

EQcountertops Make Their Debut At 2006 Greenbuild Show in Denver

Reaction to EQcountertops at the 2006 Greenbuild Show in Denver was summed up in three words by VT Western Regional Sales Manager Jay Pack: "It was awesome!"

"The interest was overwhelming," according to Pack. "This was the first time that we had exhibited our EQcountertops at the show and most of the time I couldn't even talk inside our booth because it was full of people. We probably had upward of 200 leads that were generated during the three-day exhibition."



VT's booth at the 2006 Greenbuild show.

Environmentally friendly EQcountertops are made from SkyBlend™ brand particleboard certified by Scientific Certification Systems (SCS) as using 100 percent consumer recycled wood fiber with no added urea formaldehyde in the manufacturing process. EQcountertops can assist in achieving Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification, which is a criteria for products being exhibited at the Greenbuild Show.

SHOW AND TELL

The booth featured a six-foot EQcountertop with a Valencia edge profile, plus point of purchase displays and the Wilsonart HD (High Definition) posters. "The hook was the aesthetics of the countertop, which had the appearance of granite," Pack reported. "Many of these people didn't know what postformed laminate is and were extremely interested in how it looks and feels and in the variety of designs. They would come over and touch its surface, then we would explain how it can help them earn LEED points and they were very interested."

EQcountertops can help earn LEED points in two categories:

- **Materials and Resources**, which encourages the use of products that incorporate the recycled content material, such as SkyBlend particleboard cores. Many EQcountertop shipments will also qualify for credit resulting from being manufactured regionally.
- **Indoor Environmental Quality**, which is intended to reduce the quantity of air contaminants that are odorous or potentially irritating to the comfort and health of fabricators, installers and occupants. SkyBlend core material uses no urea formaldehyde resins during manufacturing, plus VT Industries uses a water-based adhesive that eliminates volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and other hazardous air pollutants. In addition, Formica and Wilsonart laminate is GREENGUARD-certified, which means significantly diminished harmful emissions.

SUSTAINABLE INTEREST

Greenbuild welcomed 13,500 attendees including architects, engineers, facilities managers, developers, contractors, builders and interior designers specializing in both commercial and residential projects. "It was probably 70 percent commercial and 30 percent residential," Pack noted.

'THE INTEREST WAS OVERWHELMING.'
— PACK

The VT booth included an exhibit of architectural wood doors made from Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified stave lumber core and rapidly renewable agrifiber materials, which can also help earn LEED points. "VT doors are GREENGUARD- and FSC-certified, so EQcountertops benefited from this association at the show," Pack added. "Everybody in the industry is moving toward recycled content and indoor environmental quality, and these products demonstrate the level of leadership VT Industries has achieved in the green movement."

A similar booth arrangement featuring a selection of VT's environmentally friendly doors and countertops is planned for the 2007 Greenbuild Show at the LA Convention Center, November 7-9.

ABOUT GREENBUILD

Now in its sixth year, Greenbuild is presented annually by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC), a nonprofit coalition of more than 7,200 private companies, nonprofits, educational institutions and government agencies working to transform the building industry. ➔

FABRICATOR'S FORUM

Scribing Made Easy

A new countertop seldom fits squarely against walls and corners. Bends and bows can turn any surface installation into a time-consuming battle for perfection. That's why Bill Friegang of Custom Design Cabinets in San Jose, California, invented the QuickScribe™.



Attach the QuickScribe plate.

screws from underneath. Place the accessory plate onto the countertop with the wheel touching the wall. The wheel will keep a constant distance of one inch from the wall to where the cut is made. The non-marking and non-sticking wheel is then free to roll along the wall.

According to Friegang, "The wheel follows the wall, guiding the router while the router does the cutting." With the wheel being centered on the router bit, the router can be rotated during use without loss of accuracy.

"It saves quite a bit of time from the old method," Friegang noted. "This eliminates the need for masking tape, and scribing tools and belt sanders. It saves you the work of picking up the countertop and wrestling with the thing."

When installing a large countertop into a small room, the tool saves you the worry of having to remove the countertop off the cabinets to do your trimming. It saves the wall from possible scuffs and you from having to lift it out to whittle it down. And with a precise fit, there is no need to caulk.

USING A TEMPLATE

For more complex, multi-sided or curved wall countertop placement, Friegang invented a router accessory called the ScribeMate™, which uses a wheel to follow templates made with the QuickScribe. Both accessories retail for around \$80 each and can be purchased at a number of retailers and online at www.thescribingtool.com, where you may also view videos of the tools. Both the QuickScribe and the ScribeMate are patented products. ➔

COUNTERTOPICS

A MARKETING/COMMUNICATIONS PUBLICATION



New Formica Riverwash Finish Designs Make Classic Materials 'Look More Modern'

Two new laminate design series from Formica Corporation — Granite and Quarstone — are now available with the Riverwash finish, according to Gerri Chmiel, Senior Design Manager, North America. Inspired by the Italian kitchen shows in Milan, each new collection includes three patterns, raising the total number of Riverwash designs to 12.

"Granite and quartz surfacing has had a high polish finish for a very long time," Chmiel reported. "With Riverwash, we're mimicking finishes reminiscent of the brushed or flamed stone technique that creates a low-gloss texture. We're taking a classic material and making it look more modern."

The Granite collection is an ideal complement to the new Valencia contoured full-wrap ogee profile and the Barcelona double-waterfall edge, while the Quarstone designs are best suited to contemporary profiles like VT's Futura or Tempo edges, Chmiel noted.

THE GRANITE SERIES

"Granite, still the preferred choice of consumers, comes alive with the addition of the Riverwash Finish," Chmiel said. "Our new granite designs with their small crystalline structure are perfectly matched to the small scale Riverwash finish, reminiscent of the flamed stone technique used on low gloss flooring. With large and sweeping veining, this granite shows the mystique of random variation found in natural granite."

The Granite collection is available in nature-inspired stone colorations including American Rose, Brazilian Brown and Venetian Gold designs. Each design is styled to coordinate with popular wood stains used for kitchen and bath cabinets.



Kitchen countertop with a Futura edge, featuring Formica's American Rose Granite Laminates.

"The comfortable rose tones balanced with cool grays in American Rose harmonize beautifully with popular cherry-stained woodwork," Chmiel shared. "The rich gold, warm brown and creamy white of Venetian Gold is contemporary with oak and maple cabinetry, while Brazilian Brown is a complementary accent to mocha-stained woodwork."

THE QUARSTONE SERIES

The Quarstone Series, consisting of Crème, Walnut and Smoke designs, features colors that are subtly neutral, yet full of the depth and character of natural quartz. "Quartz surfacing trends highlight

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Patented tool streamlines the scribing process. Page 4

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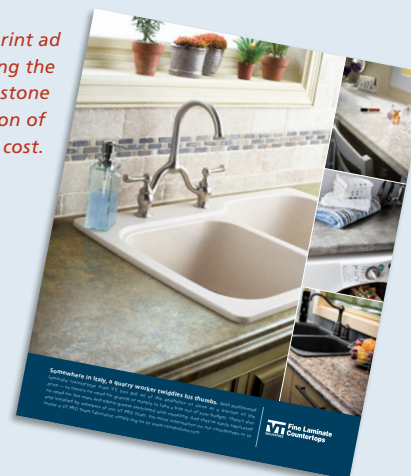


By Amanda Paulsen
Communications Coordinator

VT Industries' busy lineup of trade shows got underway in February with the International Builders Show in Orlando, where several of our fine laminate countertops were on display in the popular Show Village. An article describing our participation in that event appears in this issue.

On May 3-5, VT will be an exhibitor at the AIA National Convention and Design Exposition in San Antonio, Texas. This year's show theme, "Growing Beyond Green," is well-suited to our EQcountertops, which can help achieve Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) program credits. You'll find us in booth No. 19059.

New VT print ad featuring the look of stone at a fraction of the cost.



VT will be an exhibitor at the Kitchen and Bath Industry Show and Conference May 7-10 in Las Vegas. You'll find us in booth No. S12833, so stop in and say hello.

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VT Countertops Are Showcased at International Builders Show Village

Whether you're building homes for "Echo Boomers" or a "Gen X Family" many opportunities exist for using postformed laminate countertops with the natural look of concrete or granite. This point was demonstrated at the 2007 International Builders Show in Orlando, where several countertops in the Show Village paired new postformed edge profiles from VT Industries with the latest laminate designs from Formica.

"It was a really good marriage for both of those companies to showcase this product," reported Margie Wright, vice president of design for Palm Harbor Homes, Inc., which co-sponsored the Show Village with *Professional Builder* magazine. "The new edge profiles look very realistic. I think it's a success story, I really do. And the new collection from Formica is very leading edge."

ECHO BOOMER

This year's Show Village featured a tri-plex townhouse with units running in the \$130,000 to \$175,000 price range, and designed with the Echo Boomer in mind. "VT was extremely exposed in the townhouse program," Wright confirmed. "In the townhouse project, there were three units,



Gen X kitchen with the Barcelona edge, featuring Formica's Jamocha Granite laminate.

each with a kitchen, two bathrooms and a powder room where countertops were required. This provided a great opportunity to create several designs and disciplinary approaches with VT throughout the townhouse."

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VT Fine Laminate
INDUSTRIES Countertops

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In addition, we will be promoting our EQcountertops at the Greenbuild Show in Chicago, Illinois, November 6-8. On Page 4 of this issue, Jay Pack describes our participation in last year's Greenbuild Show held in Denver, Colorado.

The new year also brings a new series of countertop print advertisements, which will target both residential and commercial audiences.

RESIDENTIAL FOCUS

Full-page print advertisements featuring residential countertops will appear throughout the year in *Kitchen & Bath Design News*, *Surface Fabrication*, *Builder* and *Professional Builder* magazines.

These advertisements feature a wide selection of laminate designs and edge profiles, including our new *Valencia* contoured full-wrap ogee profile and the *Barcelona* double-waterfall edge.

Several of the advertisements focus on how postformed laminate countertops from VT provide all the aesthetics of stone at a fraction of the price. Durability, low maintenance and the availability of deep-sheen, light-reflecting premium laminates are other themes repeated throughout the series.

New residential countertop ads featuring a wide selection of laminate designs and edge profiles.



COMMERCIAL FOCUS

New advertisements targeting the commercial market will be featured in *Architectural Record*, *Architect* and *Architectural Products* magazines throughout 2007.

One new advertisement portraying different classroom environments focuses on the advantages of VT commercial grade countertops in educational environments. According to the advertisement, "They're made for high wear and are available with chemical-resistant laminates."

Another advertisement depicting VT commercial grade countertops in a medical setting emphasizes: "We use high pressure decorative laminates that resist stray microbes, and thanks to our post-formed process, they don't have any seams to collect dirt and grime."

A third approach targets multi-family and assisted living projects with a message citing the durability, aesthetics and low maintenance benefits of VT commercial grade countertops.

In all of the new advertisements, readers are directed to the VT Industries Web site for more information. ➔



New commercial countertop ads featuring a wide selection of uses and benefits.

New Formica Riverwash Finish Designs Make Classic Materials 'Look More Modern' continued from page 1

mono-colored, small-scale crystal structures to meet the needs of contemporary interior design," Chmiel explained. "Using texturizing techniques such as sandblasting and brushing creates visual and tactile interest while reflecting the urban cool of industrial materials."

The Crème Quarstone design, featuring warm cream colors with highlights of gold, is a "chameleon" for any cabinet color, Chmiel suggested. "The dark brown of Walnut Quarstone would look better with some lighter cabinet colors, while Smoke Quarstone is a darker gray tone that would go with more classic cabinet colors such as Cherry, which often has details that are darker," she shared.

DESIGNER INSIGHTS

The warm tones found in both the Granite and Quarstone collections work well with the trend Chmiel is seeing toward the use of bronze in kitchen hardware accessories and faucets. "The bronze tones would go great with the Brazilian Brown or Venetian Gold granite patterns, as well as the Crème and Walnut Quarstone designs," Chmiel observed. "The American Rose Granite and Smoke Quarstone are cooler colors that will probably look better with nickel."

Chmiel also envisioned the new designs in home laundry rooms, which are experiencing a renaissance. "We've heard from some of our bigger builders that people are using real granite and stone in the laundry room, which is

wonderful for effect, but may not be practical," Chmiel said. "Laminates are the way that you can get a beautiful visual effect in the laundry, along with durability. And laminate does not have to be sealed like granite."

The senior design manager is also seeing a strong interest from interior designers for Quarstone in a matte finish to be used for both horizontal and vertical applications. "Laminate is wonderful for wall coverings or backsplashes, but you have to apply it to board rather than directly to drywall," Chmiel said. "Laminate is a paper product and if there's high humidity, or dry conditions, there could be slight movement in the material. A board substrate will move at the same rate that the laminate does, whereas drywall is an inert material and does not move."



VT Countertops Are Showcased at International Builders Show Village continued from page 1

The majority of countertops featured VT's new *Valencia* contoured full-wrap ogee profile and the *Barcelona* double-waterfall edge matched with concrete and granite laminate designs from Formica. "The laminate companies have created surfaces that represent natural materials, such as granites, marbles and stones," Wright said. "From the countertop manufacturer's standpoint, they are up against solid surface and natural stone, so they need to design and implement new edging to give it a new, sophisticated look."

The *Valencia* profile with a three inch backsplash was chosen for a second townhouse unit designed in earth tone colors, including Formica's Madras Indian Slate laminate in the kitchen and powder room. "In the master suite bathroom we used the Iron Rust design with Riverwash Finish, which is new from Formica for 2006," Wright shared. The Atomic Turf design with *Nova* edge and no backsplash was selected again for the hall bath.

GOING COASTAL

A third townhouse, designed with softer lines typically found in the southeast or areas along the coast, featured Jamocha Granite laminate and the *Barcelona* edge with three inch backsplash in the kitchen and powder room. "We used Sand Crystall, which is very 'chameleonesque,' with a matte finish in the master bathroom," Wright said. "We selected a palette of cool colors and kept it soft and elegant, but still used Sand Crystall because it had a textured feel to it. In the hall bath, we used Himalayan Slate with a honed finish and *Barcelona* edge."

Wright described the Gen X Family home, which is in the \$400,000-plus range, as a two-story, coastal home with front and rear porches and Bahama shutters. "I saved one of the laminates for this exposure where we have a soft, tropical feel," Wright acknowledged. "We used the *Barcelona* edge with the Realcrete design and Riverwash Finish in the laundry room and hall bath. Realcrete has a chameleon, beach-like feel to it."

AMAZING EXPOSURE

This was the first year for VT to be involved with the Show Village. The International Builders' Show is sponsored by the National Association of Home

COMMERCIAL USES

Both collections also hold potential for a variety of commercial applications, Chmiel acknowledged.

"The Quarstone series actually scored high in the commercial markets as well as residential when we surveyed the patterns," Chmiel shared. "Since it is a more subtle pattern, it makes a good worktop surface for the Commercial Office category and scored high for Retail and the Tabletop Market — companies that typically make tabletops for the restaurant and commercial office segments."

"The Granite Series, which we knew would have much more appeal in the residential market, surprised us by being popular in Healthcare," Chmiel added. "Upon talking with some of our Healthcare customers, the Granite series fits into their goal of making Healthcare more residential in feel and creating a homey environment for patients." ➔



Gen X kitchen desk with the Barcelona edge and featuring Formica's Jamocha Granite laminate.

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 44 people a minute in each home for three days," Wright added. "It was amazing exposure. Even though the state of the economy in housing is a little scary right now, I think people know it's a short term thing and they're going to stay innovative."

ABOUT PALM HOMES

Based in Dallas, Texas, 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. ➔

IN THE NEWS

VT Industries Earns Innovation Award From Home Builder Executive Magazine

VT Industries has been recognized as an Innovation Award winner in the Laminate Surfaces category by *Home Builder Executive* magazine. VT shared the recognition with Wilsonart International and Formica Corporation in the August 21, 2006 issue of the magazine.

ABOUT THE MAGAZINE

Home Builder Executive is the only bi-weekly publication in the residential home building industry. Each issue incorporates timely news articles, in-depth executive profile interviews and special category features.



2006 Innovation Awards issue

The magazine's readers include purchasing and marketing managers, directors, vice presidents and presidents at the leading U.S. home builders, including D.R. Horton, Pulte Homes, Lennar, Centex, KB Home, Beazer Homes, Hovnanian, Ryland, M.D.C. Holdings, NVR, Standard Pacific, Technical Olympic, Meritage Homes, Toll Brothers and Shea Homes. ➔

"The awards don't recognize individual products or brands; rather a first, second or third place award is given to a manufacturer based on overall presentation," according to Doug Vander Schauw of *Home Builder Executive*.

"You may have seen similar features referenced as Editors' Choice awards," Vander Schauw noted. "In selecting the winners of *Home Builder Executive's* Annual Innovation Awards, the magazine's research staff reviewed company Web sites, press releases and promotional materials, along with articles and interviews published over the past year."

COUNTERTOPICS TRIVIA QUESTION

Congratulations to Ed Seidle, Seidle Enterprises in Paris, Texas, for the correct answer to the question: "What are the names of the new contoured edge profiles from VT Industries?" Ed won a jacket for coming up with the correct answer, which was the *Valencia* and *Barcelona*.

QUESTION: What product did VT Industries feature at the Greenbuild Show in Denver?

Answer this question based on this issue of *CounterTopics* for a chance to win a VT prize. Place your answer on an index card with your complete contact information, or the back of your business card, and mail to the address listed. Entries must be postmarked by April 2, 2007. Limit one entry per person, and one winning per year.

CounterTopics Trivia
Attn: Amanda Paulsen
VT Industries, Inc.
P.O. Box 490
Holstein, IA 51025

VT employees and sales representatives are excluded from this promotion.



Echo Boomer Townhome bathroom with the Barcelona edge, featuring Formica's Rosso Granite laminate.

In one townhouse unit designed with the look and feel of a Chicago or New York loft, Wright chose Formica's Labrador Granite laminate and a *Valencia* edge without a backsplash for the kitchen and nearby powder room. "In the master bathroom we used the Rosso Granite with a *Barcelona* edge," Wright noted. "In the hall bath we used a retro '50s design called Atomic Turf with a *Nova* edge without backsplash."