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PERSPECTIVES



By Trisha Clausen
Marketing Communications Manager

VT Industries values the importance of continuing educational efforts and conducts sessions to help architects earn AIA/CES learning units. Our newest CES course, Specifying Postformed Laminate Countertops, provides architects with extensive knowledge of the postforming process, design options, environmental qualities and the advantages of postformed laminate countertops.

AIA's continuing education system, mandatory for membership, emphasizes learning and records participation in professional learning activities. AIA/CES enables architects to keep current, master new knowledge and skills, plan for the future and responsibly meet the role society entrusts to a professional.

Specifying Postformed Laminate Countertops is approximately one hour long and is registered with the University of Oklahoma, earning AIA members one learning unit. Highlights of the presentation include step-by-step documentation of the postformed countertop manufacturing process, important Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED®) and GREENGUARD™ information and valuable countertop cost comparisons. Architects will also receive a thorough understanding of laminate production and design options.

Educational courses are usually conducted during "Lunch and Learn" presentations. During these noon hour programs, our experienced sales reps will visit your office, provide a catered lunch and present the laminate countertop course.

Our experienced VT fine laminate countertop sales representatives are available to present our AIA/CES program to a group at any time. For more information or to sign up for the Specifying Postformed Laminate Countertops course, please contact VT Industries at 800.827.1615 ext. 564 or your VT Industries sales representative. →

VT Industries Introduces Geneva Premium Contoured Edge Profile

"The Geneva modern drop ogee edge from VT Industries is the latest addition to the exciting group of premium profiles that offer the look and feel of granite, natural stone or solid surface at a fraction of the cost," according to Rick Liddell, senior vice president, sales and marketing.

'SUDDENLY, LAMINATE IS A 'SMART CHOICE' BECAUSE IT GIVES CONSUMERS THE HIGH-END LOOKS THEY WANT AT AN AFFORDABLE PRICE.'

The Geneva edge features a subtle, modern drop ogee and is available in any laminate color from major manufacturers, with the exception of high gloss. "With the addition of Geneva, we're looking to sustain the renewed interest and excitement created last year by our Valencia and Barcelona contoured edge profiles among builders, kitchen and bath dealers and consumers who use these products," Liddell acknowledged.

"These incredibly detailed edge profiles raise postformed laminate countertops to a whole new level of sophistication, making them ideal for both residential and commercial projects where the look of stone or granite is desired," Liddell noted.

A 'SMART CHOICE'

"The new edge profiles have really caught the attention of consumers we talk to," reported Gwen Petter, manager, Surface Design, at Wilsonart International.

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Bar area in Formica's Black Faux Marble featuring the Geneva edge.

VT Countertops Are Showcased In IBS Show Village

Comfortably affordable, green design and high-tech luxury are the residential themes being displayed at this year's Show Village during the 2008 International Builders' Show, February 13-16 in Orlando. Again this year, VT Industries will be displaying several countertops in the Show Village, pairing them with Formica's new high pressure decorative laminate collection for the residential market.



"There is certainly a coastal statement throughout the designs of our models this year," said Margie Wright, vice president of design for Palm Harbor Homes Inc., which is co-sponsoring the Show Village with *Professional Builder* magazine. "From the entry-level home to the established buyer model, we really identified the buyer when we were developing these homes."

COMFORTABLY AFFORDABLE

VT will be featured throughout the comfortably affordable home at the Show Village. The home, designed for an infill lot, is a narrow, two-story model built to fit in architecturally with established neighborhoods. The countertops throughout the home will showcase VT's Valencia contoured full-wrap ogee profile matched with the new granite laminate designs from Formica in the gourmet kitchen, master suite and guest bathroom.

The gourmet kitchen pairs two of Formica's new Mineral Series laminates in their Radiance finish: Mineral Jet, inspired by an opulent mix of black and lush dark browns found in real jets, along with warm brown highlights to simulate the luster of pyrite, and Mineral Umber, a creative blend of warm reddish brown combined with

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VT Industries Introduces Geneva Premium Contoured Edge Profile

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"When you pair them with the new laminate designs — like our Wilsonart HD patterns — we can redefine laminate in their minds," Petter said. "Suddenly, laminate is a 'smart choice' because it gives consumers the high-end looks they want at an affordable price."

"The launch of Valencia and Barcelona was so positive that we could not wait to get our third new contoured edge profile into our customers' hands," acknowledged Chris Schlabach, national sales manager, VT Fine Laminate Countertops.

"Our customers saw how fast sales grew with our previous new edges and are excited to have yet another option for the homeowner and homebuilder," Schlabach noted.

'OUR CUSTOMERS SAW HOW FAST SALES GREW WITH OUR PREVIOUS NEW EDGES AND ARE EXCITED TO HAVE YET ANOTHER OPTION FOR THE HOMEOWNER AND HOMEBUILDER.'
— SCHLABACH

'EVERYONE WINS'

Like the Valencia full-wrap ogee profile and Barcelona double-waterfall edge, the Geneva is GREENGUARD™ Certified and available with or without a backsplash. Since they are formed as a single piece of laminate wrapped around the custom core materials to form a seamless surface, postformed countertops are beautiful and easy to clean.



Geneva edge profile specification sheet.

"Combine Geneva and our other edge profile options with our EQcountertops and GREENGUARD Certification and everyone wins, from the fabricator to the homeowner," Schlabach said. "With the trend in both commercial and residential construction focusing on green design and products, our new edges give green buildings a great aesthetic look at a fraction of the cost of other surfacing materials."

"The launch of the Geneva together with our other contoured edge profiles is very exciting," Schlabach added. "It has been several years since we had launched new edges, and we couldn't be more pleased with the results our customers are getting."☘

VT Countertops Are Showcased in IBS Show Village

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rich cocoa and dusky black. With the addition of the Radiance finish, the Mineral Series achieves a "crystalline structure," giving it an added third dimension reminiscent of quartz or mica.

VT's Valencia profile will also be showcased in the master bathroom and guest bathroom within the comfortably affordable model. The master bath countertop design will include Formica's new Parquet Noche in a Honed finish, a rich golden brown blend.

'THE QUALITY AND INNOVATION OF THE PRODUCTS WE SHOWCASE IN THE HOMES REALLY BRINGS PEOPLE OUT TO WITNESS THESE PRODUCTS AT WORK.'

"The Parquet Noche with the Valencia edge is the consolidator for the rich granites we showcase on the floor and the clean line tiles on the backsplash within the master suite," noted Wright.

The guest bath countertops in the model feature a European flair with Santa Cecilia Light in the Etchings finish by Formica, a soft off-white granite pattern with hints of gold and burgundy bursts of color. Santa Cecilia is one of the most popular granites available in the residential market today, and ranked third for design leadership and fourth for usability for patterns surveyed in Formica's residential quantitative research for their 2008 launch.

"The pairing of VT and Formica for this home will make for a nice showcase," added Wright. "We focused on the entry-level but astute buyer for

this model. Functional kitchens, rooms for real life and a space to be happy to come home to were focal points. The countertops we feature work beautifully for the buyer who may not be able to afford granite, but will get to still feel like they are experiencing it."

'INCREDIBLE EXPOSURE'

This is the second year for VT to be involved with the Show Village. The International Builders' Show is sponsored by the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB), a federation of more than 800 state and local associations. About one-third of NAHB's 235,000 members are home builders and/or remodelers.

"Last year, we averaged 50 people per minute for the entire duration of the show. It was incredible exposure," acknowledged Wright. "Modular housing is the housing of the future and has its own validity. The quality and innovation of the products we showcase in the homes really brings people out to witness these products at work."

ABOUT PALM HOMES

Based in Dallas, TX, Palm Harbor Homes Inc. is one of the nation's largest marketers of factory-built homes. The company's vertically integrated operations — manufacturing, retailing, financing and insuring — set it apart from other producers of factory-built homes. Additionally, Palm Harbor's focus is the high-end, customized niche of the market. Four of five homes produced in its 18 manufacturing facilities from Oregon to Florida are customized with owner-selected features.☘

COUNTERTOPICS TRIVIA QUESTION

Congratulations to Susan Cotton of Countertops by Crown for the correct answer to the question: True or False? VT postformed laminate countertops are the only laminate countertops that are GREENGUARD certified. Susan won a VT prize for the correct answer, which was "True."

QUESTION: Where will the 2008 Greenbuild Show be held?

Answer this question based on this issue of CounterTopics for a chance to win a VT prize. View the newsletter on VT's Web site at www.vtindustries.com/trivia and submit the correct answer by filling in your contact information electronically by February 22, 2008. Limit one entry per person, and one winning per year.

VT employees and sales representatives are excluded from this promotion.

Laundry Rooms: Finally Getting Their Due

Once a neglected area designated to remain closed off and out of sight to visiting friends and family — and even homeowners themselves — the laundry room is now quickly becoming a prime location in homes across the country. With the help of expanded product lines and color offerings by appliance manufacturers, today's homeowners are calling for an upgrade to their laundry areas and are incorporating a bolder approach to their countertop design selections.

"The countertop transformation we have witnessed in the functionality and design of the kitchen area over the years is similar to what we are now seeing for laundry rooms," said Renee Hytry Derrington, senior vice president, global design, of Formica Corporation. "Consumers are recognizing the laundry area as a solution center, and an area deserving a prominent location and design status within the home."

ERGONOMIC SPACE

In a recent consumer preference survey by the National Association of Homebuilders (NAHB), 95 percent of respondents expressed a strong desire for a separate laundry room within the home. The survey also found that today's homeowners prefer an expanded ergonomic space that allows for multifunctional tasks such as built-in ironing boards and other fold-in/fold-out capabilities, storage cabinets and closets.

These preferences have led to an increased level of product innovation and versatile capabilities by countertop providers. Laminates and fabrication techniques are being designed to stylistically incorporate the multifunctional capabilities and ergonomic requests by the consumer for use in their laundry areas.

Updated placement and color schemes of the laundry room within the living quarters has also been noted by consumers. Design centers are seeing a move toward locations on the main level, off the master bedroom, bathroom and kitchen areas, and a move toward incorporating the colors and design flow from these main areas into the



Laundry room in Formica's Labrador Granite featuring the Tempo edge.

nearby laundry room, including flooring, wall coverings and countertop selections.

"The laundry area countertop selection was typically a plain white laminate, and we are now seeing more granite and quartz looks as homeowners blend their color designs from the kitchen into the laundry space," advised Hytry Derrington. "Gold and brown tones are really popular right now, as are water-themed blues that oftentimes flow from a kitchen or bathroom design."

BOLD COLORS

Hytry Derrington also noted that appliance manufacturers' latest offerings, such as front load washers and dryers, built-in steamers and

stackable units, have helped to drive this increased consumer focus on laundry rooms.

And the bold color options of many laundry units, such as Kenmore's Pacific Blue, Champagne and Borolo (burgundy) colors have allowed homeowners to feel more comfortable taking design risks and have more fun with their wall, woodwork and countertop selections.

These updated appliance offerings and consumer preferences have spread far and wide into design centers and the residential building market as well. Design centers are putting more creative thought into their color schemes and design options, and residential builders are designing new plans for home layouts and prototypes that will work with this "new consumer." ↔

Waste Not, Want Not... Countertop Leftovers Inspire Coffee Table



Coffee table in Deepstar Agate featuring the Nova edge.

Mike Massey, VT PRO Team member and co-owner of Kitchen Encounters in Belton, TX, had an idea when he noticed a piece of leftover material from a recent kitchen island countertop job.

"I thought the countertop would make for a neat and easy-to-make coffee table," recalled Massey. "I sketched the plan out on paper, gathered the materials that I would need and went to work."

In about five hours of labor time, Massey built, shaped and stained the pieces for the coffee table, utilizing extra VT wood pallets for the legs and stopping by a few jobsites to gather scrap 2' x 4's to use for the coffee table skirts. The countertop, featuring a Nova edge and DeepStar Agate Wilsonart laminate, finished the piece.

"The aged bronze hues of the DeepStar Agate made for a nice-looking table that can blend with a lot of color designs," noted Massey. "So much so, in fact, my business partner is now using the coffee table in her home."

Kitchen Encounters, co-owned by Sirinat Rose and Mike Massey, performs residential and commercial kitchen cabinetry and countertop construction using the VT product line throughout the central Texas area. ↔

VT Booth Draws Attention at Greenbuild Expo

The 2007 Greenbuild International Conference and Expo held Nov. 6-8 at the McCormick Place Convention Center in Chicago, Ill., was a huge success, kicked off by an address by former President Bill Clinton.

'JUDGING THE TRAFFIC WE HAD IN OUR BOOTH, I THINK EVERY ARCHITECT, SPECIFIER AND DESIGNER STOPPED BY TO CHECK OUT THE LATEST GREEN PRODUCTS FROM VT INDUSTRIES.'
— SCHLABACH

The Greenbuild Expo, established by the U.S. Green Build Council, focuses on informing the building industry about products that reduce energy and environmental impacts associated with new construction. VT Industries was in attendance to share its line of low-emitting, recycled countertops and doors with more than 20,000 attendees.

"The 2007 Greenbuild Show was fantastic, solidifying the fact that sustainable building is here to stay and VT is committed to providing countertop products that address this need," stated Chris Schlabach, VT Fine Laminate Countertops National Sales Manager. Sales

representatives educated show attendees about EQcountertops, GREENGUARD™ certification and LEED® assistance availability.

"Judging the traffic we had in our booth, I think every architect, specifier and designer stopped by to check out the latest green products from VT Industries!" Schlabach observed.



VT Industries looks forward to next year's show, as attendance is projected to reach more than 30,000 attendees. The 2008 Greenbuild Show is scheduled to take place Nov. 19-21, at the Boston Convention Center, in Boston, Mass. ↔

FABRICATOR'S FORUM

Scribing Leads to a Flawless Fit

Scribing the backsplash is the key to installing postformed high pressure decorative laminate (HPDL) countertops with a professional fit. Countertops and cabinets seldom fit squarely against walls, which is why postformed countertops with backsplashes come standard with a 5/8-inch scribing strip that can be trimmed to eliminate gaps or variations in the wall. Failure to fit the countertop to these contours can result in spaces behind the backsplash that detract from the project's appearance.

Depending on the skill level of the fabricator, scribing can take from less than 15 minutes for a single section of countertop to a half-day for more difficult U-shaped designs. The preferred method for scribing the postformed countertop includes the following steps:

- **Step 1.** Place masking tape along the "lip" of the scribing strip, then position the countertop so it aligns parallel to the front face of the base cabinets.
- **Step 2.** Set the points of a scribing compass at the widest gap between the backsplash and wall and draw a scribe line across the tape along the backsplash.
- **Step 3.** Use a portable disk sander or belt sander to remove material down to the scribe line. High-speed disk sanders, or grinders, are often preferred by experienced fabricators.
- **Step 4.** Place the countertop on the cabinets to check the fit, making sure it is level and stable and that drawers open freely. It's not uncommon to scribe some countertops more than once to achieve a perfect fit.



STEP 1 Observe backsplash.



STEP 2 Draw scribe line.



STEP 3 Remove excess material.



STEP 4 Achieve a perfect fit.

Position the countertop so the lip on its front edge extends over the cabinets, allowing enough clearance for drawers and built-in dishwashers to open and close freely. On some modular cabinetry, buildup may be required to allow for the necessary clearances of the drawers and appliances. The buildup should be applied to the bottom of the countertops, making sure that some of the blocks are positioned over the point where the cabinets come together.

Finish the installation by assembling mitered sections where necessary and attaching the postformed HPDL countertop to the cabinets with wood screws. Use high-quality woodworking glues in the miter, or a silicon colored sealant adhesive. Coat the edges of both miters with 100 percent



A successful miter looks flawless.

silicone sealant before positioning them together with miter bolts. Align the top of the miters by tapping on a wood block placed over the high side and tighten the bolts when the miters are flush.

Seam clamps with electric vacuum pumps that provide a consistent grip can replace the use of several manual clamps required to level and pull countertops into place. The tool can make installation of mitered countertop sections faster and easier, enabling one person to install a countertop at the jobsite.

For more installation tips, see *A Professional Fit* (BJPF 0507). An online version of the brochure is available at <http://www.vtindustries.com/countertops/WhitePaper.shtml>. ↔



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