

## House&amp;Home



▲ Radial ash trivet by Superfolk, £70, twentytwentyone.com



▲ Dining room by Lionel Jadot, [lioneljadot.com](http://lioneljadot.com)  
Jean Luc-Laloux

# Rough with the smooth

**Interiors** | Digital and visual overload has

inspired a return to raw materials in the home with designs valuing the tactile over

highly finished surfaces. By *Trish Lorenz*

**W**e live in a visually stimulated era. Never before has screen-based media dominated so much of our lives. A 2014 Ofcom study showed that the average Briton spends almost nine hours in front of a screen each day – more time than he or she spends sleeping. In an age when images rule, our other senses – especially touch and scent – are sometimes neglected.

In the home, this digital overload is inspiring a trend for “raw” materials. Raw in this context describes materials that are irregular and rough, handworked and weathered, rather than highly finished. It is an aesthetic designed to engage the senses beyond the visual: textured stone demands to be touched, raw wood has a soft lingering scent and patinated brass has a warmth that comes from age.

The trend began in the commercial arena about five years ago. Australian

cosmetics company Aesop was an early exponent. Each of its 100 global stores is different and features raw materials, with reclaimed wood shelving, aged stone basins, handmade tables and industrial metal display counters. Scent plays a role, as do acoustics.

London’s Michelin-starred Dabbous restaurant, which opened in 2012 with concrete floors, metal-mesh panels and minimal lighting, also signalled a change. Today many restaurants eschew polished, formal interiors for a more lived-in feel. Fashion brands, too, are embracing the look: in New York, the upmarket boutique Owen features an entire wall made of brown-paper lunch bags, which

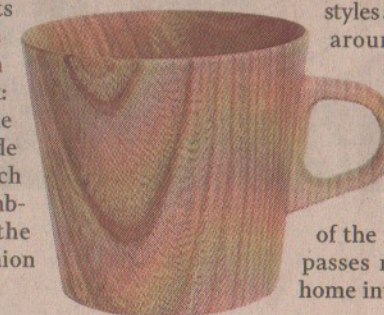
creates a beautiful honeycomb-effect against the colourful fashion it frames.

▼ Kami cup, designed by Masanori Oji and made by Takahashi Kougei, from £50, [thecoldpress.com](http://thecoldpress.com)

Domestic interiors are becoming rougher around the edges, too. London architectural salvage and interior design group Retrouvius works on interiors projects with budgets ranging from £150,000 to £2m. “People are looking for a raw and more organic style,” says Retrouvius co-founder and designer Maria Speake. “It’s a trend among affluent, well-travelled, cosmopolitan clients. It’s not about rustic – it’s more sophisticated than that – but there’s a craving for simplicity and a sense of the handmade.”

Exposed brick walls, faux industrial styles and vintage designs have been around for a while now. What makes today’s approach different is that it goes beyond aesthetics: it is instead a lifestyle choice, a rejection of the faux and the virtual and a celebration of the real and the raw. It encompasses many aspects of life, from home interiors to the campaigns for

▲ Shear Table Lamp in brass and black, £443 [bertfrank.co.uk](http://bertfrank.co.uk)





▲ Evelina Kudabaite's Lithuanian Tree dishes, from €25, behance.net

supermarkets to sell "ugly" fruit and vegetables. This year, in a Boston Consulting Group study of affluent consumers, 18 per cent of British respondents defined luxury as "sustainability" – a 13 per cent rise on 2014.

Hugo Haas, co-founder of Paris architecture practice Ciguë, which works primarily with reclaimed and industrial materials, echoes this idea. "Luxury and sophistication have moved on," he says. "Today it's more about authenticity and honesty. I think people increasingly want to know where things come from, whether that's the objects in their home, their clothes or their food. There's a growing popularity for small restaurants where you can see what the chef is doing and talk to them about what they are making and the ingredients they are using. People appreciate it when it's possible to do the same thing with furniture or interiors. We use visible systems so you can understand how our things are made. It's good to have some simple elements among the complexity of life."

British designer Jasper Morrison

agrees. As well as his furniture design work, Morrison is art director for the electronics brand Punkt. His most recent design for the brand is the MP01 mobile phone, which launched in September. It has a pre-smart phone aesthetic and only handles calls and SMS messages.

"We wanted to create something simple, stripped back to basics," says Morrison. He concedes the phone is unlikely to replace smartphones – he uses his MP01 only in the evenings and weekends when he wants to switch off. But, he insists, "this approach is very relevant today. In the last year or two there's a growing sense among people that we are overconnected. We are getting to the point where it's nice to have simple, durable objects, where what you see is what you get."

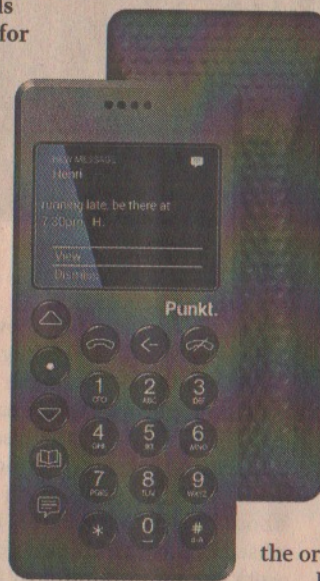
The London architectural practice Sasa Works does not use computers for design work, opting instead for hand-drawing, and partners spend as long as 12 hours sitting in and walking around a space before they begin creating it



▲ Volcano desk organiser, by Danzo Studio, £54.95



▲ Pyxis Vessels by Sarah Kay for SCP editions, from £225, scp.co.uk



▲ MP01 mobile phone, £229, punkt.ch



▲ Ildhane cast iron candleholder £39.50, twentytwentyone.com



▲ Volcano desk organiser, by Danzo Studio, £54.95

steel, Baltic granite and natural woods. Products include Peter Marigold's Galvanised shelving, made from galvanised steel and constructed with visible, oversized nuts and bolts; and Sarah Kay's wooden Pyxis vessels, which have noticeable knots and lines.

Product designers are also beginning to experiment with a raw aesthetic. Norwegian duo Torbjorn Anderssen and Espen Voll are one example. In November, the pair launched the first product in a range called Nedre Foss, which they describe as "modern objects imbued with an air of history". Their cast iron candleholder, Ildhane, has an earthy feel quite different from the cool, clean style the duo usually favours.

Younger designers, too, are finding inspiration in the raw. Lithuanian designer Evelina Kudabaite has used tree bark and leaves for her first project, a series of bowls. "Tactility and the expressive qualities of materials have an

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interior. "Our work is about how you exaggerate the physical experience of the space," says co-founder Louise Sayerer. "Computer renders are incredible at visioning a space, but don't unearth the tactility or physical sense of place. We are very materially led. Steel, brass, reclaimed wood, old bricks, lime plaster with pigments all give a rich texture." In Sasa Works' latest project – the conversion of a former farm building into an artist's house in Norfolk, England – the original flint and brick is combined with unvarnished wooden floors, handmade furniture and tarnished metal lights. "It's not at all about nostalgia," says Sayerer. "We revisit the past but bring things into our time. Our spaces have a contemporary feel but traditional processes are present."

The trend has been picked up by design retailers, as well. SCP in London has launched SCP Editions, a collection of products made in small batches using materials such as hand-thrown terracotta, galvanised

important communicative value," says Kudabaite. "The uneven shapes and surfaces are the emotion of the object."

In Mayo in the west of Ireland, young design duo Superfolk have created a range of products – which include a stool in oak and leather and a range of trivets in oak and beech – with a simple, handworked aesthetic. Co-founder and designer Gearoid Muldowney echoes the views of the other designers. "Simplicity in making and materials informs

our design. We take things out rather than add things on as we develop a product. It's about including only what is integral and essential. We believe that having just the essential is a more peaceful way to live."

