



BACK TO NATURE

VENEER IS BEING USED INNOVATIVELY IN HOTEL LOBBIES, FOR WALL TREATMENTS AND MODERN LIGHTING DESIGN

BY ARUNA RATHOD

Wood veneer has been showcased nearly everywhere — it's a versatile material that has grown in popularity in recent years, as designers and savvy consumers are attracted to natural materials.

Each species of wood throughout the world has its own unique colour, grain pattern and even scent. The final appearance of wood depends on how it is sliced or cut, and staining can alter its colour and the depth of the grain. Protective layers can be added with a polyurethane coating, which can also add a shine to the surface. Timber has been used for the framing of houses, external cladding and joinery in traditional construction for many years, but it has also been used in interiors as a major decorative element.

Wood is versatile and used for wood flooring, timber wall panelling, solid or timber veneer doors, skirtings, mouldings, window joinery, kitchen joinery and, of course, furniture. The look of wood can transform virtually any room in your home or office. In residential design, natural wood veneer wall covering can create an exclusive space to suit your needs and add a touch of class.

CONTEMPORARY TRENDS

Eucalyptus, mahogany, walnut and rosewood are some of the wood species that are extremely premium. Veneers from these trees lend class and poise to spaces. Parul Mittal, director, Greenlam Industries, believes that veneers highlight the perfect imperfections of wood, giving interiors a unique look with detailed textures. "In the past couple of years, smoke charred veneers that emit a smoked and rustic effect are gaining demand in the interior and décor industry. In addition to that, digital veneers are trending today, which allows one to have your chosen design on the veneer sheet. Digital veneers give your creativity and more of a free reign to experiment as well," she states.

In case of textures, the beauty of wood lies not only in its look, but also in its feel. Currently, distressed textures have become the talk of the town due to their natural flaws, which emit a grunge and raw touch to the space. Be it rugged texture or highlighting the natural imperfections of wood, veneers come in a variety of textures, which enhance the look and feel of veneers. For a luxurious look, premium veneers can be incorporated on a statement furniture piece to make it a focal point of the room. In offices, veneers are

1. A sophisticated look with Mystique by Greenlam.

2. Parul Mittal, director, Greenlam Industries.

3. Wall effects by Greenlam.

4. Oak Charcoal veneer by Greenlam.

5 HDBX Red Oak by Greenlam.





used to create bespoke, impressive tables for boardrooms and offices.

Shankho Chowdhury, president, Decoratives Division, CenturyPly, observes that most people who do up their homes, take a lot of efforts to hand pick items to enhance their interiors. "From walls to furniture to drapes, everything is artfully matched to create a beautiful ambience. One of the major trends over the last couple of years is the use of veneers for interiors. Veneers are mostly preferred for furniture as these are known to enhance the beauty of the surface and the space altogether."

Durability and flexibility are the main advantages of veneer, making it a popular material, besides it being environmental-friendly and offering a sophisticated, polished look.

"The main veneer species which are widely used in the world are combinations of walnut, maple, teak wood and ebony, among others. Of late, grey seems to be a colour tone which is getting popular worldwide. The overall texture, form, grain and pattern of the veneer sheet can be found to vary from smooth to rough and from matte to gloss, depending on the choice of the customer and the area of application," explains Chowdhury.

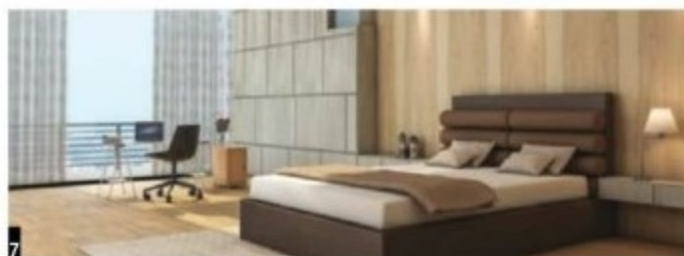
Smoked grey, walnut, oak, teak and maple are all very popular and trendy, and one can add more texture by leaving it open-grained. And it can be used almost everywhere.

Kumpal Mittal, principal designer, Kumpal Associates, says, "Selection of veneers is done depending on the space and desired look. Veneers are very appealing when finished in monocoat as it lends a very natural look. The grains look brilliant and it is the most natural form."

ENHANCING INTERIORS

Exotic wood veneers are growing in popularity with interior designers. Each piece has its own character and patterns. Wood veneer is functional, aesthetically pleasing and completely unique. A space done up in beautiful wood finishes, exudes luxury and elegance. Parul Mittal feels, "Veneers provide warmth and individuality to your space by bringing in the element of real wood with the use of innovation and technology. With exquisite grain patterns that establish individuality, these distinct patterns give your space a rich character and a tranquil feel."

Veneered panels in the kitchen offer a sleek look. With handles carved into the fixture, this space saving design adds a practical and elegant feel to contemporary kitchens.



Chowdhury feels that the use of veneer sheets helps in giving a more aesthetic appeal to wooden structures such as doors, furniture or any other piece of architecture. "Premium interiors and exclusive furniture pieces are designed with the use of veneer sheets," he adds.

Kumpal Mittal prefers using natural products to make spaces look as close to nature as possible. "I love using veneers as it provides warmth and richness and one doesn't get bored of it easily. Veneer can be easily installed and maintained and, hence, it's one of the best ways to enhance any space with its lovely characteristics."

PLUS POINTS OF USING VENEER

Parul Mittal states that veneers are slowly becoming one of the most popular products in the world of interiors and décor. When it comes to advantages, veneers add natural warmth and provide an extremely premium look to spaces. Since veneers are made of thin layers of real wood that is glued together, the chances of splitting and cracking of wood are low. When veneer is applied to a substrate, it increases

6. Veneer by CenturyPly adds a touch of class to office interiors.

7, 8 & 9. Innovative use of veneer by CenturyPly in bedrooms.

10. Shankho Chowdhury, president, Decoratives Division, CenturyPly.

CASE STUDY - OFFICE INTERIORS USING VENEER



Kumpal Mittal, principal designer, Kumpal & Associates

The office had to be designed in a way as to accommodate the working of any kind of firm as the client wanted to rent out the office.

We had a free hand in designing and creating a look for the same. We had to make it attractive so that it

would be appealing to all interested parties.

We decided to give it a smart look by using straight lines in metal, complemented by fluted glass and veneer as the main elements. Veneer was used to give warmth and richness.

A muted colour palette was used so that the company who rented it out could use its logos and any colour would blend in.

The advantage of veneer is that being a natural product it has a lasting appeal. Few walls have been highlighted to add design elements like the blue wall in the cabin and the motivational wall in the staff areas. A cement finish in grey has been used to finish the look and making it low maintenance.

the strength of the product and the surface becomes strong enough to resist temperature changes and humidity. The fact that veneers are sliced into thin sheets instead of being cut from the log means that no piece of wood is wasted as sawdust and manufacturers can utilise the entire piece of wood.

"The entire range of products by Decowood is made from A+ grade veneers with termite- and borer-resistance. As a result, the lifespan of a veneer is much more, and you have a product that will last for years to come," explains Parul Mittal about Decowood Veneers, a brand from Greenlam Industries.

Since veneers are made with thin layers of wood glued together, they are more susceptible to water damage which is why it is necessary to always wipe any spills with a damp cloth. Additionally, the installation of veneers requires skilled workers, who ensure that there are no roadblocks in the process. Wood veneers require regular maintenance to ensure durability. 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.

Decowood also uses patented and highly advanced

MITT (Melamine Impregnated Tacking Technology), which ensures perfect bonding of the veneer with the substrate, resulting in high bonding strength of veneers.

Chowdhury explains that the advantages of using veneer outweigh the disadvantages. "Variety, exclusivity, bespoke interiors and low-maintenance are the advantages, and the only disadvantage is the availability of premium species and cost, when compared to artificial substitutes for cladding such as laminates."

The other advantages of using veneer are that it is easy to install; easy to polish and repolish; can be used overall or as a highlight; is affordable; has a classy rich appearance; and is available in many finishes and varieties. The only disadvantage, according to Kumpal, is that it can be attacked by white ants.

Wood veneer is a cost-conscious, sustainable choice if you want the elegant design of wood without the high price and overuse of natural resources. Overall, wood veneer is a versatile material, and its popularity in modern design is a great opportunity for new and creative projects. ■