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Home & Garden

RIGHT AT HOME: Decor that's perfectly imperfect

By Kim Cook | AP February 21 at 8:59 AM

"Perfect imperfection" is a trend in furnishings and decor.

"It's a return to the artisanal and the crafted, with narrative and meaning to objects," says Caroline Till, co-founder of the London design studio FranklinTill. "Fingerprints of process and technique are part of the aesthetic appeal of the finished item."

Her studio got together last year with trend researchers from across Europe and the United States to see what's percolating in interior design, fashion and architecture. They displayed their findings at the recent international textile fair Heimtextil in Frankfurt, Germany, and a published compilation is being used by designers as inspiration for new products.

"Perfect imperfection" was one of the design directions they identified.

One pavilion at the fair featured artisans working on dyeing, weaving and other crafting methods. Barrels of inky blue dye stood next to wooden racks draped with cottons that had been given pattern or left to absorb the color naturally.



This undated photo provided by Reflin show's Refin's Voyager ceramic tile collection, which was inspired by the aged and rusted metal bridges of Genoa, and the architectural elements of Victorian buildings. (Reflin via AP) (Associated Press)

Till says indigo is a lead player on the artisanal stage.

"(It's) embraced by a wave of contemporary brands and designers as they revisit the craft, celebrating the imperfections and graduated hues," she says.

Indigo pieces can be found in abundance at retailers this season. Arhaus has floor poufs wrapped in indigo-dyed, mud-print-patterned cotton. Indigo and white brushstrokes add an abstract individuality to a classic Norfolk chair from Annie Selke.

Houston designer Margaret Naeve is on board with the perfectly imperfect look.

"From a messy bed to handmade ceramics and metalwork, I hope to see more people looking for pieces that aren't necessarily manicured," she says.

"I love curtains that are slightly wrinkled, and vintage African furniture that's one of a kind, obviously handmade by an artisan. The idea of mixing pieces that aren't perfect in a polished space excites me," Naeve says. "There's nothing more chic than a sophisticated room styled with loose florals and a messy throw, adding a level of approachability to the formality of a carefully designed space."

Perfectly imperfect also reflects a 15th century Japanese aesthetic: wabi sabi. Loosely translated, it refers to an appreciation of the effects of time, and the humble beauty found in things that are impermanent, old, worn or incomplete.

We see it in the charm of rustic recycled wood, wrinkly linens, and vintage pieces with patina.

It's also evident in unpredictable and unique finishes, like reactive or drip glazes, color-washed walls, antiqued pieces and distressed rugs.

Anthropologie's spring tabletop line includes ceramics from Portugal with painterly drip and wash glazes in gentle hues.

Feathers inspired a set of rugs by Spanish maker Nanimarquina ; the free-form rugs each have their own slight imperfections from the handmade process, and come in a soft palette of ivory, pale green and stone.

Crate & Barrel's Bringham iron vases meld a simple sculptural shape with an aged-look finish of gray, bronze and silver. Grain-rich teak slabs are connected with black wire to create the Marcel wall art that's organic and contemporary.

A new wall art piece at West Elm is crafted of aluminum, with a textural indigo finish creating a wave pattern. Spring bedding collections includes flax linen and cotton linen covers in calming hues of pool, slate, blush and a gentle gold shade called horseradish.

Inspired by an old wing chair stripped of its upholstery, furniture maker Van Thiel & Co.'s collection of deconstructed seating and ottomans at Restoration Hardware exposes the pieces' walnut wood frames and burlap and cotton base covers.

Michelle Lamb, a marketing consultant and trend forecaster for the home furnishings industry, says she saw another aspect of the "imperfect" look at last fall's High Point furniture market. "Fabrics that appear to have been repaired, sliced, cut-and-pierced or defectively woven show the mark of the maker in a very different way," says Lamb, of The Trend Curve .

This relaxed way of decorating also extends to other aspects of the home. Leigh Spicher, national director of design studios for the homebuilder Ashton Woods, in Roswell, Georgia, says it's part of a "slow living" trend.

"People are returning to a simpler lifestyle, and it's affecting every aspect of life, including home design," she said.

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