

Get Floored

New-age flooring solutions are making their mark as they strike the balance between form and function.

By Bindu Gopal Rao



COURTESY DASH SQUARE

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COURTESY EREJUDE

The palette of new-age materials is broadening as innovation takes centre stage, transforming floors into intricate works of art.

DO THE NEW

Patterned wooden floors, meticulously designed concrete, and artistic epoxy redefine contemporary design, offering more than just a foundation. Composite wooden floors, luxurious carpets, and versatile vinyl have emerged as dynamic solutions, meeting the preferences of clients seeking easily changeable designs. Bamboo floors, recognised for their sustainable nature, have gained prominence alongside the rustic appeal of Kota, underlining the industry's dedication to eco-friendly luxury. "Natural Quartzite is a popular choice among consumers for contemporary flooring because of its alluring beauty. There's also a noticeable increase in creative tile selections that mimic the appearance of metal, wood, stone, and marble. This combination of modern imitations and materials inspired by nature provides the consumers with a range of aesthetic alternatives in modern interior design," says Rahul Maheshwari, Director, Marble Centre International.

DÉCOR MANTRA

Tradition and innovation intertwine seamlessly, transforming each floor into a masterpiece that tells a captivating story. It is a paradigm shift in elite interior design where flooring becomes an art form, a narrative of cultural preservation, sustainability, and uncompromising elegance. Swathy Sivaraman, CEO / Chief Designer, Storeyboard Designs says, "Inlays of traditional palace carpet designs, meticulously replicated with marble and semiprecious stones, become visual masterpieces. Infusing floral brass motifs into pure white marble adds a modern twist



COURTESY DASH SQUARE

2. By incorporating a thin veneer of real wood as the top layer, manufacturers can create more flooring material from a single tree.

3. Water-based finishes emit fewer volatile organic compounds (VOCs) compared to traditional finishes and sealants, contributing to improved indoor air quality and a healthier living environment.

to the typical stone inlays, showcasing the harmonious blend of tradition and contemporary elegance. Beyond residential settings, the versatile applications extend into commercial spaces, blending sophistication and functionality. Backlit onyx, agate, and mother-of-pearl inlay find their place in neo-classical luxury homes, adding opulence to the narrative."

CHANGING VISTAS

Fusion flooring, the harmonious union of marble or tile with wood, is finding favour while the allure of concrete and epoxy floors is making waves in the contemporary segment. The resurgence of colour-pigmented red oxide and terrazzo introduces a nostalgic charm, showcasing the vast spectrum of possibilities in flooring

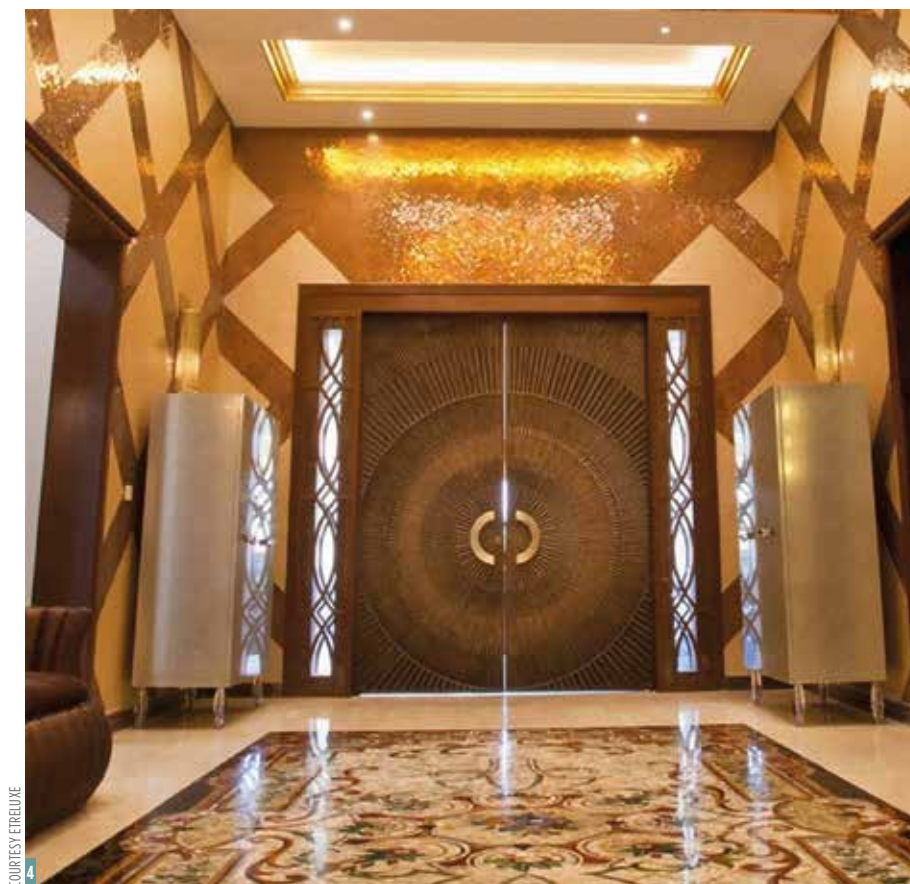


Juhi Jaiswal Chaubey, CEO, Uniworks Designs Pvt



Michele Merlo, Creative Director, VOXFLOR, Milan.

aesthetics. The growing popularity of polished concrete stems from its robustness and modern aesthetic, characterised by an industrial and minimalist vibe. Its durability and sleek appearance make it a favoured choice, and its versatility allows for personalisation through various stains and finishes to cater to diverse preferences. "Epoxy resin flooring has gained popularity in both commercial and residential environments due to its exceptional durability and the flexibility it offers for creative designs, allowing customisation with either a glossy or matte finish. Rubber flooring, traditionally utilised in commercial environments, is gaining traction in residential spaces due to its durability, comfortable walking surface, and effective sound isolation properties. Terrazzo, once deemed outdated, is experiencing a resurgence in popularity. Modern terrazzo employs a variety of chip materials such as marble, glass, and quartz, offering a trendy and durable flooring option," says Juhi Jaiswal Chaubey, CEO, Uniworks Designs Pvt. Ltd.



COURTESY EREJUDE



COURTESY BUREYOT DESIGN

CONTEMPORARY MUSINGS

In 2024, the prevailing tile design trends are leaning towards embracing warmer tones, including cream, beige, and grey. Homeowners and designers alike are gravitating towards the allure of diverse large format tiles, exploring various sizes and tonalities to craft intricate patterns. There's a growing preference for medium to darker wood-effect tile collections and flooring in earthy brown tones, fostering a design ambience that feels both warmly inviting and subtly moody, akin to the welcoming atmosphere found in hospitality settings within residences.

Todd Jarvis, Global Marketing Director, Shaw Contract, says, "The healthy office trend with safe and sustainable flooring design will continue to accelerate. Flooring is the largest physical element in design planning within a space. Aside from its textural physical component, it is the platform of any commercial interior. Aside from the two mentioned facts, floors are the key in the LEED & WELL factor computations, given the increasing role of technology. Visually, floors also offer opportunities to balance the global guideline mandate with local design opportunities for palettes. Many end-user brands and A + D firms are adopting or focusing on WELL Building Standard and (LEED) Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design. The standards are already significant and will be enhanced further. As a genuinely sustainable and human-centric brand, we will continue to manufacture and advocate the usage of safe and sustainable flooring products and designs." Shaw is the first flooring brand to achieve the Works with WELL Certification Programme in 2023. As part of this licensing programme offered by the International WELL Building Institute (IWBI), the new mark demonstrates that the company's EcoWorx Carpet tiles align with health strategies within the WELL Building Standard (WELL).

6. The integration of smart technology in the kitchen is becoming popular.

7. Glass-ceramic materials, known for their resistance to scratches and high temperatures, are finding applications in cooktops, countertops, as well as cabinets.



COURTESY ERELDUE



COURTESY GREENLAM INDUSTRIES

SUSTAINABILITY CUES

Bamboo, recognised for its regrowth potential, stands as a recyclable and sustainable material. Wooden floors, a timeless choice, are finding new relevance in sustainable design. Cork floors, slowly striding into the market, present a fire-resistant and relatively inexpensive option, carving a niche for itself. Water-based finishes emit fewer volatile organic compounds (VOCs) compared to traditional finishes and sealants, contributing to improved indoor air quality and a healthier living environment. Parul Mittal, Director, Greenlam Industries Ltd, says, "Responsible forestry practices and certifications ensure that the wood used in engineered flooring is harvested in an environmentally friendly and socially responsible manner. By incorporating a thin veneer of real wood as the top layer, manufacturers can create more flooring material from a single tree compared to traditional solid hardwood flooring. This innovative approach minimises waste while providing the authentic beauty of wood that homeowners desire."

The global need for sustainability is now more important than ever. VOXFLOOR Carpet Tiles are made with a completely sustainable cushion backing, made with recycled PET and Cradle to Cradle certified. This guarantees a continuous life cycle in which the materials can be taken and recycled forever in a constant circle, reducing waste of materials and energy consumption. VOXFLOOR also offers several product collections featuring sustainable fibres, including SORNONA and ECONYL. SORNONA fibre is made from 37 per cent green sources, mostly corn crop fibres that generate a direct positive effect on the planet as they are continuously renewable sources. ECONYL is 100 per cent recycled and recyclable nylon that offers top-quality nylon after cleaning the oceans from fishing nets and other pollutants.

CHALLENGES & MORE

With the rising demand for elite flooring in both commercial

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and residential spaces, balancing style, durability, and sustainability requires meticulous planning and industry collaboration. Material choices become imperative for high-traffic areas and dynamic commercial interiors. "The biggest hurdle we face is to keep our product up to date by leveraging the latest and most advanced technologies. Additionally, we have noticed a rising trend in using hard-flooring options like LVT, SPC, and laminate. Exploring ways to integrate soft and hard flooring while working on the product thicknesses, new pattern design, and flooring layout distribution will be intriguing. We are pleased to announce that we are implementing a new yarn technology in our production process, which will feature permanent built-in anti-stain properties rather than simply having stain resistance on the surface of our products. We are optimistic about the potential of this new yarn in product development, and we look forward to its comprehensive utilisation in the years to come," says Michele Merlo, Creative Director, VOXFLOOR, Milan.

Another challenge is awareness about engineered wood floors. Consumers still do not know the difference between engineered wood floors and wood look-alike products like laminate floors. "There is a misconception that engineered wooden floors are difficult to maintain, while it is the opposite. Regular sweeping or vacuuming, occasional mopping with a damp cloth and prompt cleaning of spills are sufficient to keep engineered wood floors looking as good as new for years," says Mittal.

With the continuous progress of technology, there is an exception to greater incorporation of intelligent functionalities into flooring, including features like heating elements and interactive surfaces. This evolution has the potential to transform the purpose of flooring from merely aesthetic to actively enhancing the functionality of living and working spaces. ■