Tiegs touts quartz as green building material
Anh-Minh Le, Special to The Chronicle
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At a recent show at the Moscone Center, supermodel Cheryl Tiegs could be seen on the exhibition floor, helping promote a product that she's passionate about. It wasn't a new line of cosmetics or a fashion collection.

These days, Tiegs is using her fame to focus attention on green living. Last fall, she became the spokeswoman for Cambria (www.cambriausa.com), the makers of environmentally friendly natural quartz surfaces. Tiegs' role with the company, which is based in her home state of Minnesota, brought her to the Pacific Coast Builders Conference in San Francisco in mid-June.

Surrounded by lumber and hardware booths, she mingled easily with visitors. While most show attendees wore plastic badges around their necks, Tiegs was draped in a chic turquoise and gold necklace. Midsentence, she pointed to a garbage can and noted that its contents should be separated for recycling purposes.

Tiegs has injected her everyday routine with such eco-friendly practices. At the supermarket, if she forgets to bring her own bag, she has been known to wrap up groceries in her jacket and tote them out or fill up her purse and pockets.

Thanks in part to her good friend Ed Begley Jr., Tiegs is constantly looking for ways to further green her Los Angeles home. She appeared in the second season of "Living With Ed," the HGTV program that highlighted the environmental efforts of the actor and his wife, Rachelle Carson. The couple stopped by to conduct a green audit of Tiegs' residence.

Her regular incandescent bulbs were replaced with compact fluorescent lights. The paper products in her house are now all recycled. Two hybrids are parked in her garage, and she hopes to someday own an electric vehicle. Her backyard pool features a saltwater system, so no chlorine is used in the sanitization. Tiegs is also considering installing solar panels and small windmills to generate
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electricity, as well as Astroturf in the backyard.

While she regards her community as progressive when it comes to environmental issues, Tiegs is loath to refer to it as "forward-thinking," she said, "because this is how we should all be thinking now."

**Quartz made sense to her**

When she was introduced to the family that owns Cambria, she quickly took an interest in their quartz products.

"I used to have Italian tiles in my kitchen, and every time a drop of lemon juice or wine got on them, it would stain," Tiegs recalled. "I would spend $3,000 every six months to have the Italian tile people come out and scrub it with harsh chemicals and seal them with harsh chemicals. There was too much anxiety about them. I was a slave to these tiles.

"I designed clothes for 10 years for Sears and know that something can't just be beautiful," she said. "It has to be practical, too."

It was Cambria's green business practices - as much as the aesthetic of its quartz - that appealed to Tiegs. For example, 100 percent of the water used at the company's production plants is recycled. Its fleet of vehicles includes hybrids such as the Toyota Prius. In addition to the usual office supplies like paper and ink cartridges, all computer equipment and batteries are recycled.

The product itself is 93 percent natural quartz, most of which is mined in North America, combined with nonporous composites. By producing and shipping its products from Minnesota, Cambria minimizes shipping and transportation resources. Importing products from Asia and Europe tends to increase their carbon footprint.

Today, not only does Tiegs' kitchen feature Cambria countertops, flooring and backsplash, but her guesthouse was also given a makeover with the firm's Fieldstone quartz.

"It's very Zen, very soothing - and then my son plays his drums in there and that's not as soothing," she joked.

According to Tiegs, Cambria surfaces do not require any sealing. Cleaning is a cinch, with just soap and water. "It's just the pure, simple honest state," she said. "It does not emit toxins."
The Greenguard Environmental Institute awarded its low-emissions certification to Cambria. The quartz products were tested to confirm that they do not harm indoor air quality. This accreditation allows homeowners who install Cambria to qualify for one Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) point.

In addition, the National Sanitation Foundation (NSF) found the material in compliance with its standards for safe food preparation. Moisture and food particles are not absorbed in Cambria surfaces, which helps ward off mildew and harmful bacteria.

**Choices are limited**

There are only a handful of eco-friendly quartz products on the market. Silestone ([www.silestoneusa.com](http://www.silestoneusa.com)) is made up of recycled content and is fabricated within 500 miles of a project. It is Greenguard- and NSF-certified as well.

Earlier this year, CaesarStone ([www.caesarstoneus.com](http://www.caesarstoneus.com)) introduced a line made of recycled materials. But, according to a February press release, the collection is available in a limited run solely in the New York City area.

Tiegs described her house - which she shares with her 16-year-old son and a pair of Labrador retrievers - as "very Balinese. It was a Hawaiian teardown," she said. Purchased 12 years ago, the house was built in the 1950s and sits in a tranquil, country-like setting. After extensive remodeling, the dwelling now boasts walls of sliding glass doors that allow her to take advantage of the city views.

Art treasures, such as works by painter Andy Warhol and her former husband photographer Peter Beard can be found throughout the home. One of the Warhols incorporates her Time magazine cover from March 1978.

The great room - which owes its airiness, in part, to 35-foot ceilings - includes a dining table that seats 30, dual fireplaces, comfortable seating and entertainment areas. But her favorite room in the house is her own bedroom, which has ebony floors and a British Colonial bed complete with mosquito netting.

At the Moscone Center, Tiegs is shown Cambria products that will be released this fall: handles and knobs made from scraps of materials, resulting in less waste. She already has her sights set on adding a few of these to her home.
"We became such a throwaway society in the '70s," Tiegs said. "I didn't feel as strongly about green living until the last 15 years. And now we have no choice. This has to be the way."

**A model makeover**

Cheryl Tiegs acknowledges that the process of greening a home can be overwhelming at first. But even small changes can have a huge impact. She started with the basics around her own house and offers these suggestions:

-- Use energy-efficient lightbulbs whenever possible.

-- Use low-VOC (volatile organic compounds) paint, which emits less fumes and chemicals into the air.

-- Buy locally to decrease the natural resources it takes to get the product to your home.

-- When it's time to replace appliances, look for products that have the Energy Star rating (www.energystar.gov).

-- Use reusable bags for shopping and recycled products whenever possible. Also, when recycling, use the appropriate bins.

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