

# THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

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By: Alina Dizik

Skier Lindsey Vonn on a cozy basement bedroom in Minnesota  
M16



## MANSION

*'Perfection is finally attained not when there is no longer anything to add, but when there is no longer anything to take away.'* —Antoine de Saint Exupéry

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Expect to see rich, intricate patterns using marble, European oak and other flooring materials in 2017. Photos: (left) Getty Images; (middle & right) Courtesy of Deco27

## DESIGNED TO FLOOR

The most dramatic part of a home's decor may be hidden in plain sight. Flooring isn't always the first thing that draws your eye, but it's a critical, cohesive element in any design scheme. All eyes are looking downward today as designers and homeowners reimagine floors as walkable works of art, created with a palette of classic and contemporary materials that span from vintage, recycled and natural to synthetic and modern.

Flooring has gone "retro" in upscale South Florida residences, according to Fabian Llobell, principal at Deco27 in Miami, which specializes in luxury, interior hardwood surfaces. He says his customers are eager for the latest materials, colors, patterns and finishes. These days that means flooring in white wash, distress and gray tones. "Trends come in cycles and this one has circled back," says Llobell, who started doing business in 1984 when European oak flooring in neutral shades was all the rage in the U.S.

European oak comes in planks that are cut from the log using a different technique than the ones used in the U.S. or South America. This results in wider planks that are atypical in the Americas. The tree's slower growing cycle also produces planks with a tighter, multifaceted grain that gives off a rich and refined appearance.

The wood, which is usually from Italy, France or northeastern Europe, tends to have higher tan-

nin content than American oak. The higher the tannin content, the more dimension it creates, Llobell says. "It makes stain react more subtly with the wood, which results in interesting tones and colors that you don't see in American oak."

Herringbone patterns using European oak are highly desired among Miami luxury homeowners. And it isn't the only flooring pattern that is gaining momentum. Designers are expecting all sorts of patterned floors, including chevron and parquet, to become increasingly more prevalent in 2017, with bold statements that use a mix of colors and materials.

While flooring styles tend to change with the times, imported Italian terrazzo and marble never go out of style. Celebrated architect and interior designer Michele Bönan lives in the historic heart of Florence, Italy, in a Renaissance-era palazzo with doorways and portals of Pietra serena stone and frescoed ceilings. Clearly, he is no stranger to distinctive stones and

looks to incorporate them in his designs throughout the world.

Bönan plans to install luminous Botticino terrazzo for the common areas of a new residential development he is working on in Sunny Isles Beach. Durable and low-maintenance terrazzo, which is often used in entrance lobbies and other high traffic areas, is also showing up in modern residential interiors, in flooring that ranges from monochromatic to intricate mosaic.

Italian Calacatta marble tile is Bönan's top pick for the master baths in the residences. "With its off-white background and light green tones, the Calacatta stone recalls the sand and water of the neighboring sea," he says. Similar to Carrara marble, Calacatta is whiter and has more dramatic veining, creating vivid, artful patterns.

Massimo Iosa Ghini, of Iosa Ghini Associati, an Italian-based design and architectural company with projects in Miami, is experimenting with flooring and design that combines expensive materials of high-perceived value with less expensive materials to create a fresh, modern aesthetic.

Ghini says that flooring concepts today are being driven as much by social conscience as style. "Our philosophy about luxury is evolving," he says. "Luxury has always been equated with admiring and owning what we perceive as being precious. With an awareness of our planet's limited resources, homeowners and designers are coming to recognize that all materials are precious and should be valued. It is less about the material itself and more about the workmanship, creativity and detail in the design."

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