



Vegan sneakers

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HANDMADE 'LEATHER' SNEAKERS ARE BOTH VEGAN AND ORGANIC

 SCIENCE & ENVIRONMENT

A new sustainable design of sneakers are made from a combination of cork, natural rubber, recycled bottles and fungus.

We have already seen numerous ways in which clothing has been made more ethical and environmentally friendly. For example, the South Korean firm which created **self-assemble footwear** in order to eliminate sweatshop labor. This ethical innovation puts the onus on the customers who put the shoes together themselves. The recent invention of a new kind of **vegan leather** also holds much potential for the creation of clothing that is not only vegan, but also eco-friendly. This leather is made from mushroom mycelium, making it more sustainable than the alternatives currently available. **Nat-2** has also used fungus in their vegan leather design, combining it with eco-cotton, suede made from recycled bottles, cork and rubber.

German designer, Sebastian Thies, and the designer Nina Fabert headed up the design of the trainer. Fabert is the designer of **Zvnder**, a line of vegan leather products made from the same fungus used in the sneakers. This real fungus, *fomos fomentarius*, is a parasite, tinder sponge, which grows on dead or weak birch and beech trees. Harvesting this material is a laborious process. Workers must collect it by hand, and then test it for a year. Historically used for fire-lighting, this material must then undergo hand-work treatment for a further two years. The finished material is anti-septic and anti-bacterial in addition to it being sustainable.

However, this fungus is just one element of Nat-2's new sneakers. The other materials are equally as high quality, such as eco-cotton and microfiber suede made from recycled PET bottles. The sneakers also boast real cork insoles and real rubber outsoles. This renders the sneakers fully

chemical-free and organic. Furthermore, produced by hand in a small Italian family run manufacturer the shoes are ethical as well.

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