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August 2014

KEEP YOUR COOL
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latest home fashions

BAROQUE IS BACK
Why baroque keeps getting
a modern makeover

Sit down...

With the Irish family taking a swing
at Jumeirah Golf Estates

Ask the *flooring* experts

“I don’t like the existing tiled floors in my villa. Is wood flooring a good option?” Marc Panthos

Yes, but maintain it properly, advises Lesley Lobo, managing director of Woodfloors Middle East:

Wood flooring works very well in bedrooms, living rooms and dining rooms. You might want to split your budget, as many people do, and have more exclusive wood flooring in the entrance, dining hall and living areas and more affordable options upstairs. Laminate flooring is popular for children’s bedrooms but colours are a novelty, even for kids’ rooms. Coloured wood is attractive but many clients want the floor to last ten years or more, and kids will change their tastes as they grow up.

A straightforward lounge area of 35 square metres can be installed in a day. Then you’ll need two days for the adhesive to dry and for the skirting thresholds to be added. The majority of problems come from unprofessional installations – it’s not rocket science but you need the right materials, the sub-floor has to have the correct moisture level and it needs to be kept clean and dry. If you’re going away at this time of year and you don’t leave the AC on, that could also cause problems with moisture from condensation.

Maintenance is simple yet many don’t get it right. When you’re cleaning you mustn’t use a lot of water on the floor – you can’t treat it like a tiled floor and wash it with puddles of soapy

water. This will expand the wood and will also leave a soapy residue. Instead of soap there’s a special fluid that you can buy to mix with the water: first vacuum, then wet the mop and wipe the floor with this mixture. That’s all you need to do to look after the floor properly.

In Dubai the most popular wood flooring is oak. With 90% of suppliers producing oak it’s readily available and quick to source, mainly from the USA and Europe, especially from sustainable plantations in France, Austria, Germany and Sweden. Oak is versatile, too, as you can change colours, textures and finishes: you can make it look natural, rustic, reclaimed or varnished. There are all sorts of options available. With colour, the fashion is grey or white oak, perhaps whitewashed with the grain and knots visible. Walnut and vengai are also fairly popular species but oak has really pushed ahead over the last five to ten years.

Trends have changed in terms of type and construction. Twenty years ago everyone wanted solid wood flooring but now the majority of flooring produced is made with a top layer of real wood and a bottom layer of engineered wood, which is more environmentally-friendly. There’s a big difference between solid and engineered and all the problems associated with moisture, like expansion, cupping and bending – engineered wood reduces these side-effects.



“I want a seamless, easy-to-maintain floor going from the living room to the outside terrace.” Isaac Terrence

Porcelain tiles are a perfect choice, says Tanya Pearson, key account manager at Mirage Spa:

A seamless look between your indoor and outdoor space is easily achieved with porcelain tiles. You can have the same colour throughout or different shade variations, if you prefer. In the UAE, popular colour choices are natural stones such as limestone, slate and natural woods. Essentially, people want to mimic marble and limestone, which have become very expensive since exports from Syria stopped. The best quality materials tend to come from Europe, and Scandinavia in particular.

The great thing about full-bodied porcelain tiles are the natural materials it’s made from, such as clays and quartz – nothing artificial. These materials are ground down to a fine powder and impurities like carbon are removed, which makes the tile stronger. The powder is then pressed to make the tile tougher for use inside and outside the home. Porcelain tiles also withstand water and acidic rain, which can leave unsightly green marks. You can see this on villas on Palm Jumeirah.

You may want the same colour in your living room and on your terrace, but slightly different designs. Patterns are easy to create because porcelain won’t crack like its natural-stone counterparts. Curves are common, especially around the pool, while mosaics are popular for the pool interior. Compared to the trends seen in Italy and Europe, designs here are all about simplicity and natural colours. Inside and outside, natural timber looks beautiful but it can warp and needs maintenance. Timber porcelain gives you the same design with no aftercare and it’s very hard to tell if

it’s real or not. It’s also better quality than laminate, which is liable to peel in damp or hot air.

With finishes, high polishes are used in bathrooms, kitchens and luxe living rooms. Outside, you might want to go for a structured finish, which can be a little rough to the touch because it complies with anti-slip standards. Outside, tiles can be raised off the gravel or grass bed by standing on little feet – this is great for drainage and installation. This way, the tiles can be dry-laid and if you’re renting you can take them with you – in the industry we call this the ‘divorce floor’.



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