Diamond in the rough

Tables with textured edges are big news in the design world right now – and this little detail punches above its weight

FEATURE Ellen Finch

It's always the details that distinguish the very best interior design projects from all of the others, and this shows up time and again in the house tours we review for *Livingetc*. Often, it's a small thing that makes us snap up a home – a sculptural wardrobe handle here, a rounded worktop edge there.

Curiously, one such detail that's surfacing ever-more regularly is the rough-edged table. Dining tables, coffee tables and side tables, always in wood or stone, with carved, hammered or otherwise textured edges that make the piece feel raw, much more organic – we've seen enough of them now to officially declare them 'a thing'. This textured effect lifts a minimalist scheme by introducing subtle texture and interest, adds edge to a contemporary look that's overflowing with smooth, honed surfaces, and elevates a playful scheme by making everything feel a little more handcrafted and considered.

This clever note of contrast is why designers are incorporating rough-edged finishes into their schemes more and more. 'I think we're naturally drawn to pieces that tell a story, and a rough-edged table does exactly that,' says Steffanie Ball, co-founder of Australia and US-based furniture brand En Gold, which counts beautiful textured-edged beige marble dining tables and raw fossil stone plinths among its collection. 'It celebrates the imperfections that make natural materials so beautiful, rather than trying to disguise them. In a room filled with clean lines and refined finishes, that rawness introduces warmth, character and a sense of authenticity. It creates some contrast, which is often what makes a space feel layered rather than flat.'

In his own studio, Adyn Kelly, founder of his eponymous Perth and Sydney-based interior design studio, incorporated a table made out of travertine, used for the jagged-edged top, and chrome, which adds contrast to the rough-and-ready look (see right). 'We looked to create something with an organic feel,' says Adyn of the design. 'The edge reads as a natural fracture, the opposite of the legs, which are machined, straight and precise. We wanted the top to appear to float, so we balanced its weight against legs that barely register.'

Dining tables are an obvious starting point for this finish. So much of eating is about the senses beyond taste, which is why, for example, food looks and tastes better in a handcrafted ceramic bowl than it does on a mass-produced plate. The pleasure of being able to run your hands along the roughed-up edges of a table adds a little something to the experience of sitting down to eat. But if you're hesitant to invest in such a big piece, where else could you incorporate a rough edge?

For Yasmine Ghoniem, director of Sydney design studio YSG, one should look beyond the dining room. 'We'd use them on the surface edge or legs of a coffee table,' she says. Or venture beyond the table altogether: 'Perhaps also along the fronts of a bedside console or feature wardrobe in a primary suite.'

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Adyn concurs: 'I'd use it anywhere the surface is looked at more than it's used – a plinth, a coffee table, the end of a bench run, a powder room vanity where the drama is the point,' he says. Practicality plays a part here, too; after all, this finish will never be the easiest to clean.

'I'm a big believer in repeating materials and textures throughout the home so that they feel intentional,' says Steffanie. 'Rough-edged detailing works beautifully on coffee tables, consoles, shelving and plinths, but it can also be incorporated more subtly through objects such as stone bowls, vessels or sculptural decor. The key is restraint – you don't need it everywhere. A few thoughtfully placed pieces create enough contrast to bring depth and a stronger connection to natural materials throughout the space.' ➤

PHOTOGRAPH TIMOTHY KAYE

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DRAWN BY HAND

'A smooth edge tells you a machine has been there and looks like every other table,' says Adyn Kelly. 'We wanted this to feel natural, like a raw edge straight out of the ground. Except it isn't – it's water-cut and every line and step of it was drawn. The textured edge has a life of its own: it holds shadow and it changes as the light moves across it.'

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TOUGHENED UP

In the dining room of their Elden Ranch project, En Gold used their La Via table as the centrepiece. 'The inspiration for this came from wanting to preserve the honesty of the stone,' says Steffanie Ball. 'Rather than overworking it, we wanted the edge to feel as if it had been shaped by nature, while pairing it with a form that feels calm and architectural. That's a balance I come back to often in my work – something organic alongside something considered. I tend to pair it with softer elements like upholstered seating, timber, linen and warm lighting.'



WELL WORN

As well as a carved edge, this round dining table in an Ibizan project by Paris-based interior architect and designer Emmanuelle Simon features a hand-gouged finish on the base and the middle for extra texture. In making the table – the Tiga design from the studio's own collection – Emmanuelle wanted to evoke 'the faces of a cliff'.





CUTTING EDGE

'The kitchen's shell we inherited had white walls, plus glass and steel doors framing the courtyard, so we needed to add tonal and tactile warmth,' says Yasmine Ghoniem of this space. 'The custom table's caramel shade and hand-pitted timber bookends do both, bringing a rustic charm that steers away from looking too ornate as the detailing is minimal. It's a gathering space for meals or casual coffees throughout the day, so it's nice for everyone to run their fingers across it, connecting them to social moments.'

PHOTOGRAPHS (YASMINE GHONEIM) ANSON SMART; (EMMANUELLE SIMON) DAMIEN DE MEDEIROS; EN GOLD

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