you're ticking the organic box, too. An alternative to wool is Tencel, a sustainable plant-based fibre grown without pesticides. You can find it in several of Jacaranda's carpet ranges (jacarandacarpet.com). And Piñatex (ananas-anam.com), is an ingenious vegan 'leather', manufactured from waste pineapple leaves, used for everything from fashion to furnishings.



Fair Trade

Many interiors brands are now ensuring that a decent wage and acceptable working conditions are standard. Check out Kalinko (kalinko.com), whose handmade homeware comes directly from the craftspeople in Burma, with no 'middle man'. The artisans making their highly covetable bedspreads and my favourite wooden bowls are given recognition and fair working conditions. SEP Jordan (sepjordan.com) utilises the skills of displaced people in the deprived Jerash refugee camp in Jordan, with residents employed to make stunning hand-embroidered accessories. Their linen towels and aprons would add texture to the most stylish of kitchens. Closer to home, Aerende (meaning 'care') is a lovingly sourced collection of handmade homeware created in the UK in low-volume batches by people facing social challenges. Each purchase directly supports and provides opportunities for the talented makers. Top of my wish list are the wool blankets and elm chopping boards (aerende.co.uk).



Buy for Life

It is easy to preach the words: 'buy something you love and treasure it for life', but is that really realistic in our world of fast changing trends, multiple homes and disposable income? Many pieces of furniture are now being designed so they can be quickly and easily disassembled when they're no longer loved, and

the parts reused rather than dumped in landfill. For example, ByAlex (byalex.co.uk) last year launched Revive, a repair service for their own designs.

Kintsugi, the Japanese art form which sees broken pottery repaired with gold, follows the philosophy of recognising beauty in broken things. The broken element is considered

part of the history of the object, not dissimilar to our own creases and wrinkles... (apparently!)

Buying second-hand is of course one of the most basic eco-friendly options. The British Heart Foundation (bhf.org.uk/shop/furniture-and-electrical-shops) have charity shops specifically for furniture.