



A SLICE OF ELEGANCE

WOOD VENEERS USE A PRECIOUS RAW MATERIAL WISELY, ENABLING ITS AESTHETIC USE ACROSS APPLICATIONS AND TYPOLOGIES

BY ARUNA RATHOD



Wood veneer is a versatile material that has grown in popularity in recent years, as interior designers and discerning consumers are attracted to natural materials. The warm touch of wood veneer in places like hotel lobbies and innovative wall treatments enhance and inspire living spaces. Veneers use wood, a valuable raw material, to its optimum, by slicing it into thin veneer leaves. It is both economical and ecological to use veneer instead of solid wood boards as these thin leaves produced using the same raw material can surface thousands of square feet of area. These slices of wood are



glued onto core panels of real wood to produce flat panels such as doors, tops and panels for cabinets, parquet floors and parts of furniture. Thus, wood veneer production caters to endless design possibilities and creative uses of wood across interior infrastructure industry.

Given the boom in the real estate sector, the demand of veneers has significantly increased. Parul Mittal, director, Greenlam Industries, observes, "In the past couple of years, smoke charred veneers that exude a smoked and rustic effect have become popular in the interior and décor industry. In addition to that, today digital veneers are also in trend which allow for a chosen design on the veneer sheet. Digital veneers give your creativity more of a free reign to experiment as well."

Eucalyptus, mahogany, walnut and rosewood are some of the wood species that fall in the premium category, exuding class and poise. The beauty of wood lies not only in its look but also in its feel, which is its texture. Be it a rugged surface or one that highlights the natural imperfections of wood, veneers come in a variety of textures which enhance the look and feel of a space. For a luxurious look, premium veneers can be incorporated on a statement furniture piece to make it a focal point of the room. Additionally, veneers can be used on cabinets, table tops, walls and more.

Shankho Chowdhury, executive business head, Decoratives, CenturyPly, states that in spite of the abundance of varied decorative products, natural veneer has maintained its charm amongst the users. "Globally subtle natural designs are preferred which mostly include walnut, oak and pine finished veneers. The demand for natural teak veneers and created patterns on veneers is stronger than that for common highlighters. However, rough textures are used in some highlighted spaces," states Chowdhury. Veneers provide a unique natural look to any interior space. Depending upon the polish, it can provide the interiors with semi- to high-gloss aesthetics. "Depending on the colour tone and grain patterns, it can elicit a crafted vintage look as well to the interiors," he adds.

Veneers are one of the most popular products in the world of interiors and décor. One of the biggest advantages of using veneers is that they look extremely classy and glamorous. Veneers have a glossy coat on top of the base sheets, which makes them look exclusive and high-end. Given the fact that veneers are made from real wood, they also bring in the element of nature. Since veneers are relatively thin, they are more susceptible to water damage which is why it is necessary to always wipe any spills with a damp cloth. Mittal cautions, "Having said that, it is critical to use a sealant on the surface of veneers if your space is prone to excessive and prolonged exposure to water."



1&2. Subtle and natural veneers from CenturyPly.

3. Shankho Chowdhury, executive business head, Decoratives, CenturyPly.



4. Smoked Larch from Greenlam.

5. Parul Mittal, director, Greenlam Industries.

6. Greenlam's Silver Splash Rovere veneer.



INSTALLATION OF VENEERS

Unlike laminates, veneers need a little more care during installation. To master the installation process, there are three key steps that need to be kept in mind. Mittal explains, "First, it's important to understand the kind of veneer that you require. For example, when it comes to large commercial spaces, you can never go wrong with engineered veneers. Premium engineered veneers promise impeccable consistency regardless of the number or area of sheets needed for the job.

"Secondly, select a suitable application method to apply veneers. The common methods include the traditional hammer veneering and contemporary vacuum press veneering. Thirdly, when in doubt about your requirement to experiment a bit during installation, it is always advisable to buy a little extra. If your requirement is for large amounts of matching veneer sheets, engineered wood veneer may be just the right surfacing choice for you."

POPULAR BY CHOICE

Greenply: Walnut, Oak and Ash are the current flavours. Being a chocolatey shade, Walnut has a dark and exotic look and feel to it. These veneers are great for high-traffic areas with children and/or pets. Oak is timeless, and highly resistant to wear and tear, while Ash is ideal for flooring in upscale homes with an elegant and chic style. All three species are tremendously durable.

CenturyPly: The best sellers in the category are those which have a natural dark brown tone or which have been tanned by smoking (such as American Walnut and Tanzania Wood).

NEW ON THE BLOCK

Greenlam offers a wide range of veneers for specific and generic use. With the newly-introduced Herringbone collection, one can add a modern yet rustic look to spaces, while the Morphous Collection offers marble finishes with blue, black, white and granite shades. Chevron patterns add a sense of symmetry to spaces.

Decowood offers the largest collection of veneers with over 200 treasured species of wood like the Mahogany, Walnut, Wenge, Ebony, Rosewood, Eucalyptus, Hickory, Sucupira, Sycamore and many more. All these species are available in Indian markets.

CenturyPly's treated Natural Veneer category features smoked veneer, shimmered veneer and stained veneer. Another offering is the premium poly-fibre grain veneer, which provides the best-in-class grains of the most premium species without any constraints on availability and design resemblance.



Veneers require perfection for eliciting the intended expression. Therefore, while installing these products precautions should be taken mostly against scratches and stains. Chowdhury cautions, "Any unwanted chemical contamination and excessive sanding of the face should be avoided for a better finish."

ENVIRONMENT-FRIENDLY VENEERS

While wood has always been considered an environment-friendly resource, recycling and renewability aspects of wood products are increasingly coming into focus. Wood takes significantly less energy to produce, compared to concrete, steel, cement, or glass. What's more, the manufacturing process itself is gentle on the environment. Wood veneer is sliced in a process that produces no dust and, therefore, produces significantly less waste. Then, the slices are attached to a solid base doesn't have too many warping problems and veneer uses every part of the tree, with absolutely no waste.

Decowood, a brand from Greenlam Industries, offers an array of premium quality veneers in different categories such as, Naturals, Teak, Engineered and Noirwood. Mittal elucidates: "While 'Naturals' category captures nature's best creations, 'Teak' is a symbol of luxury and elegance. 'Engineered' veneers create consistent designs on a large scale making them perfect for use where the design needs uniformity. 'Noirwood' is the perfect blend of nature and human ingenuity where natural wood is enhanced using special technique to give a warm look to your interiors."

Greenlam veneers are manufactured using non-toxic bonding materials, and organic resins. Mittal adds, "We strongly discourage using adhesives with formaldehyde base, which is harmful to people and environment. Instead, we rely on organic resins."

SOURCING OF WOOD

Wood is known to be one of the greenest materials that you can use for building, manufacturing and as fuel. However, it needs to be sourced carefully so that it doesn't risk contributing to deforestation and loss of biodiversity. "Made from the finest species of wood which is sourced from around the world, Decowood's exceptional production capabilities allow architects and interior designers to come up with outstanding pieces of intricate art. Decowood veneers are ethically sourced from legal and managed forests available around the world to reduce the

carbon footprint through clean technologies," says Mittal.

CenturyPly, too, is a strong advocate of responsible sourcing. "All our sourcing happens from legal and authorized suppliers from across the world and all our products qualify for LEED rating 1 point. Therefore, our veneers are environment-friendly and green products," informs Chowdhury.

As for sustainable manufacturing practices, at Decowood, the company has the Green Strategy Group that works towards creating, implementing and monitoring 'Green Initiatives' across the entire organization. "With the prime mandate to reduce our footprint through clean technologies and to bring innovation in product to reduce consumption, the Green Strategy Group is leading our charge as a benchmark within the decorative surfaces space. The wood used to make the products are derived from sustainably-managed forests to have a low environmental impact," informs Mittal.

As for CenturyPly, being an ISO 9001: 2008 and ISO 14001:2004 certified company means strict quality checks are part of their processes, and sustainability is maintained while manufacturing veneers.

Wood is an enduring design material, and its derivative veneer, enjoys the same timeless appeal – made even better by a host of decorative finishes. **A&B**

7&8. Wood and, by extension, veneers can create wonderfully soothing and elegant spaces.