

## Material Connexion

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Material Connexion is a "material library" based in New York, Cologne, Bangkok, and Milan. The Library houses over 3,500 new and innovative materials representing eight categories: polymers, glass, ceramics, carbon-based materials, cement-based materials, metals, natural materials and natural material derivatives. It is a resource for designers, architects, and so on, to touch materials, assess their viability in new projects, learn about new technologies and techniques.

Click here to download an article about the library from Dwell Magazine: [Download file \(.pdf\)](#)

However, these materials are oddly decontextualised in this setting, with its overt focus on technology. For instance, one of the success stories cited on the website [MaterialConnexion.com](http://MaterialConnexion.com) highlights the capability of materials to be redefined through the process of product design. The example concerns beauty company Aveda's search for a new cosmetic packaging for the product Uruku which "draws inspiration and ingredients from the cosmetic practices of an indigenous South American tribe. Aveda's environmental concerns impelled it to look for a cosmetic packaging solution created entirely from recycled materials." With the help of Material Connexion, Aveda discovered a post-industrial polypropelyne used primarily in outdoor applications such as outdoor decking for their new lipstick tubes. The vegetable fibers that lent it its strength also gave the polymer a "pleasing, earthy texture." So, the inspiration of generic "south american tribe" has been linked to a cutting edge material, which in some ways itself becomes invisible (or invisibly associated with an indigenous South American tribe). This could be seen as a form of reverse engineering, in which a form is redefined very much through its inherent materiality.

Aveda won praise for its vanguard effort to lessen the negative impact of cosmetic packaging on the environment. In 2003, the Uruku packaging won the International Package Design Award "Cosmetic Category Leader," which was given in conjunction with the Health and Beauty America show. But the exact nature of the material remains unacknowledged...