

There are compelling reasons why customers are opting for laminates for their living and working spaces. Laminates offer remarkable versatility in terms of decor, while being sustainably produced and low on maintenance. Besides, as a result of innovative product material development, this material is now conquering moisture-prone rooms such as kitchens and bathrooms as well.

As for commercial spaces, if you look around offices, you can see laminate usage in cubicles, on the reception desk, in rest rooms, on the conference table, on the elevator control panel, or even in some of the office furniture. The material is extremely versatile, very durable, extremely functional and highly fashionable. As interior designer Anish Motwani, principal, Anish Motwani Associates, puts it succinctly: "Laminates are an important surface finish and are easily available in different shades and textures. But what attracts us more to this material is that it is cost-effective and doesn't require maintenance like veneers – which require polishing."

Parul Mittal, director, Greenlam Industries, rightly observes that laminates now represent a mix of glamour and functionality. "Laminates provide a peaceful ambience by adding just the right quantity of spotlight to your walls. Having said that, laminates have the tendency to add warmth and be the centre of attention at the same time," she says. "Greenlam has a huge variety of laminates for just about every space."

Customisation and innovation are other factors that are adding more excitement to this segment. Laminates are being used as much for exteriors as interiors currently. "Our core responsibility of being part of the industry is to continue with research and development for innovation," says Rachhpal Singh Kanwar, GM – Sales & Marketing, Stylam Industries Limited. "In this process, nowadays people are demanding their own ideas/designs in laminates, for which we have processed our in-house production specially catering to customised needs of digital laminates."

Other than such tailor-made products, options for users are augmented by finishes that cross the limits of design hitherto offered by these surfaces. Shankho Chowdhury, executive business head, Decoratives, Century Laminates, states, "A solid surface look has been very popular and preferred by urban consumers. Century Laminates has introduced a unique range 'Silk Tuff' in the 1mm category, which gives the look and feel of a solid surface at an affordable price and is apt for table-top surfaces as well as kitchen cupboards."

1&2. Easy-to-maintain laminate-clad walls by Merino.



GLAMOUR MEETS FUNCTION

THE ADVANTAGES OF STYLE, ECONOMICS
AND FUNCTIONALITY, MAKE LAMINATES
AN ATTRACTIVE MATERIAL FOR INTERIORS

BY ARUNA RATHOD





3. Flooring by Xylos, in an attractive herringbone pattern.

4. Laminates add a pleasing texture to this bedroom designed by Anish Motwani.

While the word 'laminate' brings to mind furniture/woodwork finishes, flooring also forms a significant part of the category. And like the furniture finish, its flooring counterpart possesses qualities of durability and ease of maintenance. Chirag Shah, head of Operations, Xylos India, says, "The past couple of years have witnessed an extensive use of laminates in flooring and interior designing."

Xylos offers a classic range of laminate floorings under the Cheer and Chrome series which possess a number of attractive traits. "We offer EIR technology which gives you a real wood feature with a synchronised effect. We have a number of shades, patterns and textures in these laminates that allow our users to choose according to the ambience they intend to create. Also, waxed edges, piano finish, bevelled edges, hand-scraped textures and availability in a host of other textures have made our laminate series ideal. Materials are complemented with the cost savings and the faster installation time that they enable," adds Shah.

With the flexibility, versatility and ability to gel with any design scheme, laminates prove to be a cost-effective alternative to wood as well as an environment-friendly practice. Prakash Lohia, managing director, Merino Industries, states that apart from the colour and the feel, laminates also add a lot of surface properties to the application required for the furniture. "Lami-

nates majorly contribute towards easier maintenance, longer life, better health and ergonomics of the furniture," he says. The wide range of options is the cherry on the cake.

While high-pressure laminates are inherently tough and easy to look after, they now come equipped with other features such as anti-bacterial protection and anti-fingerprint property for everyday use. The latter renders the surface impression-free, non-porous and hydro-repellent -- making it easy to clean of impurities and grease marks.

Greenlam has chemical resistant laminates for laboratories as well, known as Lab Guardian which have been specially developed to shield surfaces from chemical attack. Not just limited to interiors, Exterior Clads bring added colour to outside spaces with compact laminates to withstand harsh weather conditions for use in all weathers.

TREND FORECAST FOR 2019

Mittal predicts that in terms of colours, dark and mood colours will be the talk of the town in 2019. "Shades such as navy, black, deep burgundy and forest greens will win home owners over this year. Having said that, wood pattern laminates will continue to rule the industry for their classic charm. Textures are measured by their tactile quality and whether they feel natural to the touch or not. In addition to that, laminates come in a variety of finishes such as suede, gloss, stone, raw silk, chased wood, sparkle, stucco and more. Marble will continue to ride on the wave of being an absolute favourite of designers for its versatility. Stone laminate finishes look breathtaking if paired with dark and dusky tones. On the other hand, if incorporated with pastel or subtle shades, a marble pattern emanates a calm and cosy vibe."

Chowdhury echoes this opinion and adds, "A combination of colours such as black, 100% grey, white and pastels with stone, wood as well as contrasting with solid colours, will be in. Some of the distinctive textures, like woven textile and natural stones, are preferred for applications like wall panelling or bathroom interiors."

Having said this, those with a slightly more edgy design taste need not despair...products that go beyond natural finishes will also be making their presence felt. "In terms of finishes, colours and textures, Stylam has come up with laminates in magnetic finish, mirror finish with various colour options, flicker designs..." says Kanwar.

SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTION

The focus of most manufacturers is on producing laminates through a process hallmarked by a small carbon footprint, reduction of waste, recycling and the use of wood from sustainable sources.

Mittal says, "Greenlam does not employ toxic inputs or materials that may be considered unhealthy for ecology, employees, society or users." The firm has invested in responsible processes, as a result of which not a single day's production has been lost on account of environmental non-compliance. In addition to that, all the emissions and wastes have been within statutory guidelines.

With the prime mandate to reduce Greenlam's footprint through clean technologies and to bring innovation in product to reduce consumption, the Green Strategy Group is leading the company's charge as a benchmark in the laminates and decorative surfaces market. "Our products also meet



5. Silk Tuff by Century Laminates is ideal for table-top surfaces and kitchen storage units.

6. Greenlam's stucco-finish laminates render an artistic touch to a space.



NEW ON THE BLOCK

GREENLAM

Greenlam has a collection of textures in Stucco, Synchro and Olmo range. While the Stucco range has a rough and uneven texture, Synchro and Olmo offer a tactile element to the laminates. In addition to this, HD Gloss, Designer Collection, Super Gloss, Wood Horizontal, Nuovo Smoked, Woodgrain, Naturalle, Stone Collection, Textile and Pearlescent are some of the other offerings by the company.

CENTURY LAMINATES

A unique range called Silk Tuff in the 1mm category, which gives the look and feel of solid surface at an affordable price, is the company's latest product. Another interesting series is the Anti Fingerprint laminates, available in 1mm thickness and four solid colours. This series is apt for offices.

XYLOS

Xylos, a brand by Samling Global, has introduced a flooring innovation called the Hybrid Flooring. Hybrid Flooring comprises many unique layers, including a UV coating and 'wear layer' and is constructed with the perfect blend of limestone and polypropylene. It is highly water-resistant, making it a perfect solution for situations involving spillages. The new innovation from Xylos is also termite resistant, fire resistant and is available in seven different shades including Oak and Hickory - making it a combination of style and functionality.

MERINO

Synchro is a recent entrant in Merino's product profile. As the surface texture is seamlessly synchronised with the decor patterns, this makes the laminates indistinguishable from solid woods and veneers. This product makes any wardrobe or wall panel feel as tactile as natural wood.

VENTURA INTERNATIONAL

A metallic and handmade designer laminate from German brand Wallenstein is the newest product to be rolled out by the company. The range is available in rust, stone and metal-like surfaces. This laminate creates a vintage look and shine through individual composition and design. The brand also offers appealing concrete and steel surfaces which can be used in residences and commercial spaces. The Wallenstein range at Ventura International features authentic natural and UV-resistant surfaces. The laminates can be processed with regular commercial wood-working machines. All the products are ecologically harmless and easy to recycle. Available in a thickness of 1.5mm and size of 2440mm x 1220mm (8'x 4'), the range offers finish options of Grey Stone, Rust Silver, Corten Steel, Old Messing and Vintage.

STYLAM

Stylam has come up with laminates in magnetic finish and mirror finish with various colour options. The Flicker collection allows a glittery overlay on any solid colour, while the Fire Retardant series minimises the risk of eventualities arising out of toxic smoke inhalation.

a range of environmental standards, including ISO 14001, OHSAS 18001, Greenguard Gold, FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) and Singapore Green Label. With Greenlam, you can trace and evaluate the impact of our products, proving our



7. Fire Retardant laminates from Stylam ensure an immediate and complete extinguishing of fire as soon as the flame source is removed, thus eliminating risk posed by toxic smoke.

8. Available in silver and copper, Stylam's Flicker laminates can be overlaid on any solid colour.

9. Stylam's Mirror Shield laminates are manufactured using real aluminium, stainless steel and copper foils.



position as one of the most environmentally aware laminate manufacturers operating today," adds Mittal.

The 28-year-old Stylam believes in the commitment to sustainability and being environmentally responsible. "Our laminates are accredited with indoor air quality certification, Greenguard, FSC certification, European CE Certification for both internal and external application of compact laminates, Singapore Green Label, Green Building Membership of India, to name a few," says Kanwar.

Century Laminates procure papers made from plantation timber. "We have FSC certification and we also use solar panels for manufacturing laminates and recycled water at Century Laminates manufacturing facility," says Chowdhury.

All products from Xylos come from the parent company, Samling Global Ltd, Malaysia, which is equipped with more than 50 years of experience and is aligned with vast resources and interests around the globe. They are certified under FSC and SFC (certificates for sustainable forest management).

Energy conservation, energy-efficient operations and increase in share of renewable energy are major sustainability practices adopted by Merino. "Our group produces Green fuel-based energy from bio-gas, and agri-wastes like rice-husks are used in steam production. Solar energy caters to our increasing power needs. Over 1.6 MW solar power is installed, and more is planned," explains Lohia. Besides this, the practices of reduced water consumption by achieving high water-use efficiency; recycle and reuse of water, the zero discharge system, rainwater harvest systems and also adopted ponds to recharge water table, are being used.

LAMINATES IN OFFICES

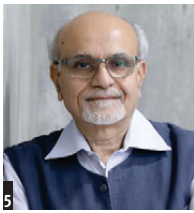
Since designing an office is connected to several economic issues that impact the company's financial health, every little detail needs to be given equal attention. Laminates are an ideal choice for offices, since they are resilient and long lasting. Additionally, they can transform the look and the feel of an office without much effort. Mittal believes, "Laminates give you an economical solution without compromising on the design element, which makes them a favourite of most of the architects and interior designers."

Shah is of the opinion that laminates make it easier to change interiors in a jiffy, especially in case of modular furniture. Xylos offers laminates, flooring that is made by compressing layers of fiberboard together and placing a photographic image of wood grain, stone or tile pattern over the fiberboard. For an instant designer touch, clients can opt for click-lock. The planks will snap together and can be laid over other flooring. With exciting options like 'Diamond', 'Herringbone' or 'Chevron', it is a boon for the discerning customer, interior designer or architect.

While Chowdhury highlights the different thicknesses laminates come in, saying this makes them "ideal for use in any kind of applications," Kanwar points out the various textures and properties such as "anti-fingerprint and MR+ high gloss" complemented with competitive costs that make them an ideal material option for work spaces.

Gone are the days when laminates were available in obviously faux wood finishes and flat shades. Finishes now include wood and stone that are difficult to tell apart from the real thing; colour options have multiplied exponentially; technologies such as graphic printing add customisation to the spectrum...all this coupled with being a green product that is easy to maintain, durable and economic.

No wonder, laminates continue to be one of the most preferred interior finishes even today. **ANI**



SMART SURFACE

EXPERTS HIGHLIGHT THE PRACTICAL AND DECORATIVE ASPECTS OF LAMINATES IN HOMES AND OFFICES



PANEL OF EXPERTS

Parul Mittal, director, Greenlam Industries Ltd.

Rachhpal Singh Kanwar, GM - Sales & Marketing, Stylam Industries Limited

Shankho Chowdhury, executive business head, Decoratives, Century Laminates

Chirag Shah, head of operations, Xylos India

Prakash Lohia, managing director, Merino Industries

opportunity to fit a budget is endless – which makes them a preferred surface over other options.

Chirag Shah: Apart from the obvious benefits of cost-effectiveness and durability, laminate floorings offer extra strength and scratch/moisture resistance properties, along with great textures and colours. A laminate floor can be laid over old cement floors and can be easily dismantled and moved, if required. They are also fade resistant. So, they are a renovation-friendly alternative.

Prakash Lohia: Wooden furniture was the only option earlier. When laminates were introduced in the market, retailers and consumers opted for this new material in furniture and flooring. Veneer and acrylic surfaces are still beyond reach for the masses. Besides, when it comes to quantity, laminates naturally score over other options for their economic attractiveness. Laminates are easily available in a wide variety of colours, textures and price range. In the case of veneers, sometimes it's difficult to find the same matching grain. As for durability, laminates have a long life.

In the case of residences, for which parts of the home would you recommend laminates?

Mittal: Every product by Greenlam is designed to perform faultlessly in residential, commercial or public spaces. Anti-fingerprint laminates (AFX) are perfect for kitchen spaces as they make the surface non-porous and hydro-repellent, which makes it easy to clean impurities and grease marks. Similarly, VRB (Veracious Bark) laminates have an assortment of wood textures and wood finishes, which makes them ideal for living rooms and bedrooms. Having said that, laminates can be used in every part of your home.

Kanwar: High-pressure laminates are not only used in interiors. The trend has shifted to exterior application these days.

Chowdhury: We recommend using our laminates for kitchens, furniture, wardrobes, living rooms, dining tables, wall panelling, etc. as we have a wide range of designs and finishes that would be suitable.

Shah: You can create a luxurious living room with a beautiful laminate. These durable surfaces can also be elegant, and help you replicate looks that might be expensive to create. Wood laminates can be used to achieve effects similar to real wood, at a much lower cost. For bathrooms, we have Xylos's Vintage Noir or Rustica.

Lohia: Wherever there is furniture and panelling, there laminates can be used. **AB**

Why have laminates become the preferred choice in residences and offices today?

Parul Mittal: Besides being economical, laminates are resistant to stains, scratches, abrasions, impacts, etc. and are easy to maintain. Anti-bacterial property of laminates also makes them a preferred interior surfacing solution. Laminates come in a variety of colours and textures – which makes them an ideal choice for accents and sprinklings of contrast in a bedroom, office or an entryway.

Laminates can be used on doors, tables, cabinets, insets and walls to highlight a neglected spot or create a statement in the decor. Insets, for example, are a perfect way to install laminates. Laminates are an excellent solution for adding textural or tonal contrast.

The diversity of species and colour schemes makes the decorating experience extremely seamless. Be it bohemian, traditional or chic, the diversity of species and colour schemes makes the decorating experience seamless. Classy textures, with a tactile element to them, never fail to lend an authentic and rich visual appeal to interiors.

Rachhpal Singh Kanwar: Laminates are a reliable and long-lasting product that lends offices/residences a customised look. Laminates also help designers to get innovative, as the laminate industry has come of age with an exciting range of beautiful, durable, versatile and easy to use/care for products. Today, these products offer outstanding quality, superior value and incredible options to go beyond imagination.

Shankho Chowdhury: Laminates are affordable and very easy to maintain. They are available in a variety of designs to suit any interior décor. With laminates, the

1. Parul Mittal.

2. Rachhpal Singh Kanwar.

3. Shankho Chowdhury.

4. Chirag Shah.

5. Prakash Lohia.

6. Greelam's Woodgrain Texture laminate creates a striking surface.