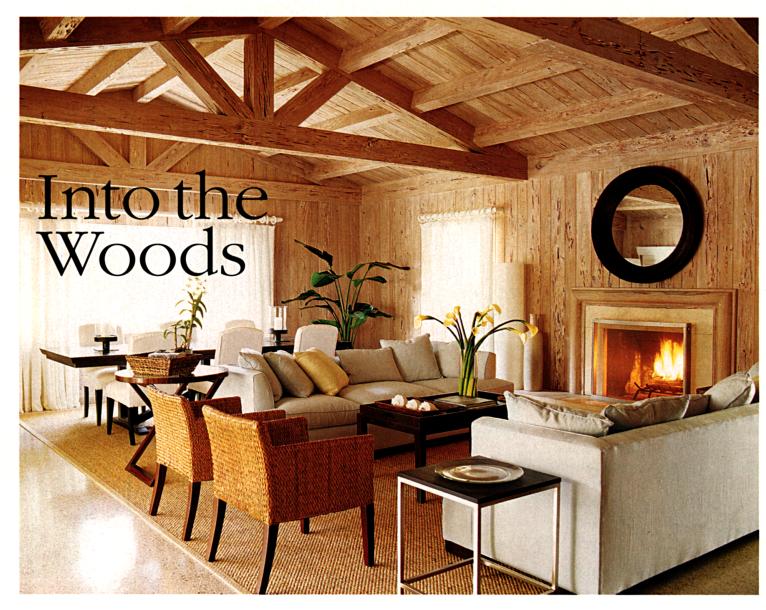
Southern Accents

The magazine of fine Southern interiors and gardens

March-April 2007



decorating



Designers avow that wood paneling is not part of a trend but an investment that will last the life of a home

WOOD PANELING IS A TIME-HONORED DESIGN fit a given room, determining element that imparts warmth, beauty, and architectural interest to a space. Dorothy Draper once wrote, "Rooms paneled in wood are, to my mind, the most beautiful homelike places imaginable."

Historically, wood panels provided an opportunity for painted, carved, or gilded details. Today, this sophisticated design element often gives a period look to a room. Prac- and expect the wood to darken tically speaking, wood can also cover up old plaster walls that are in disrepair. However, it is a relatively costly finish that requires careful consideration, says designer Ralph Harvard. "Finding quality wood, laying out the design to

correct proportions, and getting the finish right are among the challenges of creating paneled rooms," he explains.

First, consider how light or dark you want the room to be several shades as it ages.

Pecky cypress paneling makes a chic design statement throughout a Florida beach house designed by Tricia Foley. This wood enhances Foley's casual, organic scheme, as well as the sand and sea palette.

Walnut, cherry, mahogany, rosewood, and oak (and combinations thereof) are popular choices for formal living and dining rooms, or settings where one might want

BY JULIA E. LEWIS

ORIGINATED ANTIQUING IN EUROPE

☐ April 20-29, 07 ☐ Sep 7-16, 07



□ April 13-22, 07 □ Aug 31-Sep 8, 07 We're "putting on the ritz" at

Already Made

Travel Plans???

European Shipping Services

sures" you might discover, please are happy to offer

wned & Operated

THROUGH LOOKING GLASS www.antiquetours.com

1-410-827-0441



Designer Mona Hajj used mahogany paneling in this study, making it an inviting place to sit and read. An antique Farahan Sarouk rug and rose-colored upholstery complement the dark walls.

and permanence, such as libraries. To keep a dark-paneled room from color, but never stark white." seeming gloomy, designer Miles slipcovers—cozy touches that provide foils for all of that wood."

paneled walls are painted, they covering the ceiling with tea paper.

an impression of opulence, luxury, on the ceiling too," she says. "Otherwise, it should be painted an accent

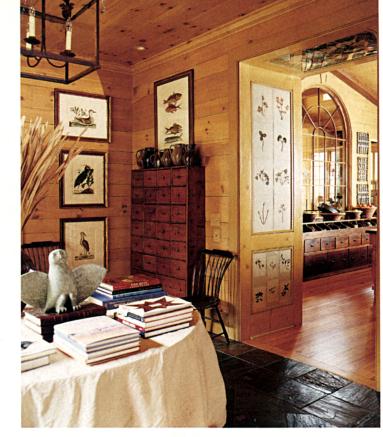
For less formal paneled rooms, Redd says, "I like to soften the space particularly in more rustic settings, with a Sultanabad carpet or chintz poplar, pine, and cypress are perennial favorites. The latter two frequently appear in Southern homes, Most designers agree that, unless notes architect Mark Maresca, who used longleaf pine paneling in shouldn't contrast too much with the kitchen, solarium, and den of a the ceiling and floors. In a mahogany house in Greenville, South Carolina. room, for example, Harvard suggests The hand-planed planks are a "mellow honey color that comple-Designer Cindy Smith also prefers a ments the homeowners' collections seamless look. "I prefer to see wood of Oriental rugs, antique furniture

decorating

and maps, and botanical prints," he explains.

Pecky cypress, a wood distinguished by deep holes and crevices caused by a fungus that invades older living trees, was fashionable in the 1930s and is still appreciated today. This sculptural wood, which is native to swampy areas throughout the South, proved to be a chic yet practical design statement throughout a Boca Grande, Florida, beach house designed by Tricia Foley. "With its unusual pinkish sandy color and unique texture, the wood paneling is more interesting than plain drywall, and it underscores the casual, indoor-outdoor feel of the house," she says. "Plus, it's a durable, indigenous material that can withstand the local climate. It lives and breathes with the house."

Decorating a wood-paneled room is less problematic than one might imagine. "Wood paneling enhances everything in a room," says Smith. "It is always a handsome backdrop for furniture, provided the woods are compatible, but it generally calls for stronger, textured fabrics that can stand up to the walls, whether they are light or dark." Pale woods, such as longleaf pine, can create a luminous



Architect Mark Maresca specified hand-planed longleaf pine panels of varying widths applied horizontally to create an informal interior in a Greenville, South Carolina, house. In the passageway, a collection of pressed flowers is displayed behind acrylic insets.

space. In a dark-paneled room, however, good lighting is essential. "It doesn't need to be bright," advises Smith. "If the walls are very dark, keep the drama." Harvard agrees but avoids using too many recessed lights: "Dark walls suck up light, so there should always be plenty of lamps and picture lights to create a pleasant glow."

Though some worry about hanging art on paneled walls, Smith maintains that the panels shouldn't be considered too precious. "Think of those lovely old English rooms where there are generations upon generations of paintings that always overlap the panels," she says. Indeed, those precedents illustrate the enduring appeal of the tradition. "Wood paneling creates that cozy, inviting room we all want," says Maresca.

For details, see Sourcebook, page 166.

panel review

Designers offer some pointers on decorating with wood paneling.

- "In a dark-paneled library, line bookshelves with light-colored felt to keep them from looking like black holes," advises designer Ralph Harvard.
- Designer Miles Redd softens a paneled room with velvet or leather insets.
- "Wood can withstand a lot of abuse and activity, which is why it's actually a practical wall surface for hallways and staircases," says designer Tricia Foley. "Paneling can make boring transitional spaces more interesting."
- Architect Mark Maresca loves limed oak. "The finish is aged without looking fake or overdone, and it's a great foil for other woods," he says.
- For any type of wood, "the right finish is crucial," says designer Cindy Smith. Dark stain should be a warm brown that isn't too red or too opaque. "A hand-waxed surface is labor-intensive but worth the effort. You don't want the walls to look too perfect."
- Wood paneling will last a lifetime with very little maintenance. "A gentle dusting with a damp cloth is really all you need to do on a routine basis," says Maresca. "But if the walls need cleaning, use vinegar and water. The panels can be waxed every couple of years to restore luster."
- "If the sky is the limit, I buy antique panels in England or France," says Smith. "But when the budget is tight, some decorative painters can create incredible faux paneling, and there are some great trompe I'oeil wallpapers."

