

## What Do Floors Hold In Store?

(NAPSA)—It may not be what most people think about when they consider technological innovations, but science has turned its attention toward the floor and come up with some pretty clever ideas.

For example, some floors are made of new materials designed to look old and others are of old materials given a new purpose. There are floors that really look like wood or tile or stone but aren't—thanks to advances in digital photography. You can even have a floor that purifies the air in your home. Designers have been busy, too, experimenting with textures and unusual motifs. Here are a few of the more popular and intriguing:

• **Hardwoods:** One new hardwood floor cleans the air. Revolutionary technological advancements bring new surface treatments to wood flooring that use sun and artificial lighting sources to break down harmful emissions and VOCs. It also rids the air of odors. As for colors, classic staples such as dark mahogany- and cherry-stained floors are seen and so are muted grays, vanilla and whites. Weathered and worn looks continue to gain ground. An “antiqued” finish increases the durability of the wood and allows it to withstand the high traffic and heavy wear of large families and pets. Manufacturers are also offering eco-friendly options such as bamboo and products with extended warranties and enhanced life spans.

• **Carpets And Rugs:** These days they're all about definition and texture, from leopard print shag to braided fibers. Growing demand has led to supersoft and easy-to-clean wall-to-wall carpet. Luxuriously soft man-made fibers are so stable that they can be cleaned with bleach and water



Photo courtesy of Beaulieu.

**Whether hardwoods or soft carpets, stone, tile, porcelain or vinyl, floors today offer both the latest technological innovations and old-fashioned good looks.**

and come with lifetime stain warranties.

Then there's the trend toward projected fragmented digital imaging from computer screens directly on area rug designs. Rugs with pixelated designs look like they jumped right off a desktop. Contrasting with this are handcrafted rugs in tribal and traditional Ikat designs in muted grays and pastels. In response to a yen for classic aged looks, manufacturers present “new” rugs with foot-worn weathering and patterns that appear to have been faded by time and wear. A bright idea in recycling is glorious shimmering antique silk repurposed from Indian saris.

• **Tile Trends:** Engineered stone commonly found on countertops has made its way to the floor. A composite of reconstituted natural crushed stone bound by a polymer resin or cement mortar, it offers nearly the same performance as sandstone, marble and limestone. Engineered stone is

nonporous, so indoors or out it resists corrosion from water, materials and air pollution. The engineered variety is more uniform and more stable than natural stone and more affordable.

Porcelain, thanks to recent digital imaging advancements, can reinterpret stone, hardwood, leather, even linen. Rich coloring, veining, stratification and surface texture lend a realistic look without the high maintenance and price tag.

Now you can get punk-styled graphics and graffiti on porcelain. The eye-popping “tagged” looks appear as paint-splattered planks and tiles. Other “urban” looks for tiles resemble rusting iron or chiseled concrete.

• **Laminate Looks:** Photo-real hardwood, stone and porcelain are found in laminates. Advancements in noise reduction have helped to level the playing field between laminates and hardwood and vinyl. Cork and other sound-absorbing materials reduce echoes commonly associated with this type of floor.

• **Vinyl Surfaces:** Luxury vinyl tile (LVT) is extremely resistant to dents, scratches and stains; it's easy to install and even easier to maintain. Through computer-assisted design and surface treatments, LVT can have the look of nearly every other flooring surface. Drop-lock, floating designs allow for easy, glueless and affordable installation.

**Learn More:** You can find fascinating facts and practical tips on every flooring category, the pros and cons, trends, varieties and styles available, things to consider before purchase, maintenance tips and how to prepare for installation on the WFCA's website, [www.WFCA.org](http://www.WFCA.org). There's also a searchable database of retailers and a blog: [FloorTalk.wfca.org](http://FloorTalk.wfca.org).