

History of Solid Wood Flooring

Wood flooring made its appearance in the Middle Ages, with some of those 800-year old floors still in use today. The upper levels were the most common placement, with the most expensive floors being stained colours, laid in patterns, parquets and even marquetry. Less costly floors were decorated with painted patterns and designs starting in the early 1600's, with the genesis probably being painted oilcloths which are still popular today.

Colonial times brought smooth pine boards, and the 18th century saw painting to simulate stone and simple checked patterns combined with floor cloths in elaborate designs and marbled diamond patterns being very common. These were used primarily in hallways, dining rooms and parlours. Finer cuts of wood and inlaid designs were limited to the formal and nicer rooms

The 19th century was characterized by unfinished pine that evolved to being stained and finished by mid-century. Pine soon became subflooring as parquet got popular, with prefabricated parquet patterns being sold to install on cloth yielding "wood carpet." Herringbone oak parquet patterns abounded with the emergence of custom borders featured in dining rooms, libraries, and drawing rooms.

The 20th century visited lighter woods in the 20's and 30's, with strip oak the standard in the 30's, 40's and 50's. Peaking in 1956, wood flooring was overwhelmed by carpet following the FHA's acceptance for new home construction. Throughout the 60's and 70's hardwood flooring was a specialty surface utilized very selectively until the appearance, durability, health and maintenance benefits returned it to favour again in the 80's and 90's.

Structure of Solid Wood Flooring

Solid wood flooring is milled from a single piece of timber that is kiln or air dried before sawing. Depending on the desired look of the floor, the timber can be cut in three ways: flat-sawn, quarter-sawn, and rift-sawn. The timber is cut to the desired dimensions and either packed unfinished for a site-finished installation or finished at the factory. The moisture content at time of manufacturing is carefully controlled to ensure the product doesn't warp during transport and storage.

There are a number of proprietary features for solid wood floors that are available. Many solid woods come with grooves cut into the back of the wood that run the length of each plank, often called 'absorption strips,' that are intended to reduce cupping. Solid wood floors are mostly manufactured .75 inches (19 mm) thick with a tongue-and-groove for installation.



Pro's and Con's when choosing Solid Wood Flooring

Cost

Con – Depending of the type of wood you choose, solid wood floors can be a couple of hundred rand more per m2 than engineered wood flooring.

Durability

Pro - Both solid and engineered hardwood floors are very durable, but surface wear depends on the type of flooring finish, and not on whether your flooring is solid or engineered. You are however able to refinish a solid wood floor more times than you would an engineered floor.

Stability

Con - Solid hardwood is a 100% natural product that responds to air humidity variations. During warm and humid summers, it is not unusual for wood to expand. During cold and dry winters, wood can contract. If room temperature and humidity levels are not kept in the optimum range, minor gapping or cupping may occur seasonally.

Life Span

Pro - Solid wood flooring will last you 40 to 80 years if not more depending how well you look after it.

Applications of Solid Wood Flooring

Solid Hardwood flooring is sensitive to moisture and it is not recommended to install these floors below ground level, or directly over a concrete slab due to these areas having higher concentrations of moisture. Solid Hardwood flooring are for nail-down installations only, with the exceptions of a few manufacturers that state you can direct glue down 5/16 inch thick solid Hardwood flooring.

