



## European Producers of Laminate Flooring

### Spotlight on surfaces

#### Or: Current design trends in laminate floorings

**Two design trends currently dominate the international laminate flooring market: one is the continuous improvement in surfaces by means of synchronized grain and pore printing and the other the development of direct print laminate flooring using indirect gravure printing. This technology, which has been used successfully in the furniture industry for long time, is a brand new development in flooring applications and, with its directly printed main boards and lacquered finish, represents a new generation of laminate floorings. A number of laminate flooring manufacturers introduced their first product developments to the trade press at the start of 2006 and are now ready for the big breakthrough into the market.**

At the same time, surface designs in conventionally produced laminate floorings are improving constantly in terms of perfection, authenticity and refinement. With synchronized grain and pore printing, it is possible to obtain a true reproduction of the natural characteristics. Again, it is wood decoration that continues to hold center stage here, although in the meantime ceramic tile designs have also established themselves firmly in the world of laminate flooring. It was not that long ago that Mediterranean designs in terracotta and white were in demand, but now the customer is looking for much starker contrasts using slate and granite. Fantasy designs with patterns from the 70s, blue or green stripes, colorful florals and other creative design themes are also leading the way.

Trends in wood are moving towards the darker species such as walnut, wengé and merbau, and even the mid-brown wood types, such as oak and acacia, are now becoming available in darker shades. The grained profile and high heartwood content breathe life into the product, creating movement and a convincing natural appearance, while the color play introduces lively elements, with individual floorboard laminate floorings now demonstrating much broader contrasts in color, which in turn emphasize the natural appeal.



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To convey a greater impression of calm and elegance, the preference is for woods with matt surfaces, while for the more rustic designs, verging on the positively antique, it is the deep brushed or “scrubbed” surfaces, which are enjoying popularity. The effect is that of handcrafted wood, hence the name "hand-scraped surfaces". Attractive fruitwoods such as wild cherry and pear tree complete the decorative spectrum alongside superior exotic woods such as rosewood and teak.

### **Farmhouse floorboards and oblong designs set the trend**

The classic ship's deck pattern with its 3 strips look might have been fashionable just a few years ago, but in the meantime 2 strip floorboards or farmhouse floorboards (single strip) have become widely accepted in the market. Whilst floorboard width has become increasingly narrower – by 70 or 80 mm – the length of floorboards range across a spread of 400 to 1300mm. The farmhouse floorboard with its elegant optical appeal is leading the way in home interiors, as flooring increasingly becomes subject to individual design. Extremely oblong formats, e.g. 200 x 2005 mm, are becoming more attractive, especially when large areas of flooring need to be laid out.

The trend towards lacquered surfaces is increasing across the laminate flooring market. The new technology for the production of direct print laminate floorings has seized on this idea, although it is also possible to find conventionally manufactured laminate floorings with lacquered surfaces. In terms of both their optical and haptic qualities, they come extremely close to parquet and represent a further addition to the wide variety offered by the laminate flooring portfolio. Lacquered laminate floorings are available with matt or gloss surfaces, in each case offering a floor of a natural or elegant appearance.

So we have every reason to be excited about what the industry might be offering us in future. And it is certainly true that creativity and imagination have never been in short supply.



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### Photo captions

Handscraped oak, farmhouse floorboard (elne0604_b1)	Photo: Balterio
Slate, cuboid format (elne0604_b2)	Photo: Balterio
Wild pear, farmhouse floorboard (elne0604_b3)	Photo: Haro
Agate oak/ Creatino granite (elne0604_b4)	Photo: Haro
Stripes green, creative décor (elne0604_b5)	Photo: Parador
Stripes blue, creative décor (elne0604_b6)	Photo: MeisterWerke

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