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# Desert Living

MODERN LUXURY FOR THE DESERT



**BON APPÉTIT**  
**FOOD &**  
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PHOTO: JEFFREY MAYER



a.k.a. green owners Jeffrey Frost and Mick Dalrymple

# GREEN HOUSE

These guys know the color of good design should be green. And relax, this isn't your daddy's Earth movement – it's the future of home building

BY TERENCE O'TOOLE PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRENDAN MOORE

KERMIT WAS WRONG. IT IS INDEED EASY BEING GREEN, and even though it's a slow transition, it might be easier to save the planet than you think.

Breathe deeply. A fresh wave of "new" ideas is blowing from the doors of a.k.a. green, the ultimate and first entirely environmental building materials showroom in metro Phoenix, AZ. It features a broad array of sustainable, healthy, non-toxic, formaldehyde-free, renewable, recycled options for your home.

Now, exhale. There's no chartreuse VW van sporting Vermont plates with a back hatch stuck together with peace signs and Greenpeace bumper stickers. We couldn't even find any pony-tailed, hemp-wearing hippies reeking of patchouli inside the shop.

But we did find a pair of hip, Prius-driving building suppliers with a mission. Partners Mick Dalrymple and Jeffery Frost recognized a missing link in our marketplace known for building with little or no regard for the future. As an advertising sales exec, Dalrymple followed his enthusiasm for solar energy and became increasingly active at events like the Scottsdale Green Building Expo, often speaking on the topic of residential green building. Running in these circles, he continually bumped into Mr. Frost, a project manager at Sol Source Architecture and Building. Frost already had a portfolio of alternative building systems for progressive clients, including structural foam technology and straw bale – but he was looking for more ways to push the envelope. Inevitably, after each presentation at the SGB, a hand would go up and the question would beg, "Where do I get these new materials?" And the seed was planted.

a.k.a. green pulls off the seemingly impossible task of offering fun, fashionable home interior items that are also subject to stringent guidelines: the products must be recycled or recyclable; contain rapidly renewable materials; the companies producing them must use their resources efficiently (raw materials, energy, shipping distances, and water); and the products must be non-toxic and safe for your health.

Current customers range from trendy design professionals and contractors who are looking for beautiful, cutting-edge kitchen and bath cabinetry to chemically-sensitive homeowners who are acutely aware of – and actually have allergic reactions to – mainstream products that contain formaldehyde and other toxins. One needs merely look under their feet to see how simply the green transformation can begin. The exposed concrete floor of a.k.a. green has been painted with a soy-based stain, or "Soy Sauce," from Dana Boyer at Concretizen.

Imagine entertaining guests in your home and at every turn you introduce them to a product with personality – each component expressively elegant with a wonderful story to tell. From Alkemi, you'll find polyester resin countertop materials created from metal shavings for a futuristic industrial landscape

feel (\$75-\$90/sq ft, installed). Sheka Stone boasts the "Counterfit Green" look of recycled dollar bills for spectacular kitchen counter tops and tables (\$25/sq ft to \$50/sq ft, installed). And exciting materials from Ice Stone made from recycled glass and concrete (\$1,200 per slab) and Vetrazzo, comprised of handcrafted recycled glass materials (\$1,750 to \$3,000 per slab) compete aesthetically with any granite material on the market.

Alternative, innovative examples continue to dazzle the eye including EcoTimber, a leading supplier of sound wood and bamboo flooring. The gorgeous surfaces can be installed like any wood flooring and stained in 52 different colors (\$6-\$9/sq ft). Marmoleum struts its natural elegance as a beautiful, durable, clean, and allergen-free linoleum floor covering. It's made with completely natural materials, including linseed oil, wood flour, and environmentally responsible pigments; and after its 25-year guaranteed shelf life, Marmoleum can return to Earth as a biodegradable material – even the adhesives used to install it are environmentally friendly and free of solvents (\$2.80-\$3.45/sq ft).

Chandler-based Ultra Touch produces Bonded Logic, which is a Fiberglass insulation replacement made from blue jeans. American Clay is a wonderfully natural alternative to acrylic plaster and it actually ionizes and filters the air in your home. Safe Coat offers environmentally sensitive paints (\$32-\$36/gallon) and a.k.a. green carries a soy-based paint stripper that is also a great moisturizer for your hands!

At every turn, the green buzz builds. "When you realize that babies are exposed to more chemicals in their bedroom than their ancestors were in a lifetime, you see that this is not just some trendy phase of our development," imparts Frost. "Healthy environments can still be fashionable and high-end."

a.k.a. green's future appears healthy as more residents become interested in living and building in a way that is sensitive to the desert. Dalrymple has produced an environmental home improvement series called "Build It Green!," which PBS seeks to distribute nationally and Frost continues to inspire architects and the design community.

More: a.k.a. green; 4408 North Miller Road, Suite #101; Scottsdale, AZ; 480.946.9600; [www.akagreen.com](http://www.akagreen.com) ■

Not sure what "organic" means? a.k.a. green tempts the uninitiated with quixotic gifts such as hand-painted cards and soy candles. Frost recommends *Homes That Heal* by Athena Thompson as a good start for anyone interested in the reawakening of this sustainable movement.