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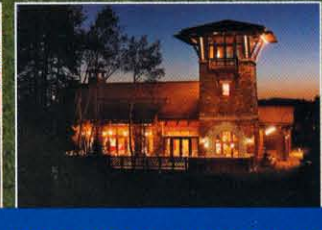
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TOP DESIGN TRENDS ECO-LUXURY HOMES



WOOD FLOORS GO EXOTIC
BARBADOS | PALM SPRINGS | PARK CITY
TENNIS COMMUNITIES | MARINA HOMES | HOME SPAS



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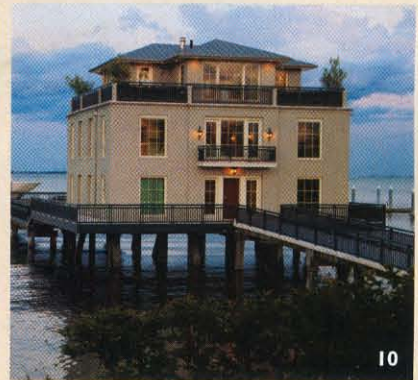
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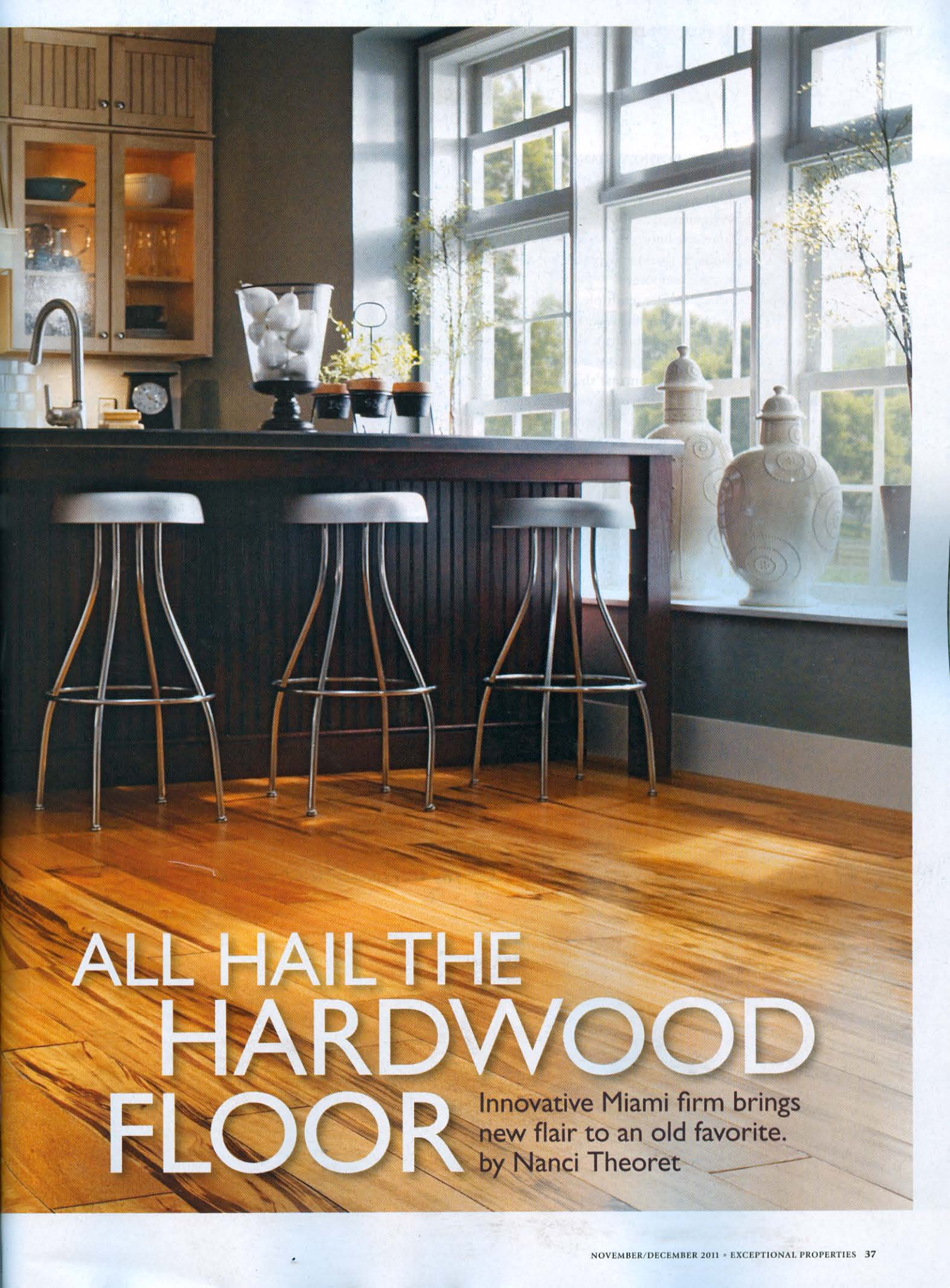
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Recent residential sales in notable markets.

BY DESIGN



BR-111 can create flooring from more than 50 different varieties of hardwood.



ALL HAIL THE HARDWOOD FLOOR

Innovative Miami firm brings
new flair to an old favorite.
by Nanci Theoret

ONCE THE RODNEY DANGERFIELD of the flooring industry—it got no respect because it seemed a little too old-fashioned—hardwood has re-emerged as the ultimate interior design statement, a luxury finish that has evolved for the modern world, adaptable to any type of décor. Yes, even contemporary.

Wood flooring fulfills multiple design scenarios: as a light- or medium-toned neutral that fades into the background to let a home's decor and artwork shine or assuming the starring role with dramatic grain or light-and-dark contrast that add texture and dynamic movement. Hardwood can add warmth or—surprise!—coolness. It's also extremely durable. Wire brushing, oil finishes, wider planks, and whitewashed grays are among the latest flooring possibilities from Miami-based BR-111 Exotic Hardwood Flooring



This page: South American forests, harvested sustainably, provide most of the wood for BR-111's flooring.

(www.br111.com), one of the country's leading wood flooring companies, which has expanded its services to include walls, too.

FOUNDED BY Ricardo Moraes in Washington, D.C., 21 years ago, BR-111 is represented by 2,000 North American retailers and offered directly to interior designers and architects. The BR-111 brand has emerged as one of the top hardwood products, offering a collection of 150 designer products in more than 50 species of woods, many of them exotic, and all certified by the Forest Stewardship Council, an agency that ensures each tree is harvested in an environmentally friendly manner. Its A-to-Z offering, from Afzelia to Zinfandel tigerwood, also has a sophisticated clientele. BR-111 floors appear in Louis Vuitton boutiques, Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts, Miami's Delano Hotel and in the Beverly Hills home of actress

Jennifer Aniston, who chose a dark hand-scraped hardwood as her flooring.

"We have a niche in the wood flooring market," says Moraes. "We were pioneers in exotic woods that appeal to the luxury market beyond the usual cherries and maples."

Eighty percent of the company's wood is harvested in South America, and Brazil in particular. It also offers a handful of European and Far East species and the ultimate exotic and expensive wood—wenge, from Africa. Even a wood as ordinary as red oak, once the staple of the hardwood industry, can demonstrate multiple personalities. Depending on finish and a slew of modern technologies, this humble wood can add a rustic or contemporary look to a room.

Most popular right now, Moraes says, are exotic Santos mahogany, tigerwood, chestnut and amendoim, a Brazilian oak. The foursome takes on a natu-



BR-111 helped launch the market in wide-plank flooring



More than 2,000 retailers now feature BR-111 flooring.

ral color range from deep rich red to yellowish and pecan undertones. “These woods are naturally beautiful and don’t require a stain,” he says.

THE COMPANY’S newest offering, the Reserve Collection, reflects many of today’s trends and a contemporary edge. The five engineered oaks have brushed textures and carry a 50-year warranty. The oxidized oil finish and white washing of the Kingsbridge Oak give it a modern look; another selection has a distinct French flavor with rustic styling.

“These woods don’t look perfect and are less glossy, which is what people want these days,” says Moraes. “It has an old-world, worn type of look that works great in

a modern home or one that’s traditionally decorated.”

The collection also delivers—or maybe even created—the fashionable wider plank. It offers planks from 8 to 12 inches wide. “Dark woods and grays are also popular,” says Moraes. “The gray, which is treated and steamed, is kind of like the driftwood look that we’re seeing in furniture but it doesn’t look as beat up.”

The wood flooring industry’s policies of eco-friendly harvesting has helped drive hardwood’s renewed popularity. BR-111’s practice of select harvest ensures sustainability—a factor that may be contributing to the demise of bamboo, once the gold standard because of its quick regrowth (either that or just the fickle nature of home design). The company has close ties to Brazil; Moraes



is a native and derived his company's name from a fictitious road. "In Brazil, they give interesting highways a BR designation. BR-111 doesn't exist."

The company is also committed to the socio-economic benefits of every laborer involved in the process, from harvest to production, and has partnered with agencies dedicated to promoting only certified forest products from Brazil, among the world's top 10 wood exporters.

"We harvest old trees that are dying and going to fall


and take a bunch of trees with them," says Moraes. "By taking these trees, the surrounding area grows faster."

Contrary to popular belief, wood can be cost-effective; its lifespan far outdistances carpeting because of its hardness and durability. Yes, it's going to take a bit of a beating from pets' claws and daily life but that red wine stain won't likely leave a permanent mark and a little wear and tear generally adds to the floor's character.

"In the worst-case scenario you might have to have a wood floor sanded and refinished in 10 to 15 years," says Moraes. "Just look at the places in Europe where the wood flooring is 400 to 500 years old, and it still looks good."

BR-111 continues to develop new textures, finishes and treatments. "Any color or texture you could possibly think of, it's more than likely we've thought of it," says Moraes. "The interior designers we work with are setting the trends, rather than following them. They have discerning clients who want that certain edge."

The company's flooring is also showing up in the unlikeliest of places: in the bathroom and on the wall. Far from that 1970s look of blocky wood paneling, the planked wall accents "look great," he says. "They add warmth and texture."

"Wood flooring is one of those things you use forever. It's a great product all around," says Moraes. 



This page: Wood flooring can add a sense of space to a bedroom or take hard knocks in the bathroom.