

Fabulous

floored

Color, texture and pattern
turn floors into an art form

by Kali Justus

With the development of new surface technologies and the popularity of remodeling, why not have a little fun with your floors? While floors may not seem a likely avenue for creativity, inspired homeowners are increasingly turning to what is underfoot to express their personal style.

"[Homeowners] are more bold in the decisions they make, which is a lot more fun," says Dean Howell, owner of MODA Floors & Interiors in Atlanta. "They get what they want rather than what they think the people who will buy their house will want. That leads to more thoughtfulness and boldness in making decisions on styles and colors... People are taking chances."

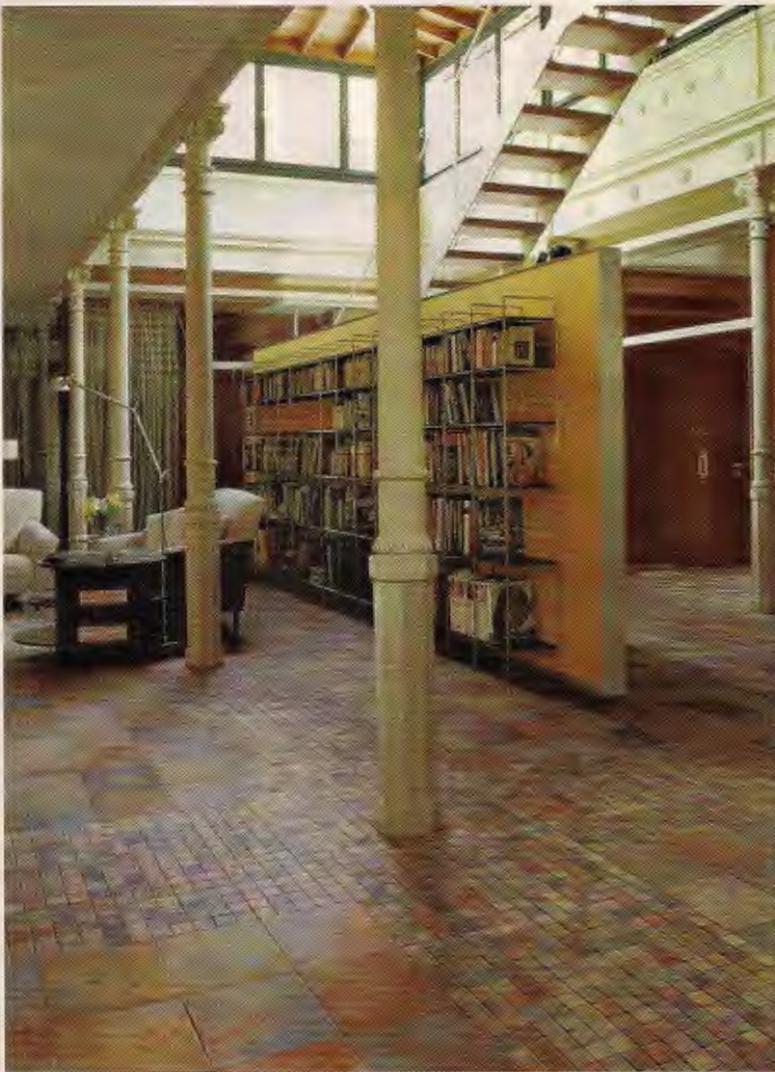
New flooring could be just the thing to spice up your space. "Changing your flooring can make a huge difference, especially if you're going from carpet to hardwood," says Rick Gill, of Dasso in Atlanta. ◀





Dasso's **ECO-FRIENDLY SOLID BAMBOO** flooring in Antique Toffee simulates an oak finish with a french bleed.

Photo courtesy of Dasso



SLATE SOLUTIONS PORCELAIN TILE by REX Tile



"North Star of Spain" TUMBLED NATURAL STONE TILE MEDALLION by Floor and Decor Outlets

Photos courtesy of (left to right) Specialty Tile and Floor & Decor Outlets

Before choosing new flooring, Howell recommends determining the style of the room it will go in first. "Start with your furnishings," Howell says. "What style do I have? What do I like? And then work your flooring and your colors around that."

However, he says, homeowners should also consider their long-term plans for the room such as purchasing new furniture or painting the walls a different color and how the flooring will work within those plans. Focusing on personal style rather than trends will result in the best choice. "There is a floor for everyone, but not every floor is for everyone," says Howell.

Investing in quality flooring is a way to increase the enjoyment of your home for

years to come. "People start with laminate and then go to natural wood," says Bobbi Jo Luciani, pro sales manager at Floor & Décor Outlets in Roswell. "They see the quality and the price point, and a lot of times they end up trading up."

Play with pattern

No matter what floor surface you choose, almost any look can be achieved. For example, you can enjoy the durability and easy maintenance of porcelain tile with the look of a grainy wood. "This year's most popular wood looks range from photo-realistic grain to more adventurous and colorful re-interpretations of the conventional," says Anne Demers,

marketing director for Specialty Tile Products.

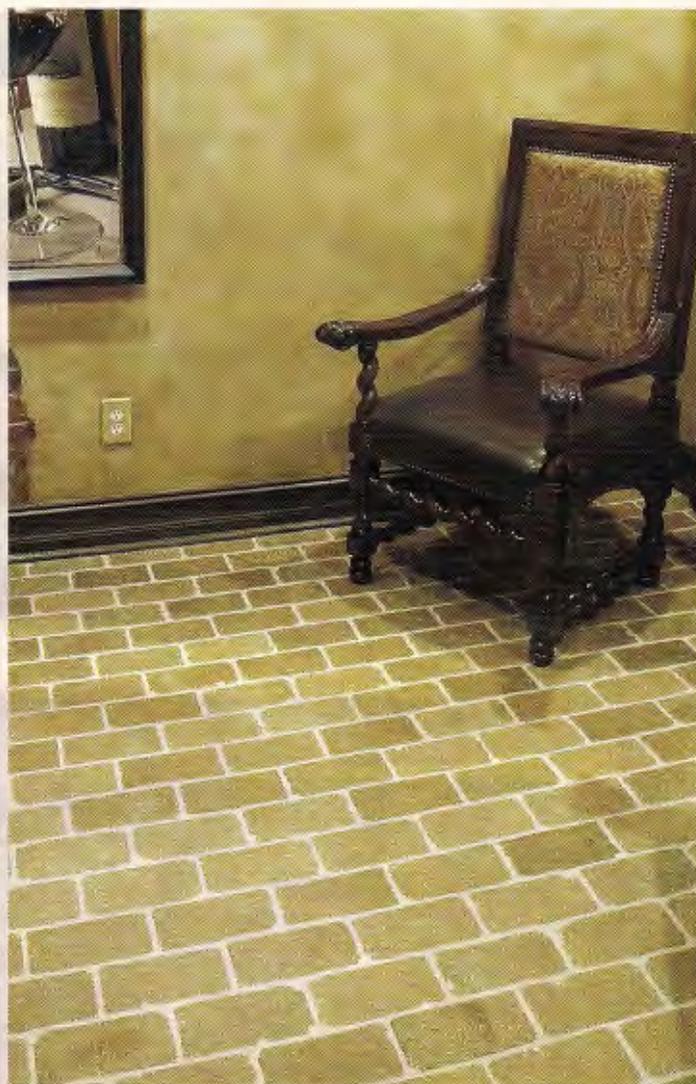
This technology allows wood-look tile to be placed in a shower enclosure, for example, where real wood is not typically an option, to achieve an organic, resort spa look.

Porcelain or ceramic tiles, which are easy to care for, can also replicate the patterns of natural stones such as travertine, marble and granite.

Another creative flooring design idea that has taken off is inlaid floors, which combine different flooring materials in artful arrangements on the same surface. For instance, a large-format tile set on the diagonal with thin strips of wood placed between the seams of the tile creates a



HIGH-DENSITY FIBER (HDF) BAMBOO in “Midnight Magnolia” by Dasso USA



TUMBLED BRICK PAVERS

Photos courtesy of (left to right) Dasso and Atlanta Design & Build

classic look, while a base of rectangular wood-look tile surrounded by small mosaic tiles can give the appearance of an area rug.

Floor medallions and accent pieces add traditional flair when set within a floor design too. Bill Hoag, pro sales manager at Floor & Décor Outlets in Roswell, says customers are buying 12-x-12 sheets of various types of tile and cutting individual tiles out of them to use as accent pieces, which results in a truly custom—and cost-effective—look.

In the realm of eco-friendly flooring, solid and engineered bamboo planks such as those from Dasso are finished with various wood-grain patterns to get the

look of almost any hardwood, whether a curvy or straight grain is desired. Dasso's exotic hardwood products also feature authentic wood-grain patterns.

Cut-and-loop carpeting gives carpet lovers subtle pattern choices by alternating the heights of the carpet fibers, which produces lighter and darker shades across the surface in checkered and other patterns. Howell says transitional-style rugs are popular as well due to the increase in hard-surface flooring. The trend is away from rugs with heavy borders and toward borderless designs, which make rugs look bigger.

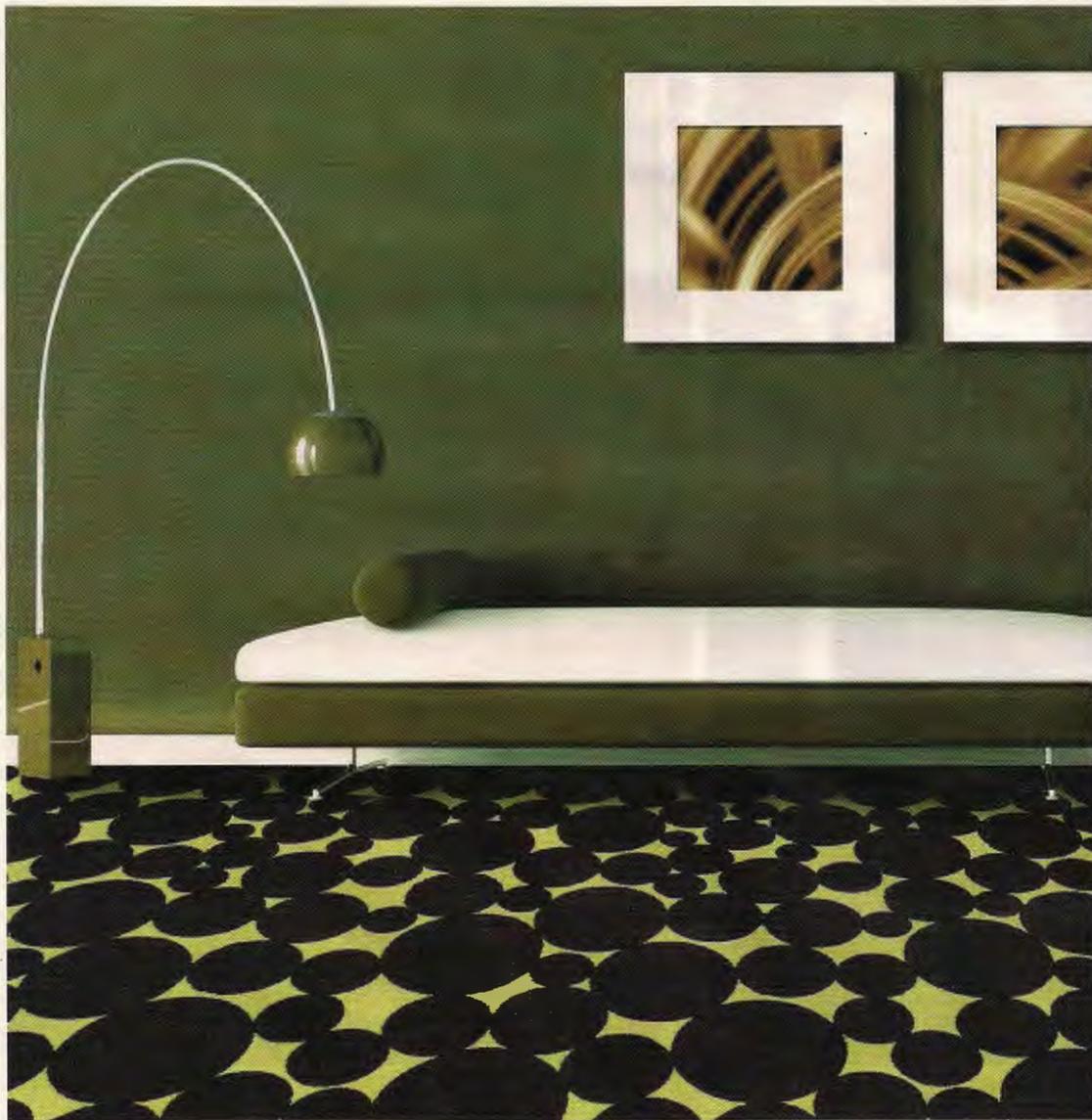
For bold patterns and colors, FLOR carpet tiles offer a wide variety of options. From

florals, chinoiserie and damask to stripes, circles and other geometric shapes, FLOR offers the latest looks for rugs, runners and wall-to-wall carpet.

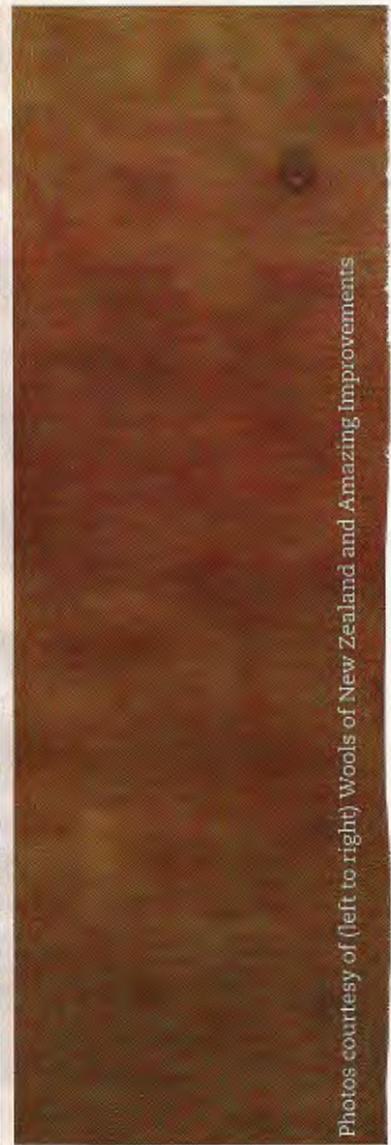
Texture

While faux finishes give the look for less, authentic materials provide appealing textures that give flooring an extra dimension. In this realm, Howell says mosaic tiles made with non-traditional materials such as coconut shells, metal and glass are popular with customers at MODA Floors & Interiors.

“We continue to add more mosaic tiles of all types,” says Howell. “We just can’t seem to keep enough styles and ▶



“Circles” WOOL RUG by Momeni



ACID-STAINED CONCRETE

Photos courtesy of (left to right) Wools of New Zealand and Amazing Improvements

colors in our showroom. We see people that will start a bathroom based on a certain mosaic tile they like, and then they will build around that.”

One of MODA's new products, Island Stone, which resembles small pebbles, offers a truly tactile experience and works well with resort-inspired baths.

“It has a very organic feel to it,” Howell says. “People put it in shower floors and wall features. You can kind of massage your feet on these pebbles while you’re taking a shower.”

Likewise, Dasso's EcoSolid Bamboo Forest flooring offers a tactile feel using an innovative manufacturing technique. To produce these floors, Gill explains that

bamboo stalks are cut in half, steamed and unfurled (flattened) into random six-foot planks. “You can feel grooves of the bamboo,” Gill says.

Concrete is another flooring material that is being used to create polished looks with staining, stamping and stenciling. Stained concrete is seen mostly in garages and basements, but can work in any room as a stylish and durable floor covering. “This is about the most elegant flooring treatment for use in a garage setting,” says Gary Damm of Amazing Improvements in Marietta.

To achieve an ultra-smooth finish, the original concrete floor is stained with the desired color and then ground with

planetary diamond grinders. “We can replicate the look of marble starting with plain old concrete,” Damm says. “A professional applicator can create the variation and effects which give the floor its character.”

For a rough (and more cost-effective) finish with lots of character, Damm says concrete floors are ground to expose some of the aggregate, producing variations in color and texture.

Color

“People think of bamboo as yellow,” says Gill. However, bamboo, hardwood and other engineered woods are available in a spectrum of light and dark finishes.



“On the Horizon” CUT-PILE CARPET by Shaw Floors



“Making Waves” and “Toy Poodle” PINK MODULAR CARPET TILES by FLOR

Photos courtesy of (left to right) MODA Floors & Interiors / Shaw Floors and FLOR

“When you apply a stain, it accentuates the difference in color tones that is naturally occurring,” Gill says. In general, says Gill, yellow, red and brown finishes are more traditional; natural and dark finishes are more contemporary.

Howell observes that wood stains have become more sophisticated, noting the increase in demand for custom stains to get a desired color. “One of the popular colors is gray, which is not commonly available in the marketplace,” says Howell.

“Gray is the new neutral,” says Demers. “... From charcoal to putty, temperature of the color is critical here. Choose a gray that matches the color temperature of the focal points in a room. Warm grays tend

to be more transitional, while cool grays are best paired with the contemporary.” Whatever stain is selected, homeowners should be aware of the variations in color and texture it produces in the flooring material. “There is a lot of variation in natural acacia,” Gill says. “It ranges from a light brown to a pale color.” However, Dasso’s “Midnight Magnolia” finish offers a uniform dark-brown finish. To simulate a weathered look, Dasso’s “Winter Wheat” finish is achieved by painting the surface and wire-brushing. For best results, Gill suggests viewing floor samples in-person. Another way to introduce color into your space is with area rugs and runners. Greg Colando, president of FLOR, says

chalky pastels and muted shades such as “Blush” pink, “Dew” green and “Dusk” gray are coming back in a big way. “Pixelated” colors, or shades of the same color, are another look Colando predicts will be a hit.

The days of flooring being an afterthought are over. Now, entire rooms are designed around flooring materials and styles. Homeowners no longer have to sacrifice style for durability, and the cost-effective solutions that are now available provide the latest look for less. Now is the time to abandon the safe choice and embrace today’s technology and economy to personalize your interiors with flooring. 
Editorial Resources begin on page 89.