



CONTACT:
Leah Gross-Harmon
Story Dept.
818-330-9839
leah@storydept.net

What Do Stratified Rock, Blistered and Charred Wood and Burnished Metal Have In Common?

It's All in Store and on the Floor in 2015!

Representatives from the World Floor Covering Association (WFCAL) Share Some of the Trends Observed at The International Surface Event - the World's Premiere Floor Covering Show

April 16, 2015 - Anaheim, CA - Whether soft or hard surface, Mother Nature is definitely influencing the future looks of flooring. Especially popular are "weathered" and "worn" looks showing up in every category. You might think that this goes against the grain of our high-tech world - seems in this day and age we'd be populating our homes with high tech, sleek designs - but that is definitely not the case. The uber-connectedness and instant gratification of our culture have us hankering for interior spaces that bring about peace and serenity and promote reflection, physical ease, and visual delights.

Scouts and experts at the World Floor Covering Association (WFCAL) have scoured TISE, one of the home market's top international trade shows, and have been working hand-in-hand with manufacturers from around the world to deliver the latest and greatest new products and trends in flooring.

One trend born of the movement toward gray and weathered products is the rise of industrial and "rustic elegant" looks that are popping up in all flooring categories. This look strikes a tension between the raw and refined, masculine and feminine. In flooring this trend is seen in the juxtaposition of organic elements like hardwood or stratified rock with burnished, smooth metals, concrete, stones and tiles - think smoked and charred surfaces with smooth, surfaces that glisten like brilliant white alabaster marble. It is a way to add both natural and modern touches to any space.

Gray, the new beige, appears in full flower in every flooring category from manmade to natural. Combined with the weathered looks are hues that range from desert to ocean. These calming colors - such as camel, sand and sepia - bring warmth and character to interiors. At the opposite end of the spectrum, eye-catching oversized geometrics and classic patterns larger in scale than normal are being seen in carpet, area rugs and tiles. For more information on the specific new trends in each category, read on:

-MORE-

PAGE 2

LAMINATE TRENDS

One does not necessarily think nature when thinking laminate. But thanks to technology that is all changing. Wear layer height and next generation embossing techniques are lending themselves to products that are the next best thing to nature - and more affordable! In addition to its convincing natural looks, today's laminate is highly durable and versatile - two characteristics that are not so prominent in laminate's naturally occurring cousin, hardwood.

The next generation of laminate offers a wear-layer that can be as thick as 12 mm. This presentation lends convincing texture depth on the surface, helps eliminate echoes, and adds to the products' ease of maintenance - they can now be damp mopped without issue. Latest presentations, as in the hardwood category, include boards in soft-scrub looks that are up to 7.5 inches wide and 72 inches long with ridges on the surface that carry over the edge of the planks. Manufacturers have also addressed the need to ensure consistent board heights so there is no variation.

Today's laminate offers another benefit unique to this category - one can now combine the look of multiple types of wood species in one presentation. Historically this look has never been possible as every species of hardwood expands and contracts at differing rates. Using laminate, never-before-seen one-of-a-kind presentations are now possible.

TILE AND STONE TRENDS

Ever affordable and everlasting porcelain is taking cues from today's tech age while simultaneously finding inspiration in the past. Intricate geometric patterns and mosaics found throughout history in civilizations spanning the globe are making their way onto the floors of tomorrow in a multitude of shapes and sizes - ovals, triangles, chevrons, honeycombs, hexagons, marquise, and pencil tiles, to name just a few.

The weathered and worn look has also been very popular in this category. Thanks to ever-evolving technology, the warmth and natural texture of wood can be convincingly recreated in a tile format. "Faux Bois" can be installed in wet rooms and kitchens without issue. This year manufacturers are showcasing wood looks in longer planks of 36" to 48", as well as parquet formats in geometric patterns. Say good-bye to the linear tile looks of yesterday.

Another element that is changing in tile is the surface treatment. Long recognized for sleek, smooth surfaces, tiles of tomorrow show subtle texture variations, beveling, embossing - even sleek matte finishes are making a comeback. In addition to wood, tile made to look like other elements including fabric, metal, even that industrial material associated primarily with outside spaces - concrete, are on the rise. Textured tiles are particularly striking when paired with a matte finish.

One may think that little can be done to elements perfected by nature over hundreds of thousands of years but natural stone offers some new presentations in 2015. These include unique shapes, etched surface treatments and pairings with other elements. For those on a budget, just a hint of natural stone adds luxury to affordable porcelain in any finish. Newer looks include pencil cut stone tiles paired with metal, wood looks or matte finish porcelain. Offset the look with complementary grout or match the grout to the tile for an understated effect.

-MORE-

HARDWOOD TRENDS

Hardwood floors continue to be one of the most sought-after home decor elements. According to a survey by the National Association of Realtors, 54% of homebuyers are willing to pay more for homes with hardwood floors. It's easy to see why. Hardwood flooring infuses homes with warmth, character and timeless style.

Nature's patterns are revealed to soften any décor. Au naturel wood provides perfect flooring for a warm, casual, yet luxuriant living space. Wood sourced and manufactured in the USA leads the pack. Classic Oak is the top seller, followed by Maple with its clean look and subtler graining. Not surprisingly, rugged and warm browns are dominating the category, from ebony to leather to honey golden. While dark floors make a statement and help highlight a room's other features, they show dirt and wear and can require more maintenance than lighter products. Understated weathered gray and muted metallic shades also remain a best seller as they offers a great base as are not overpowering. These finishes also mask imperfections and dirt so are great for high traffic areas and families. There is a new trend towards flax and blond colors, and even whitewash is making a comeback. This style development seems to be driven in part by the gray trend, with consumers seeking to add light as well as well as modernity to the home.

With the sweeping popularity of gray looks across all flooring categories, it's no surprise that the reclaimed trend of timeworn floors continues to thrive in the hardwood category. You'll find significant variation between planks as well as distress marks in these trendy, ecofriendly floors. Some are salvaged from old beams and antique flooring, or logs reclaimed from rivers and lakes. This wood is in high demand and very short supply, and hence prices can be high. To achieve a similar effect but at a lower price, today's hand-scraped woods and machine-distressed woods are worth a look. Another product in the reclaimed wood category that continues to rise in popularity is the charred wood look. This flooring is inspired by the Japanese process known as Shou Sugi Ban. This ancient Japanese technique dates back to the 18th century, and was traditionally used on siding as a natural sealant to protect wood from decay, pests, wind, water, sun, and fire. It takes the reclaimed look one step further offering presentations with cracked, charred surfaces in a spectrum of colors from light ash to dark charcoal.

Who said everything has to be in a straight line in wood? Intricate patterned wood floor installations were the hallmark of wealth and status back in the day. You had to be able to afford the artisans then, but today's consumers can take advantage of 2015 technology. Now highly intricate (or simple if you prefer) patterns, mosaics and parquet designs in hardwood are available at most price points. Like tiles, the designs are popping up across the category in a wide variety of presentations, made to appeal to every taste from modern to traditional to vintage.

-MORE-

RESILIENT TRENDS

The popularity of vinyl increases as the technology progresses. As a category, today's high quality vinyl is more durable, more affordable and easier to maintain than any other flooring in existence. In some cases today's top quality vinyl, known as LVT or luxury vinyl tile, looks nearly identical to its authentic cousins stone, hardwood and porcelain. With advanced photographic and embossing technology, LVT possesses a chameleon-like quality that allows it to take on the look of floors and transform to anything from reclaimed boatwood planks to stone slate tiles. Vinyl floors that look like natural hardwood allow you to have the look of hardwood in a space where traditional hardwood might not be an option – like a basement or bathroom.

LVT is naturally water-resistant, making maintenance as easy as a quick mopping, and unyielding against scratches, stains, dents and scuffs. So families big and small can enjoy their living space without worrying about damaging the floor. Vinyl also offers the advantage of easy installation. It can even go over existing flooring, which saves on installation and labor costs.

In addition to vinyl the resilient category also includes sustainable and ecofriendly cork and rubber, among other products. The cork category has maintained very steady growth due to its classic looks, comfort underfoot, acoustic qualities and inherent antimicrobial properties. Cork today has the advantage of modern technology which ensures a more durable and stronger product too.

CARPET AND AREA RUG TRENDS

Here's something you don't hear very often in the world of flooring: according to fashion sources around the globe, today's top clothing designers are pulling from a world of interiors - including carpeting - for tomorrow's fall fashions. Yup, you heard it here. Inspiration for the runways is being found - to some degree – on floors. Fashion designers today are referencing fabrics and motifs that usually find their home in a chic living room for tomorrow's blouses, dresses and overcoats.

In addition to inspiring what a new fashionable generation may find itself wearing, soft surface flooring is on the rise in homes today. Priced to fit every budget from low-end to luxury, today's understated carpets and rugs are adding to a relaxed outlook for 2015. In addition to the classic looks, distressed and striated patterns are popping up in almost every rug and carpet collection. One of the great things about these patterns is that they are very forgiving in your home. The striated look helps hide blemishes and dirt until you have time to clean them up, and the distressed looks - well, they're already distressed, so you don't have to worry about the added wear from your family. Along with these forgiving patterns, you'll also see a heavy influence from nature. From actual natural materials like wool and sisal to nature-inspired patterns like animal prints, insect wings and natural textures, if you're a nature-lover, you'll also love 2015's soft floors.

Unlike most carpets and hard surfaces, area rugs are all about color, pattern and texture. At the Surfaces show area rugs kept pace with current trends spanning other categories in the form of distressed motifs, nature inspired looks including animal skin prints such as antelope and striated rock forms, large scale geometric designs, Greek looks and new rugs made to look old through vintage processing and aging techniques.

-MORE-

PAGE 5

If soft surface design is taking some inspiration from the past, one thing is for sure, carpet fiber is not. In response to growing consumer demand, today's new carpet and rug fibers are some of the softest, most durable and stain-resistant you'll find. This year consumers will find carpet that boasts permanent, built-in stain resistance that never washes or wears off thanks to new technology as well as new tufting process allows for multi shade depth. And, with a push toward more eco-friendly materials, technology has helped advance fiber combinations that are as comfy as your favorite pillow. Now manmade fibers offer the look of wool with durability and price point of nylon.

No doubt with these advancements, 2015 will see carpets emerge from the background of the room to the focal point.

About WFCA

The World Floor Covering Association (WFCA), the official sponsor of the annual Surfaces tradeshow, is the floor covering industry's largest advocacy organization, representing floor covering retailers, contractors and allied service providers throughout North America.

The WFCA is a recognized leader in marketing research and industry programs for flooring professionals. In addition, it publishes the only retailer-oriented trade periodical, Premier Flooring Retailer. On the consumer end, in addition to an ongoing consumer focused flooring awareness public relations program, it operates the highly successful and award-winning premier consumer flooring website, WFCA.org, which provides unbiased information about every type of floor covering and connects customers to members' retail stores. The WFCA also influences public policy affecting the floor covering industry and consumers. For more information about the WFCA, visit WFCA.org. and WFCA-PRO.org.

###