

Building Scene

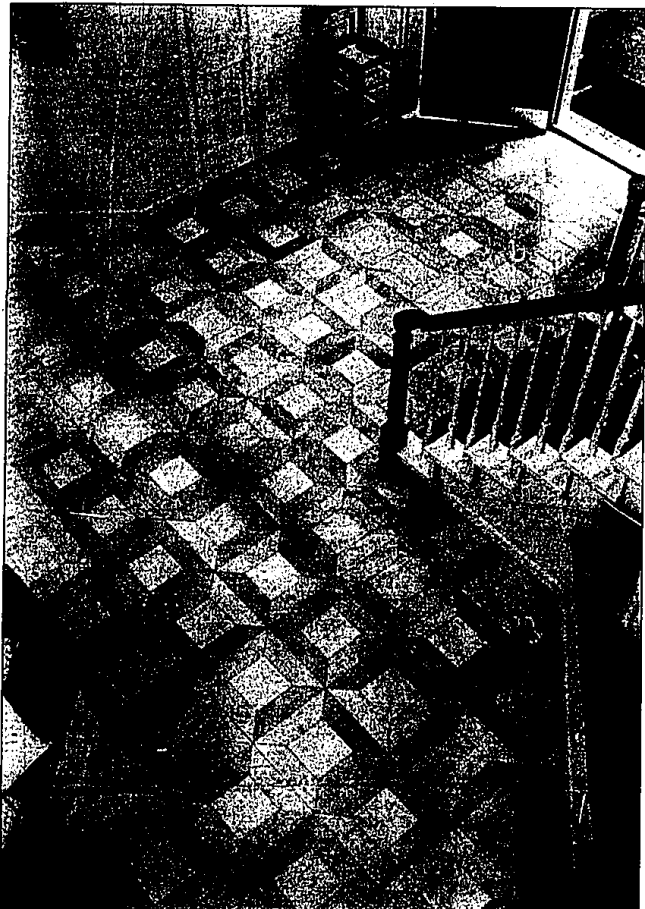
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Floor treatments in new houses today go beyond the simplistic. Here, a French limestone foyer in a home built by Kerry Bentivoglio is set off by carpeting on the steps.

photos by JIM JAGGELD/staff photographer

Designers mix, match flooring treatments

By Doug Funke
staff writer

Step into a new house today and you probably won't see one kind of floor treatment throughout. You're more likely to find a mix — something like marble in the foyer, wood in the den and dining room, carpeting in bedrooms and the family room, vinyl in the kitchen and ceramic in the bathrooms. Maybe not to that degree or exact configuration, but some kind of mix. And in some instances, you might find two different treatments — vinyl or marble squares set within wood, or carpeting surrounded by a wood border — in one room. All to make a statement. "A lot of products now weren't readily available 10 years ago, even five years ago. Things like marble," said Pat Zatina, design director for Scott-Shuptrine in Novi. "There are now more options, and they're more readily available," she said. "Consumers are much more educated. They are demanding more."

"THE INDUSTRY has become more sophisticated," said Debra Osborne, a sales consultant for Virginia Tile of Southfield. "A lot of people will come into the showroom and have no idea what they can do. They get intrigued."

"There's a bigger variety of hard surfaces," said Vicki Bockart, owner of Harbor Floors and Interiors in Keego Harbor. "I think the average customer has two if not three surfaces in the house."

A quick look at what a couple of area builders did at the fall Homearama, a showcase of idea homes, illustrates the point.

Richard Koch, a Troy builder, showcases a foyer of Italian marble and Brazilian cherrywood and a kitchen with granite squares inlaid in cherry in his Dynasty Model.

Timothy McDonald, a Rochester builder, put marble in the foyer, wood in the den and carpeting in the dining room all within a few steps of each other in his Glangarry Model.

"People are looking for ways to make their home stand out," said Terrie Koch, project manager for her father's company. "It's hard for people to envision new ideas. When they see it, they want it."



Multiple treatments like marble tiles set in oak wood can punch up the appearance of a simple floor design.

'There are now more options, and they're more readily available. Consumers are much more educated. They are demanding more.'

— Pat Zatina

Wood, which expands and contracts, would be a poor choice for a high-humidity bathroom with a lot of towels lying around, Moody said.

"Hard floors (wood, marble, ceramic) are not good where you want acoustic quality, like a media room," Zatina said. Carpeting would do better there.

"I wouldn't sell the best vinyl to a family with five kids and a dog," said Bockart.

Different treatments make different statements. Few things impress a first-time visitor to a home as a granite or marble in the foyer, especially if it flows to wood.

"Tiles say cleanliness and beauty in a powder room, carpets the same in a living room," Moody said. "Wood says warmth in kitchens, living rooms and dens."

"Wood is a product that I think works pretty much for everyone and is in a price range for almost everyone," Bockart said.

"Marble and vinyl tile are great in high-use areas," Zatina said. "The material itself cleans well. It's easy to maintain."

All kinds of people can have a hand in making decisions on floor coverings.

"A lot of times the architect determines what's going to be in the house," Zatina said. "Sometimes, builders are stubborn about the flooring and windows they want."

"In custom-built homes, builders would never make those decisions," she said. "That's where designers working directly with buyers come into the picture with their expertise."

Carpet industry suffers

(AP) — The economically sensitive carpet and rug industry faces a slowing economy which could lead to hard times for the trade.

"The current outlook is a bit on the troubled side," said Frank C. Wilson, an international management consultant who follows the carpet and rug industry from Dalton, Ga.

The industry is an example of one being dragged into a recession. It is sensitive to general economic trends, particularly home construction starts, and is dependent on oil.

Opinions differ as to the severity of the downturn ahead, but there is agreement that the outlook soon might be grim.

"I don't know that I would use the word 'recession' yet," Wilson said. "But it's certainly in a downturn."

W. Fred Davis Jr., president of Palmetto Spinning Corp., a Laurens-based company that spins yarn for carpet and rug makers, was more certain.

"There's no question," Davis said. "Our industry is in a recession right now."

Either way, troubles in the carpet and rug industry will be felt.

THE INDUSTRY is concentrated in and around Dalton, Ga. About 35,000 employees in Georgia plants produce about 66 percent of all carpet and rugs made in the United States, according to the Carpet and Rug Institute in Dalton.

When people are feeling unsure about the economy, they delay expensive purchases, such as carpet.

"You can always walk on it another year or two," Wilson said.

Said Davis: "It is a discretionary purchase that a consumer can put off for one year, two years, even three years. During recessionary times, people don't replace carpet. Carpet is not going to wear out. It just sort of 'lives' out."

Housing, another key indicator for carpet sales, also has been lagging.

Housing starts have fallen to 1983 levels.

EACH HOUSE not built represents 100 square yards of carpet not sold, Wilson said.

Also, the bankruptcy-ridden retail industry also has been a factor in slowing carpet and rug sales. The most spectacular example might be the bankruptcy filing involving the U.S. retail operations of Canada's Campeau Corp., which includes familiar retailers such as Rich's and Jordan Marsh.

"They were big buyers of carpet," said Jack Dings, vice president of the man-made fiber division for Wellman. "These department stores, like the Jordan Marsh chain and other chains, don't have the money to put inventory in."

Wilson estimated the industry's total 1990 shipments at 1.225 billion square yards, which would represent a decline of 4 percent from 1989.

Board liable for upkeep of property

Our board refuses to increase the assessment to meet urgently needed repairs to the common areas and to hire a lawyer. The board is afraid it will be ridiculed by members, some of whom are on fixed incomes. I am concerned about the propriety of their actions as I am on the board with no insurance. Do I resign?

No. Even if you had insurance, which you should, you would still be vulnerable to being sued for mismanagement. Your board suffers from the malady of many boards — an unwillingness to raise and then spend adequate monies to properly run the association's affairs. This malady affects affluent as well as modest or low-income condominiums.

The answer is educating the board members as to their liabilities and responsibilities to run the condominium like a business, which requires proper maintenance of the project together with property management and legal assistance. A book full of legal cases where boards have been found liable for their misdeeds might be a therapeutic and mandatory reading session for the board encouraged by you. Don't quit. Stay on and fight for what you know is right and what is correct and in the best interests of all members of the association.



condo queries
Robert M. Melsner

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Find out if the railroad is selling the right of way in individual parcels or whether it is being dedicated to a municipality or the like. Contact the railroad to express the association's interest in the right of way. If so, the association would obtain a warranty deed to the property. Watch out for any potential title problems plus access problems. Get a survey and a title insurance policy with the help of your association's lawyer. Also, get an environmental report on the property and make sure your association has the authority to "buy" the tract.

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