



# Basic TO **BOLD**

## HOW INDUSTRY MOVERS ARE OPENING NEW DOORS WITH CUSTOM DESIGN

In today's world of infinite possibilities and custom solutions – thanks in large part to remarkable feats made in technological advances over the last decade – one might appreciate that a door could remain exactly what it is; a door and nothing more. But if you take a closer look at what commercial industries are striving to achieve in order to stay ahead of the competition, industry movers would tell you that in highly competitive markets – full of eager-for-the-latest-and-greatest consumers – the demand for customization has become customary. In order to stand out, companies are continuously seeking new ways to make a statement. Sometimes, that statement is a statement piece itself.

### DEMAND FOR INNOVATIVE DESIGN

Having access to one-of-a-kind pieces that set you apart from the crowd is now the standard for businesses that want to fulfill those same consumer expectations. For the commercial and residential real estate industries, in particular, architectural innovation in all areas of design matters – including doors.

One industry driver, The Related Group, one of the largest and most respected real estate conglomerates in the U.S., recognized the need to stand apart with bold design. In respect to custom designed doors, a unique opportunity to elevate the consumer experience became a focus for one of their latest projects in Miami's iconic Design District.

The Baltus House Condos, "an Exclusive Luxury Residence", is The Related Group's impressive 15-story, 167-unit new construction development lead by Beauchamp Construction and designed by the award-winning firm Cohen Freedman Encinosa. Given the area's upscale, urban setting, and reputation for world-class fashion, retail and design, the vision for the Baltus House to be an extension of its environment could only be achieved through quite literally creative solutions.

One desire – that would prove to start off as a challenge for the luxury condo project – was to turn every floor into an art gallery; where each unit's door would display a different painting from Spanish artist Javier Martin.

### A COLLABORATIVE SOLUTION

Answering the challenge, Wilsonart Engineered Surfaces, a manufacturer of technology-enhanced performance and decorative engineered surfaces, stepped up to the plate. Wilsonart's lead specification and fabricator representatives on the Baltus House project, Raul Gozalez-Rio and Rick Deiros, met with Related's lead designer, Nicole Holman, to discuss ideas. Mr. Deiros shares, "Originally, Related reached out to Wilsonart looking for cost-effective alternatives to silk-screening metal doors for the artwork that would provide long-term wearability. An attempt to transpose the artwork onto a wood veneer surface was also unsuccessful once it was discovered that





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ALINA VAN KATWYK  
WILSONART METRO MANAGER

**project:**  
Related Group's Baltus House Condos

**location:**  
Miami, FL

**developer:**  
Beauchamp Construction

**architects/designers:**  
Cohen Freedman Encinosa

**wilsonart® products:**  
WilsonartXYou (WxY)

**fabricator/door manufacturer:**  
Ampco by AJW

not only would wood veneer not provide the acceptable fire-rating required for condominium interior doors, the surface was too soft to paint and, over time, dents or scratches would take its toll on the artwork.”

Ultimately, Wilsonart proposed their WilsonartXYou (WxY) service which allows anyone to create one-of-a kind High Pressure Laminate (HPL) designs using proprietary Wilsonart custom print processes. Alina Van Katwyk, Wilsonart Metro Manager, who was also closely involved with the creative elaborates, “There was no better solution. The ability to print created images on-demand and imprint them onto a laminate surface – combined with our embossing plate technology to add realistic dimension – offers unlimited design possibilities. On top of that, you get the benefits of product consistency and long-term durability. We are very proud of the fact that Wilsonart’s decorative laminate solution addressed the Related’s needs for cost-effective, fire-rated and long-lasting material.”

The process of creating these viable custom solutions has shorter lead times than ever before. According to Mr. Deiros, “The process is simple. Just upload your artwork to Wilsonart’s digital team and within approximately 5 business days your laminate sample will ready for your approval.”

As the construction for the Baltus House progressed, and pleased with the samples provided by Wilsonart, Related approved the creation of 167 laminate sheets cumulative of eight different Javier Martin design patterns. The sheets had a Fine Velvet Textured (38) finish applied to enhance the color in the artwork when lit by overhead lighting features. To protect the laminate from damage caused by overspray or debris during the end of construction, a thin peel coat was applied to the surface so that no amount of mishaps could penetrate the artwork.

Of course, a project this large is never the work of just a few individuals. Wilsonart

recruited the custom capabilities of leading fabricator and door manufacturer, Ampco by AJW, who worked diligently with Wilsonart to provide a top-of-the-line product. Mike O’Neill, Senior VP of Corporate Pricing & Product Development at Ampco by AJW, states, “As a fabricator, we want to offer high-performing decorative surfaces for a value on any architectural doors to lockers. Wilsonart’s custom laminate is the preferred, sustainably-conscious product offering impact resistance and consistent quality.”

Echoing the objectives of Wilsonart, Mr. O’Neill continues, “We understand the desire for developers, architects and designers to want unique and dynamic designs that can differentiate themselves from others. There’s no doubt that these distinct HPL applications have raised eyebrows in the industry, heightened end-user interest and increased the value of the property overall.”

**THE FUTURE IS HPL**

The evolution of laminate propelled by technological advancements has reignited its appeal across the commercial and residential industries. Today, HPL’s innovative surface performance has, in many ways, become a superior choice to veneer.

While wood veneers claim virtually unlimited color/species combinations, there are limitations by product and stain-line capacity often due to size availability and sustainable sourcing practices. On the flipside, laminate has almost no limitations in design or production.

The quality of the color and pattern consistency for multiple placements of the same design using HPL technology delivers exquisite results. By embossing texture using the latest plate technology, woodgrain laminates can also



have the same realistic look and feel as wood veneer, but for a price that will help you manage your budgets.

In addition, today’s laminate has matching performance to protect the beauty of its design. Compared to veneer, High Pressure Laminate possess up to 12x better wear performance, 5x better impact resistance and 4x better scuff resistance based on NEMA/ISO 4586 test results. There’s also evidence to show that HPL displays superior performance in light resistance-fade testing. In the long run, maintenance is a breeze with a lower life-cycle investment and no special cleaners required.

It’s time to take your basic veneer look and turn it into a bold statement with custom laminate solutions. HPL is clearly the future of innovative custom surface designs. And continuous innovation is making made-to-order designs increasingly easier to obtain.

One thing is clear; industry movers that have recognized the need to fulfill consumer expectations for unique and memorable experiences, by implementing technology-enhanced performance materials into their designs, will continue to open new doors for many years to come.