

city\*

Lamp (Chelsea, NY):  
1930's American vintage floor lamp.  
Suit: Chanel  
Shoes: Gianni Versace  
Waste-BCN pouf:  
Discarded car upholstery beanbag.

Green ◦ Light

# EVOLUTION

◦ On a cool but sunny fall day, a visitor to the Santa Coloma de Gramenet cemetery places flowers at the mausoleum slot where a deceased loved one lies. What that person may not realize, is that placed on the roof are solar panels providing electricity to the densely populated city. In Girona, the small town of Vilademuls uses a biogas plant to convert the waste of 600 milk cows into electricity to power the homes of 100 families, half the population.

These two eco-actions may seem pretty far out, but they mark the future of green and sustainable living. A cause that is slowly gaining momentum in Spain, it does have its obstacles.

One challenge is changing the misconception that green living is for hippies or a cool, passing trend for those with too much disposable cash—'bio-pijos' (eco-yuppies) as they are known in Spanish. Instead, the latest eco-ideas take design and innovation into consideration and come at a price that will delight even the lightest wallets. Like any revolution though, this one must start in the home.

Probably the most well known sustainable designer in Barcelona is **Petz Scholtus**. Originally from Luxembourg, she is the owner of **Pöko Design** and creator of curiously named eco-products like Corkutis and the Stuffbump. She is also a pioneer for eco-home reform and recently completed green renovations on her Gothic neighborhood apartment. The transformation was documented on her **R3Project** blog and featured in the New York Times.

Her project began, not on a whim, but to put her eco-living ideals to the test. As she puts it, "I try to be sustainable in whatever I do, whether professionally or in private." She soon found out what a great challenge it was and decided to post all the information on a blog, "so that more people get inspired to live green, and do the same without having to do all the research and experiments."

The website reporting her hands-on re-greening journey is informative as well as insightful and clever. She gives how-tos, like 'How to make furniture from recycled wooden wine boxes' and thorough contact information for the designers and products she used, in an entertaining way. Using high-design eco-pieces and ones she fashioned herself, the final cost that also included all the piping, plumbing and tiling was €30,000.

Along with Petz in encouraging others to start a green revolution at home is **Monica Potvin**. Monica ditched a life and company in NYC after meeting the love of her life in Barcelona. An interior designer, she is still in the midst of enviro-friendly renovations in her Poble Nou flat.

Before gutting the space, she rescued some furniture pieces, including a 50s cupboard that she gave a new life by covering it in chalk paint. Combining old unwanted furniture with new eco-friendly materials is one of her favorite things to do. "If the material already exists in the world, why not use it?" she asks. What she couldn't re-do, she recycled and gave the place a fresh coat of non-toxic paint. The flat was insulated with cork, an ecological sound muffler and shock absorber, and a floor made of unique cement containing magnesium, wood and crushed almond shells was installed.

Around the same time she began her home re-greening, she started up the online eco-product shop

**Matteria** with her friend **Anu Suominen**. Their goal is to offer well-made, well-designed eco-items, which they divide into three categories: spicy, fresh and nutty.

They spent a year traveling the world and researching eco-designers and products before launching the site. One of their finds was designer **Ryan Frank**. A South African furniture designer based in London, he creates hangers made out of 100% recycled British newspapers and embellishes them with paisley prints. They also discovered **Seija Lukkala**, founder of **Globe Hope**, a company that fashions eco-aprons, oven mitts and pillowcases from old Swedish navy digs. Their exhaustive investigation had them look into everything, right down to their shipping materials. Looking for eco-tape took them nearly six months. "It doesn't truly exist yet. I mean, the sticky part, there is still no way to recycle that. We are still testing these things," Monica shares.

Which brings up a good question, how can anyone know if something is truly ecological? Monica says, "It requires research. We are more knowledgeable about the effects of food on our bodies than 50 years ago, and it is the same with eco-products." Petz adds, "The less impact a product has during its entire life cycle, from materials to production, transport, use and end of life, the better".

When starting the home eco-product hunt and talking with people involved in the movement, it's hard not to catch their enthusiasm.

city\* | ECO-LUTION

**Caftan:** JL Sherrer  
**Darr imported (Brooklyn, NY) pillows:**  
Japanese buckwheat hull pillows.  
**Tea cup and saucer:**  
Handmade Basque ceramics.  
**Ikiru (Born) futon:**  
Handmade pure cotton, virgin wool  
and eco latex mattress.  
**Ikiru (Born) tatami:**  
Weaved rice husk mat.

It is also difficult to fight the urge to buy every new eco-item you lay your eyes on. Especially since many of these fresh and stylish products are created in Barcelona.

**Patricio Abreu** and **Luca Leonardo** of BCN's **Vaho Works** are just two names off a long list of area designers. Taking one man's trash and turning it into another man's sleek backpack, their products are mostly made in the reintegration workshops of Barcelona's Modelo prison. **Benjamin Mordoh's Waste-BCN** poufs come to life in these prison workshops as well. His attractive and durable beanbags give discarded car upholstery a new life and serve as one-of-a-kind design pieces for the home.

Industrial Catalan designer **Marti Guixé** is known for unintentionally doing eco. His Plant-Me pets – reminiscent of pet rocks – sprout tomatoes, melons and pumpkins. He audaciously came up with the product, which has owners 'kill' the pets to get food, in order to force consumers to choose between their feelings and function—keep the cute pet, or eat.

And the list of clever eco-home goods designers goes on. **Nani Marquina** makes floor covering fun with rugs made out of recycled bicycle tires, the Japanese company **Muji** sells offbeat recycled phonebook wastebaskets and **Curro Claret** crafts unconventional, but chic hat lights from men's fedoras. So how does someone put all these pieces together at home without it looking like a

crazed eco-mishmash?

Materia is launching an online eco-interior consultation service and **Ecoserveis**, a green energy research and education organization, offers advice in incorporating eco-alternatives in the home. They have affordable online eco-courses, where a 50-hour course is only €150, less than the cost of many gym memberships. Their fall program includes a 50-hour Thermal Solar Energy class as well as a 30-hour Save Energy and Money at Home course.

**Fundació Terra** also supplies eco-education services. They offer a complex course on building solar ovens, but beware; this intense course is for those who are really gung-ho about a green lifestyle. **Infonomia**, too talks about re-greening specifically for businesses.

**Carrefour** may have visited the Infonomia site before undergoing their current green makeover. Through attention-grabbing TV commercials showing a plastic bag vs fish competition – the fish currently outnumbered – and littered landscapes, they've started a campaign against plastic bag use in their stores. Now customers will find eco-bags and a 100% biodegradable bag in their locations as part of the greener look. While the new bags aren't free, the money made from their sales goes back into environmental education and research.

Even the Spanish and Catalan governments are stepping up to

help people go green. Thanks to a Spanish government phasing out plan that will conclude in 2011, incandescent light bulbs – an excessive CO2 producer and global warming enabler – are being banished from existence. Instead, they're being replaced by longer-lasting compact fluorescent light-bulbs (CFLs) that use around 75% less energy. In addition to this the City Council is opening **La Fàbrica del Sol**, a new sustainable resource center in Barceloneta this October.

All of this information and product variety may seem overwhelming. The trick is to start slowly. Pick up material on sustainability from La Fàbrica del Sol, check out Patricio Abreu making discarded book coffee tables on the L'Hospitalet channel, embark on a green DIY project with **treehugger.com** or have packages delivered by an eco-sessenger found on Fundació Terra. Take small steps at home, but continue to think big and green. ■ **CZ**

**Curro Claret:** [www.curroclaret.com](http://www.curroclaret.com)  
**Ecoserveis:** [www.ecoserveis.net](http://www.ecoserveis.net)  
**Fundació Terra:** [www.terra.org](http://www.terra.org)  
**City Council Sustainable Resource Center:** La Fàbrica del Sol. / Salvat Papasseit,1(Barceloneta). [www.bcn.es](http://www.bcn.es)  
**Infonomia:** [www.infonomia.com](http://www.infonomia.com)  
**Materia:** [www.matteriaishop.com](http://www.matteriaishop.com)  
**Marti Guixé:** [www.guixe.com](http://www.guixe.com)  
**Muji:** [www.muji.com](http://www.muji.com)  
**Nani Marquina:** [www.nanimarquina.com](http://www.nanimarquina.com)  
**Pöko Design:** [www.pokodesign.com](http://www.pokodesign.com)  
**R3Project:** [www.r3project.blogspot.com](http://www.r3project.blogspot.com)  
**Vaho Works:** [www.vaho.ws](http://www.vaho.ws)  
**Waste-BCN:** [www.waste-bcn.com](http://www.waste-bcn.com)