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Hardwood floors set a warm tone

When is a floor not just a floor? When it is an important design element of a room's decor. "I love everything about a hardwood patterned floor," says interior designer Ruben De Saavedra. "It can set the tone for the entire room."

Pattern floors or parquet or design floors appeared as early as the 14th century in Europe. Then, as now, parquet is manufactured in short lengths of individual pieces, cut to exact dimensions to match perfectly the dimensions of another piece, or multiples thereof. Today parquet floors are available in prefinished blocks with multiples of the pattern already built into the square. The individual pieces or blocks are either nailed in place or set in mastic.

SOME OF THE ORIGINAL patterns used were intricate and lovely, and were developed by dedicated artisans of the day. Because of the longevity of the hardwood floors themselves, following generations of floor craftsmen simply copied the floors as they found them. Today's craftsmen have revived many of these intricate old designs and have mirrored their medieval flavor by giving them names like Saxony, Canterbury and Cathedral.

DESIGNER De SAAVEDRA spoke of the infinite variety of styles to choose from or create, in addition to the stylized floors taken from history. There is beauty in simple geometric patterns, he says, such as squares, rectangles, chevrons, herringbones and basket weaves, and intricate combinations of these basic designs.

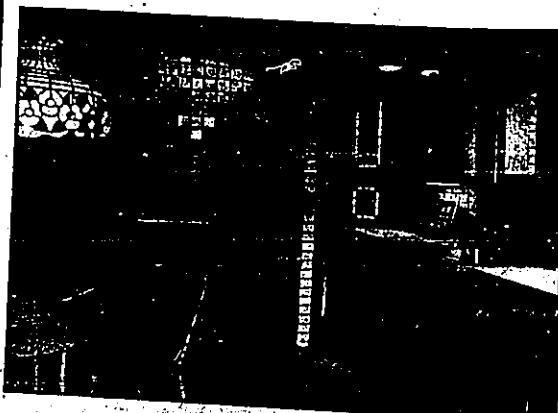
In a library he designed for one of his clients, De Saavedra installed a hardwood parquet floor in a herringbone design.

"But in addition we created a striped effect," he says, "simply by the way we installed it. We stained alternating rows of the herringbone twice, and left the rows in between with just one coat of stain. We used a simple walnut stain and created a warm looking, but very dramatic floor."

FOR ANOTHER CLIENT, De Saavedra used a combination of patterns on the floors of adjoining rooms. The sunken living room area has a herringbone pattern, this time made with longer, narrower slats.

Oak, in its natural range of colors, was used in this room without staining. Only a clear hard finish was used to protect the floor.

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