



Bavarian furniture manufacturer Brühl & Sippold has won more than 60 national and international design awards. A twin passion for quality leather and respecting the planet is at the heart of the company. Through a combination of skillful craftspeople and high-quality materials, it aspires to find a balance between style and sustainability.

Furniture for the future

Ladybug-dream, lemon-blossom and papillon. No, not the range of infusions on offer at your local tea emporium but designs from Brühl & Sippold, a furniture manufacturer with a sustainability-focused philosophy trying to redefine design through minimalism and simplicity.

Confidence in craftsmanship

The company prides itself on the quality of its products, relying on expert craftsmen and women to create furniture that has “aesthetic individuality” but is also reliable and long-lasting.

The organisation’s passion for leather is clear. The aptly-named ‘sumo’ sofa, available with saddle-grade leather covers, is the perfect example of solid

craftsmanship resulting in a durable yet striking product. Through “skillfully crafted” techniques, Brühl aims to create an end product of “lasting value”.

The company is unwavering in its belief that “leather as a cover material for upholstered seating objects is a particularly durable – and hence sustainable – material”.

An emphasis is placed on quality and sustainability from the very start of the production process. Brühl sources directly from carefully selected tanneries in Europe (many in Germany itself) which supply leather that has been processed without the use of salt, using less water.

Some of the hides used are tanned only with plant-based agents and the Wetgreen leather that they use is very

environmentally responsible.

Wetgreen is a relatively new tannage based on residues from the olive oil industry, principally the leaves of the olive trees, which are traditionally discarded and burned. It produces a leather with a shrinkage temperature of about 76°C and is suitable for tanning using vegetable or synthetic tanning material. No aluminium, chromium product or salt is necessary.

This Wetgreen leather has proved particularly popular as a cover for its ‘powder’ sofa, a purposely understated design aimed at making the product adaptable to a wide-range of interior design schemes.

Removable covers are available with many pieces, allowing the customer to revive, rather than replace, a past

Simplicity is king for Brühl. Its pieces should be able to find a place in any setting. The ‘easy’ pieces come with a choice of woods for the base, all of it from sustainable sources.

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purchase. Products can be customised then later re-customised at the customer's wish, building around the original design to create something new to adapt to their needs. The company sees it as much more sustainable to replace an old leather cover than to build a whole new product from scratch. Nevertheless, Brühl says that "a high-quality, durable leather is a good choice for a cover material" and so it expects customers would buy replacements out of choice rather than necessity.

Its 'papillon' range of chairs, the backrest of which can be chosen in beech or birch, is one of the products which features replaceable leather cushions. These can be interchanged whenever the customer decides, either to give the piece new life after long-term use or to adapt to a newly re-decorated living space.

The company's dual commitment to unique design and sustainable products is no more evident than in its 'magnat' sofa. Durable full-grain leather covers are a key feature of the minimalist design whilst craftsmanship which results in "smoothly upholstered surfaces" dovetails with the company's desire to offer enduring products that stand the test of time.

Brühl believes that "leather, particularly leather with an open grain, is a material that ages well and gains character and individuality over time". It sees an opportunity to "add to our designs' unique character" because open-grain types of leather "have a particularly natural feel and appearance".

Covered in premium quality leather and with over 30 years of history behind it, its 'visavis' range also makes use of leather with an open grain. According to the manufacturer: "The ensemble in outstanding thick leather covers is finished in one piece without seams, using leather from 2.5 to 5mm [thickness]. This special technique allows the leather's natural full-grain to be seen and felt."

Bavarian beginnings

Nestled neatly in the landscape of the Bavarian market town of Bad Steben, Brühl started life in 1948 as a mattress and



Brühl's HQ in Upper Franconia, like its products, was designed to blend into its surroundings. The company has come a long way in its 70-year history.

furniture upholstery manufacturer before the current premises were built in 1971.

Now overseen by creative director Kati Meyer-Brühl, the company strives to maintain a strong sense of individuality in an era of fast-changing trends. Distinctive design makes a creation unmistakably 'Brühl' with its wide range of products each having their own individual traits.

Ms Meyer-Brühl took over as creative director in 2004 and with more than 70 awards received, she is one of the most successful talents currently working in the design industry. In line with this reputation, she is to participate in the 'Time – Space – Existence' exhibition at the forthcoming Venice Biennale of Architecture 2016, having also exhibited at the Salone Internazionale del Mobile in Milan in April

and at IMM Cologne in January this year.

Amongst the designs she will present is her 'mosspink' sofa, a product featuring a backrest inspired by pebbles which are stacked for maximum comfort. This sort of creative design runs through the whole range of the company's products.

Its 'grace' armchair added an iF Design Award 2016 to its already considerable list of accolades; it makes use of the natural visible details offered by elementary plywood to stand out from the competition and can be combined with removable covers in leather or fabric. The 'hammersvik' occasional table range is made using beech tree trunks, with the characteristic cracks, created during the drying process, and retained to give the table a natural feel. With the non-uniformity



A 'powder' sofa covered in Wetgreen leather. Tanned exclusively with waste from the olive industry, no salt or chromium products are used during the tanning process.

of the whitewashed wood, each table is entirely unique.

Sustainability in style

The manufacturer's environmental mantra is simple: make high quality furniture that lasts so that the planet doesn't have to suffer. In 2002, Brühl received the Bavarian Environmental Medal for special services to environmental protection and regional development. It is especially proud of the Blue Angel ecolabel that it received in 2009 for the clear steps taken to limit its environmental footprint. In doing so, the company became the first furniture manufacturer recognised by Blue Angel.

From sourcing the leather to shipping the end product, the emphasis is always on environmental responsibility. Wood comes from sustainably managed forests (FSC) and the company tries to source locally whenever possible to reduce the need for extended transport. All products are built in Germany after going through the design process back at the company's Bavarian headquarters.

The solid wood base used in the 'easy' pieces chaise longue is just one example of Brühl's environmentally considerate use of adhesives. Through carefully controlled parameters in the manufacturing process, it ensures that the level of adhesive is well below legal industry requirements and only just above the overall detection threshold.

All of the fabrics used in its products adhere to Oeko-Tex standards, which means testing at all stages throughout production, or are authorised to carry the EU Ecolabel 'flower' which offers a guarantee to customers of a good quality product that has been produced in an environmentally friendly manner.

The EU Ecolabel monitors the whole lifecycle of a product, starting with the sourcing of the raw materials and extending through the customer's use of the product to the environmental impact caused by its disposal. Brühl's promise that disposal of its furniture products "causes a minimum of environmental burdens" means they comfortably meet the criteria. They also recycle any leftover

The Blue Angel Award

Blue Angel (Der Blaue Engel) is the oldest ecolabel in the world. First awarded in 1978, it was the result of an initiative by the German government to recognise organisations who offer good quality products or services that have environmentally friendly characteristics. It is administered by the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety.



Overseen by the Jury Umweltzeichen (Environmental Label Jury), the aim of the scheme is to reward establishments who make a conscious effort to reduce their impact on the planet whilst maintaining quality and value for the consumer. To date, roughly 12,000 environmentally friendly products and services from 1,500 companies have received the Blue Angel award.

Tanners to have received the award so far include Gruppo Dani, Gruppo Mastrotto, Heller-Leder* and Wollsdorf Leder*.

The label helps consumers to make more responsible purchase decisions by providing a guarantee that a product or service can be trusted to avoid negatively affecting the environment or have any health-related consequences. Blue Angel only allows products that are "more environmentally-friendly than other comparable, standard products and services" to carry its label.

The Blue Angel monitors products and services across the entire lifecycle in order to evaluate as wholly as possible their environmental consequences. The criteria which must be met to receive the award vary depending on the product or service and Germany's Federal Environmental agency updates the criteria every few years to reflect technological advances and encourage organisations to continually improve their environmental friendliness. ©

**Winners of Global Tannery of the Year Awards.*



More than 60 years of experience and still going strong - the company trusts its staff with a great deal of personal responsibility in its pursuit of furniture of exceptional quality.

materials from the production process to reduce waste.

The company's commitment to the environment even goes beyond the production process. It only delivers its furniture using vehicles which meet the Euro VI standard, awarded to vehicles that release low levels of harmful exhaust

emissions such as nitrogen oxide and carbon monoxide.

With a continued faith in its workforce and an insistence on sourcing top quality materials, perhaps Brühl's conviction that "a well-designed leather sofa or armchair can be handed down to the following generations" is not too unrealistic. ©