



DESIGNER'S WALK

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There's no reason your floors
can't be a museum piece.
Literally. Again, it's a matter
of planning details.

This 40-year-old, 2-story, 4-bedroom, custom farm-ranch style home located in Woodbury, NY, is a perfect example. The client and her eight-year-old son inhabit this home, and with the exception of back hall and kitchen, she wanted a new look for the first floor. The herringbone floor was inspired by one I'd seen at the Getty Museum in California, pretty much down to the type of wood and the layout.

From the start, the challenge was the floor. The concrete slab construction had been topped with plywood and finished in nine-inch vinyl squares. My initial thought was to take off the half-inch plywood and install three-quarter inch plywood before installing a new floor, but the nine-inch tile indicated possible asbestos. (Non-asbestos is typically 12-inch.) Our asbestos abatement expert, Mitch Kurzban & Sons, confirmed it.

We had two choices. Remove the asbestos or leave it undisturbed and go over it, which we did. Another three quarters of an inch of plywood would make the floor too high, so we left it all in place but reinforced it with nails to limit squeaking. The floor was 'flushed' with a special adhesive compound from Bostick.

The ultimate beauty, of course, lies in the look of the floor, this one a rift-cut French white oak engineered wood floor by Listone Giordano. Structurally, its foundation is seven layers of marine-ply backing, 3/8-inch thick. The "beauty" surface is a quarter inch of French white oak. This product was selected because there are no knots or holes in this perfectly grained wood; it's extremely stable over concrete due to a special backing, and the surface is thick enough for up to eight refinishings.

Though we first fell in love with the creamy yellow tone of the wood, its beauty was enhanced by a painstaking installation. Our installer used a small-notch trowel to sparingly apply adhesive so none could ooze through the tongue and groove fittings. Each piece was individually cut with a bandsaw and fit.

Why herringbone? I wanted something different starting with the entry hall. If the lines went straight, the hall would appear too long. Setting it at 90 degrees means we'd run into the same problem once the hall made its turn. We opted first for a diagonal. However, the ever-adventurous owner agreed on the bold herringbone I'd seen at the museum. Instead of a three-day installation, it took nearly 10, but it was worth it.

The walls needed to be an elegant, active backdrop, not busy, though, and not a stripe that might fade away. Throughout the first floor you can see the effects of faux artist Nina Helms who used more than 20 colors to achieve this look built around the wood tones. The wood wall units were the "wrong" color, until of course she finished them with color and glaze for a "stria" look. The colors all work to tie the look together. 🌈



Real herringbone is a painstaking process but worth the outcome, above.

A. T. Mulligan cuts and fits each piece of the Listone Giordano French white oak using adhesive, not nails, to install the wood floor over the existing subfloor.

With the floor finished, details such as the rounded wood shutters plus color applied to the walls and ceiling pull together a cohesive museum-quality look.

A hand-made rug in a Spanish weave called "Cuencia" derived from 14th century Portuguese needlepoints completes the look of a home that feels like a world-class museum but which is actually fit for an eight-year-old boy and his mom.

