

NOT ONLY PARQUET

“It is important to focus the attention on materials, making the design closely connected to their own nature...”.

F.L. Wright Introduzione

Parquet is an everlasting, comfortable, versatile, beautiful and practical element which is always present in furniture, thanks to its long-standing tradition. It can certainly be considered as “the first piece of furniture” both of home and work spaces, being available in a large range of types, from the simplest lamparquet to the most technological laminated floorings. Testò

The word parquet contains the etymological root which witnesses the possible origin and place where wooden flooring was invented.

Its name comes from the rather common word “park”, which was a fence used for flocks, composed by small closed partitions. These partitions will gradually develop in the execution of magnificent floorings – such as those of Versailles castle halls – which became so famous to be considered real works of art, and even a type of parquet composition laying.

The literature which refers to this subject reports the existence of some paintings relevant to the deeds of King Salomon, portraying wooden floorings, probably dating three thousand years ago.

It is sure that parquet is not only a form of floor covering, possessing beauty and comfort added values, and becoming the protagonist in any furniture layout, such as in industries, offices, shops and show rooms, or homes.

Wooden flooring, among all types, can be proposed everywhere, being available in a wide range of sizes¹ and wood species², in order to satisfy the needs of any customer – even the most doubtful one – thanks to its colours and technological features³.

These users, who are sceptical about the real product durability, could remove all their perplexities regarding its care (untruly supposed to be rather difficult) by adopting, as a valid alternative, a synthetic product: the laminated flooring⁴.

This kind of product, even appearing typically “cold” as all synthetic resins⁵ do, effectively succeeds in simulating – at the very first visual impact – the real wooden parquet. The designer should take into consideration the introduction of a synthetic material (even if “d’auteur”) within the whole furniture plan, checking its effect also from the semiotic⁶ point of view.

The “real wooden flooring” undoubtedly owns an inner value bringing an extra message to the end user.

The other product features, such as the size¹ and the wood species², are certainly less important: the choice of the material is probably the first aspect to be defined during the metadesign step⁷, critically selecting the wide range of available choices and materials.

Taking into consideration the remarkable impact of parquet in all spaces, we should focus our attention on the “message” it brings, which is implicitly conveyed to the relevant users, such as the customers of a prestigious restaurant, a clothes shop, a chemist’s shop or a simpler herbalist’s shop.

The parquet protection treatment could be carried out with different systems, divided into three main groups: with the most traditional wax treatment; with the most practical and efficient plasticizing paints (whose main components are polyurethane resins⁵) and with the environmentally compatible oil-wax impregnating products.

The kind of protection⁸ used on the product could enhance the natural features of wood, mainly with natural wax and oil systems to satisfy the biobuilding followers.

The minimalist designers greatly appreciate the parquet since, preferring essential materials, they reduce or substitute, for example, omnipresent ceramic tiles, cleverly and confidently using the contrast between metal and wood.

Nowadays, wooden engineered (stratified) floorings are making an attempt to solid wood ones, which are still keeping their quality status, thanks to their noble raw material. The environmentalists are fond of the stratified floorings because of the small amount of valuable wood used in the semifinished product.

Moreover, the wooden stratified floorings have some unique features, determining considerable technological advantages, such as a higher dimensional stability and consequently the possibility of a floating system laying¹¹.

These qualities will be strategically important when the premises of a commercial activity are furnished, where quick manufacture together with low costs are often looked for and greatly appreciated.

Moreover, this category allowed the development of dimensional sizes which once could not even be thought of (the so called large board sizes) where the stratification with orthogonal alternate fibres allows the overlaying just of the noble part (with thickness of 4/5 millimetres) without interruptions on the whole length of the stave¹² for 200/220 millimetres of width with lengths up to 2.200/2.800.

It is not possible to carry out parquets with such dimensions with morphologically solid staves. Wood, in fact, being a "live" material¹³, makes their dimensions unstable due to the unavoidable weather variations (together with the consequent hygrothermic parameters) occurring during the succession of the seasons. It is interesting to underline the issue regarding the definition of quality classification of the material that, in the relevant UNI EN technical standard (Classification based on hardwood flooring defects for floor coverings, codified pr UNI EN 40.05.258.0, year 1997), determines the three quality classifications, specifying the material morphological¹⁴ features, without taking into consideration their organoleptic¹⁵ aspects, which are connected to the undefinable veining colour, homogeneity or figure.

Wood, thanks to its peculiarity of being a natural material, subject to the influence of various environmental factors since its station in the forest, always presents an appreciated "dyschromaticity" in the single semifinished elements that, although coming from the same trunk, will often have a temporary colour which will be lately stabilized by the light.

These processes are also consequent to colour alteration phenomena connected with the peculiar photosensitivity¹⁷ of some tropical species, such as

many species of hardwood in temperate zones, for example Walnut and Oak, whose brown colour spontaneously becomes stronger.

The different flooring groups can be commercially distinguished in two separated categories: real wood (solid or stratified) floorings, the widest one, and laminated synthetic floorings⁴, which is the smaller category.

The first ones are present in different sizes: laminated and industrial laminated parquet, lamparquet, strip and board, in addition to the engineered or stratified type (with two or three layers) mainly characterized by different thicknesses, which may vary from 8 up to 22 millimetres.

Another issues to be taken into consideration when designing a parquet are the various geometric ways of laying, which are summed up in the technical standard pr UNI EN 40.05.259.0 as four generic types:

- Herringbone pattern;
- Fascia and bindello¹⁸ pattern;
- Regular cassero¹⁹ pattern;
- Ship deck ²⁰ pattern.

The parquet final result will therefore be strongly affected by various factors considered during the design phase, and mixed up in the final product: the wood species, the protection, the size and the composition pattern.