# Hortland Observer

## Today's Laminates Combine Easy Care And Fine Design

Hard-wearing, easy-care laminate is still a favorite for busy countertops, but these days its fashion value is so high that it's at home in just about every room in the house.

In the contemporary kitchen, laminate in a luxuriously pale color is what gives the cabinets their sleek lines, and in the dining room the table's granite top is actually an affordable laminate look-alike. In the media room, the cabinetry that brings law and order to audio-visual paraphernalia is darkly luminiscent with myriads of tiny metallic glints, a suitably futuristic look created by a unique new laminate design called Galaxy.

The home office, too, is likely to sport easy-care laminate, either in one of today's great solid colors, or faux wood. Lacquer-look laminates add formal notes to the living room's coffee and end tables, and, of course, nothing could make more sense for dressers, wardrobes and vanities in bedrooms than laminate.

#### **Eco-Friendly Products**

Westinghouse Micarta is a company that's on the cutting edge of laminate innovation, and Holbrook Platts, the firm's design director, is convinced that no other product suits today's consumer climate better than decorative laminate.

"More than ever, the consumer wants value and style, and the newest factor is environmental consciousness," he explains. "Decorative laminate fits right in. It comes in myriad colors, patterns, textures and finishes, and it has emerged as a high-style alternative to granite, marble and other costly materials. In addition, we can offer laminates that create the warmth of beautiful wood for cabinetry, counters, doors, and furniture, but without felling a single endangered tree.

According to Platts, laminates can duplicate the beauty of the world's rarest woods with such realism than even environmentalists could be fooled. Micarta wood designs include teak, mahogany and rosewood, all species that come from the world's endangered forests, but they are actually produced from readily replaceable and fast-grow-

#### **Fantasy Woods**

Ironically, designers once frowned on wood-look laminates. They didn't like products that pretended to be something

they were not. But today that's considered a virtue, for nobody wants to fell rare trees.

Platts adds that laminates are also at an advantage when it comes to such special and costly looks as burls and birdseyes. "They are replicated perfectly," he says. "And yet they are eminently affordable."

Interestingly, laminate manufacturers also go in the opposite direction, producing wood designs in fantasy colors and finishes. Pearlwood is such a design. It combines an authentic woodgrain with pearlescent lustre for an excellent look for tub surrounds, vanities, and bedroom furniture.

Lacewood is another fantasy design. It features metallic copper striations, and Platts calls it an especially beautiful look for fine cabinetry in contemporary and transitional settings.

#### **Commitment To Design**

Clearly, laminate has come a long way since its gold-flecked sheen covered countertops in diners and gas stations from New York to California back in the 1950s, and designers credit the industry for its enterprising

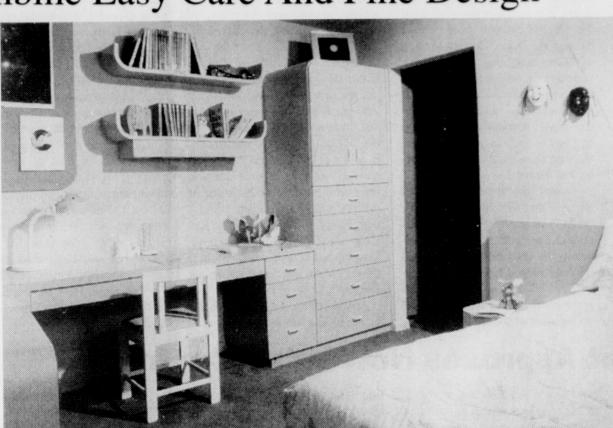
By the 1970s, extensive laminate palettes of solid colors were de rigeur, and ever since, the design community has specified them happily for cabinets, furniture and more. But, of

course, it's no accident that each year's new laminate colors go so well with other home furnishing elements. Much research precedes each year's

"The new colors must complement appliances, bath fixtures, carpeting, and other home furnishings," explains Platts. "This year, there's a trend towards nature hues like firethorn and terracotta, and warm neutrals in the beige, gray, and taupe families. Blues and greens have both become basics, and there's a lot of call for purple for children's furniture."

Platts is especially enthusiastic about several groups of new designs that mix colors in soft, abstract patterns.

"They're very interesting and even more versatile than the solid colors," notes Platts. "It's a lot easier to find coordinates for a design that blends many hues than for one solid color."



Stylish and easy-care, laminate is the perfect surfacing material for furniture for children's rooms. Here, Micarta laminate creates efficient storage and work space in a teenage girl's room designed by Feincraft. Best of all, the units are sophisticated enough to some day move along with their owner to her own home.

home centers. Architects, designers, view of what's available, it's smart to kitchen and bath showrooms, and contact manufacturers. manufacturer's distributors are better

For example, Micarta's 40-page, full- 29924. Or call 1 800 MICARTA.

choice of laminates at lumberyards or bets, but to make sure you get a full color brochure is free to consumers. Write Westinghouse Micarta, 304 Hoover Street North, Hampton, SC.

#### **Bank Locks Home Equity Interest Rate**

In the wake of the latest and largest of recent Federal Reserve interest rate hikes, Bank of America is allowing constomers to lock in an attractive home equity line of credit rate of 8.5 percent for six months.

The Equity Maximizer line of credit is available through Jan. 31, 1995 to customers with a Bank of America checking account. By visiting or calling any of the bank's branch offices, customers can lock in the introductory rate until June 31.

"The Equity Maximizer line of credit is well-timed for holiday shoppers, but even consumers who are too busy to buy in December can take their time and still count on a good rate," said Rich Weissman, bank senior vice president. "I know of no other bank prepared to make this kind of offer.

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