



END GRAIN

Extraordinary projects from the industry

By Emily Kingland

How a sun on the floor put a client over the moon

A sunroom in southwestern Wisconsin now has two breathtaking views: one when you look out the panoramic wall of windows, and another when you look down at the floor. Adrian Molitor, owner and operator of Madison, Wis.-based Molitor Traditional Flooring, let the view of Wisconsin's Driftless Area inspire what would become his most artistic flooring project to date.

Hired by the general contractor in charge of the larger renovation, Molitor wasn't thrilled about putting down generic 2¼-inch strip in the unique room. "It seemed like a tragedy to me. The space just lent itself to the natural world," he says. One day, as he sat eating lunch, looking out on the hills and valleys, he thought about how beautiful the sunrises and sunsets must be from his vantage point. He asked the client: "Couldn't you just imagine a huge sunburst in the center

with splintered rays of different species of wood?" She loved the idea immediately.

First, Molitor glued a rectangle of 2¼-inch red oak in the center of the room and cut a radius using a router with a swing arm. He followed a plywood template he made based on the client's circular table that made the perfect sized "sun." Then, he bent walnut strips around the radius, something he'd recently learned from a class given by NWFA regional instructor Lenny Hall in Denver.

For the "rays," Molitor picked up pre-milled raw stock of white and red oak and walnut from Capital Hardwood in Madison, then cut and routed it on-site. Looking back, he says he would have shaped the raw stock at his shop, because using his small router table for the rays (some as long as 8 feet) was like "being in the middle of the ocean with a canoe." Nevertheless, "it was a once-in-a-lifetime thing, so I just made it work and tried to be as careful as I could."

Designed with nature in mind, uniformity was never the goal. Molitor and the client agreed that they wanted a more natural, splintered look for the rays, like a real sunset. "It is the most artistic project that I've done just because it wasn't meant to be perfect," he says. So, in the spots where the pre-milled pieces weren't long enough, he improvised with oak flooring, adding to the sunburst's organic appearance. "We wanted it to be based in the natural world. The idea of splintered light implies that you don't have perfectly sized rays going all around it."

What could've been a perfectly mundane floor was now a piece of art that harmonized with the room's view of the natural world. Bringing the piece to life may have messed up the GC's timeline a bit; "I think the general contractor was pretty much done with me once it was all over," says Molitor. But all that really mattered was the client's satisfaction, and "The client was over the moon," he says. Since the sunburst, the client has hired Molitor for several other flooring projects. ■



Uniformity was never the goal for this floor inspired by sunrises and sunsets.

SUPPLIERS: Adhesive, Moisture barrier: Berger-Seidle | Buffer: American Sanders | Filler: DuraSeal | Finish: Berger-Seidle CeramicStar | Nailer: Powernail | Router: Craftsman, Festool | Sander (big machine): American Sanders | Sander (multi-disc): Bona, Festool | Saws: Craftsman, DeWalt, Festool | Stain: Berger-Seidle NaturalWhite | Wood flooring: Capital Hardwood (raw stock)