Among the many demands placed on today’s designed closets, adjustability rises to the top. Which means reconﬁguring as your needs and wardrobe changes. Which means your components should be well made, with durable surfaces and edges. Fortunately, this doesn’t mean sacriﬁcing on design. Whether you’re looking for solid colors or woodgrains, contemporary or rustic, bold or reﬁned, durable and beautiful options abound.

Some years ago, a salesperson from one of the major national closets companies told me a story about a consultation visit with a wealthy sports celebrity. “When you bring samples, I don’t need to see any of that laminate crap,” the client said. “I only want to look at real wood.” The salesperson didn’t have time to edit his sample kit, so he hauled in all the ﬁnish options currently on offer. After rifling through all of the wood-look samples, the client chose his favorite: a TFL in a gorgeous, warm woodgrain. “I told him that he’d just picked a laminate, and he didn’t bat an eye,” the salesperson told me. “He just really wanted that particular look, which wasn’t available in veneer.”

That was years ago, before the advent of synchronized woodgrain textures, where every “tic” is aligned with its printed counterpart in many TFL and now some HPL surfaces. These textures are proving to be a real game-changer.

“As people see more of the EiR [embossed-in-register] woodgrain textures in TFL, they realize they’re getting everything they love about wood but with better performance and lower prices,” said Marcela Lopes, Marketing Specialist for Tafisa Canada. “We try to offer great looks at several price points, so users don’t have to compromise in style or design.” For clients who demand extreme durability, or fabricators who want a little more installation and design ﬂexibility, Tafisa also offers HPL in matching colors and EiR textures.

“Today’s more functional closets call attention to design factors such as the power of textures — supermat and synchronized textures are very popular — to create a unique play of pattern and light,” said Atane Bouchard, Marketing Manager of Uniboard Canada. “Texture adds the perceived quality of a closet, visually and physically. It’s an easy way to add visual weight, dimension and balance to the ambiance of a closet, whether it’s soft and comfortable, classy, or rustic. Combining imaginative textures with strong closet design creates a dynamic and appealing space.”

Design 360 program, which offers ultra high-resolution scans of the company’s ﬁnished TFL panels in ﬁles compatible with all of today’s top design software, is an extra convenience for closets designers as they meet with clients to go over options. “We knew people would ﬁnd this useful, but we didn’t expect it to be such a huge success,” Bouchard added. “We’re hearing from architects and designers that our ﬁles are the best quality they’ve ever seen.”

What’s selling now...and next

While there will always be clients who gravitate toward woodgrains, whites and very light woodgrains are still mainstays in closet design. More recently there’s movement toward gray as a neutral solid as well, which still delivers the “light and airy” feel that many people like. To avoid veering to far into bland land, materials suppliers offer great woodgrain designs on solids as well, adding light play that evokes painted wood.

One of the newer players in the North American markets, Egger Wood Products, has been a major TFL supplier in Europe for decades. Klaus Monhoff, head of Design & Décor Management, offers a global perspective on closet design.

“Most of the trends for surface design begin in Europe, particularly in Italy, Monhoff says. “The Salone del Mobile Milano trade show attracts worldwide attention and could be considered the most important industry event for identifying new products and surfaces. At the same time, Belgium and Netherlands are also inﬂuential, as designers take much

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more risk, which results in new emerging trends. Finally, the German market is both the biggest consumer and manufacturer of furniture, so it is very important to consider trends there as well.

“Most of the European markets are very contemporary. This can be seen with the use of geometric, straight lines, and fewer accent details, such as framing and moulding. Quite often, even handles are eliminated, in favor of a cleaner look. In Europe, we are also seeing a lot of mixed materials being used — woodgrains together with stone, concrete, marble or metal are very popular.

“Black accents are very trendy as well, quite often with metal profiles being used for the feet of furniture or in racks,” Monhoff said. “Lighter woodgrain colors are most common and range from nearly white to average natural colors. In South Europe you may find some darker woodgrains such as walnut, but the cognac color of cherry or wild pear is no longer found.”

3D laminates, or thermofoils, are showing up as upgrade drawer fronts, doors, and now island tops in closets, in matching woodgrains and colors, or sometimes as accents.

“The value of 3DL is in its increased performance for the most-used parts of a closet, plus the ability to create different profiles much more cost effectively,” says Julie Moss, West Coast Sales Manager for 3DL supplier Surface Source Int’l. “Textures are also having a positive impact; super mattes have really taken off in this application as they are much less expensive than paint yet perform so much better.

“For countertops 3DL’s price point is much less than wood or stone, allowing companies to offer a complete package.”