



Ceramic Tiles of Italy

CERSAIE TREND REPORT

Sustainable Products and Technological Innovations From Ceramic Tiles of Italy

(Fall/Winter 2009, New York, NY) Cersaie is an annual platform for innovation and forward-thinking design. Now twenty-seven years strong, this exhibition of ceramic tile and bathroom furnishings never seems to disappoint. In fact this year's sold-out event, which featured 1000+ exhibitors, exemplified the same caliber prowess as the show's keynote speaker Renzo Piano. Despite economic fears, the fair was alive and well, attracting 83,137 visitors from Italy and abroad. It was business as usual with new products aplenty. While major trends did emerge, this year, as no surprise, all eyes were on sustainable solutions and energy-saving technologies, especially in the Italian ceramic sector.

Green Forum:

Recycled content and responsible production processes that reduce waste and water and lower energy consumption were top of mind for just about every Italian tile manufacturer at Cersaie. Addressing the sustainable movement head-on, many are actively promoting their green platform and have also joined the Green Building Council Italia and the US Green Building Council to be major players in the industry. Never complacent, the Italian tile industry is using state-of-the-art new technologies to produce more eco-friendly slim formats, new forms of solar paneling and even an antibacterial tile.

Reduce

Using less material is one way to reduce a carbon footprint. Many manufacturers used the fair to launch their new slim format porcelains. Unlike previous years, the tendency moved towards tiles that are 4-5mm thick as this size is strong enough for high-traffic floors and more sustainable to produce and ship. The compact thickness means it takes a smaller amount of energy and raw materials to produce and causes a lower level of harmful emissions to transmit. In terms of installation, the slim format tiles, available in the traditional 8"x8," the sleek 12"x48" and 24"x48," and the oversized 1mx3m sizes, can be laid over existing hard surfaces, therefore cutting down on construction costs and saving valuable time. This innovative thickness is available in: Florim's (the parent company of Floor Gres, Cerim, Rex, Casamood, Casa Dolce Casa) "Slim/4," Cotto D'Este's "Kerlite," Atlas Concorde's "Linea," Mirage's "Atelier," FAP's "MissFap," La Fabbrica's "Cathay 4Fine," Marazzi's "Zero 4," Del Conca's "Zero 5," Laminam's "Sketch," "Oxide," "Jungle," "Metropolis," "Blend" and "Filo."

Reuse

Of particular significance this year is the partnership between the Concorde Group (Refin, Marca Corona, Atlas Concorde, Supergres and Caesar) and Remedia, the leading Italian corporation specializing in the collection and recycling of RAEE (electronic appliance waste). An industry first, this strategic partnership has led to the creation of a ceramic product that is manufactured using 20% post-consumer recycled material derived from the glass of obsolete cathode ray tube (CRT) TV monitors.

Recycle

From raw material to water, recyclability is the name of the game. In terms of production and responsible management, Italian tile manufacturers have a geographical edge as they are organized in industrial districts and have direct control on the environmental and social impact of their manufacturing operations (air, water, waste) as well as the local trade of their products. Novabell, for example, is able to reuse 100% of the wastewater derived from the production cycle process, resulting in a more than 50% reduction in the premises' water requirements and reducing external discharge to zero. Manufacturers are also reusing the raw discards from the production process in the clay mix. New collections from Emilceramica, Ergon Engineered Stone, Caesar, Refin, Casalgrande Padana, Trend, Cedir, Fioranese, Pastorelli, Coem, Imola, Ragno, Impronta Ceramiche, Novabell, Viva, Lea Ceramiche and Marca Corona are a testament to the industry's commitment to sustainability as many contain at least 40% pre-consumer recycled content.

Energy-Saving Applications

The Italian tile industry has been actively promoting the use of ventilated wall facades. Marazzi offers an entire system, including substructure and fasteners, while dozens of others produce tiles suitable for this type of forward-thinking cladding technique. At Cersaie, yet another way to involve tile in energy-saving forms emerged. That is through the use of solar panels. Area Industrie Ceramiche's ground-breaking, new "Tegolasolare" is catapulting itself into the future of solar paneling. The main feature of "Tegolasolare" is the perfect integration of the solar panel system into the architecture of the building's roof. Every individual "Tegolasolare" tile is larger than an ordinary roof tile. A small, modular, discreet photovoltaic panel is fitted on the front. Each panel is connected to the next by means of an electrical system, connected in turn to a control unit that "collects" the energy produced by the photovoltaic system and feeds it into the power supply network. With the aid of the state-of-the-art technology, Area has taken the outstanding characteristics of traditional clay tiles, their proven stability and convenient mounting, and transformed them into a source for clean energy. With the new system, each "Tegolasolare" tile incorporates a portion of the overall solar power system. From the outside, the roof looks exactly the same, ensuring the traditional visual impact of a clay tile roof, but it actually conceals a major technological innovation that will allow the production of sustainable energy.

On a similar note, when used in conjunction with solar panels, Del Conca's new radiant heating "Therma System" brings additional savings in the form of tax incentives. Brand new, the system consists of a slim 5mm tile, "Zero5" that adheres to an innovative mesh just 4mm thick with carbon fiber heating elements that are able to give off heat immediately. While skeptics would prefer a longer test-drive, this new source is said to yield a better performance than the majority of materials traditionally used.

Health and Wellness

Using the latest nanotechnologies, Casalgrande Padana "Bios" has developed a collection that is ideal for health facilities, research labs, schools, wellness centers, restaurants, and other areas where hygiene and cleanliness are of the utmost importance. During the processing stages, the ceramic material is combined with mineral particles to generate an extremely effective antibacterial reaction. The patented product (patent no M02005A000232), which is available in all the series from the extensive Granitogres and Marmogres lines, is the result of a research project conducted in collaboration with the Department of Microbiology of the University of Modena. It has proven highly effective, since it can achieve a 99.9% reduction of the four main bacteria families: Staphylococcus aureus (a spherical bacterium that commonly causes staph infections), Enterococcus faecalis (a commensal organism that can cause life-

threatening infections in humans especially those in hospitals), Escherichia coli (E.coli) and Pseudomonas aeruginosa (a common bacterium that can cause disease in animals and humans).

Although not new to the market, Gambarelli's "Oxygena" still deserves its bragging rights for being the first patented tile to act as an air purifier by eliminating contaminating gases through its surface. The tiles contain titanium dioxide, an element that reacts to and neutralizes polluting gases, thus rendering them harmless. When solar rays hit the surface of the tiles, titanium dioxide (thanks to its photo catalytic properties) produces active oxygen, which then oxidizes polluting gases. The gases are transformed into nitrate ions that, combined with water or other elements, become eco-efficient. While it can be laid indoors, Oxygena is designed for outdoor applications as it can also help clean the air of nitric oxide and nitrogen dioxide produced by vehicles, central-heating systems and domestic cookers.

Designer-Collaborations:

Italian tile and superior design go hand-in-hand. For that reason, many top architects and designers are partnering with Italian manufacturers to produce avant-garde porcelains in a myriad of shapes, sizes and patterns.

Having previously worked with standouts like Andrée Putnam, Claudio La Viola, L+R Palomba, Mattia Frignani and Claudio Silvestrin, Brix has added three new names to the list: Vincent Van Duysen, Jean-Marie Massaud and Naoto Fukasawa. Following the same order, DRY (Don't Repeat Yourself) by Vincent Van Duysen Design was inspired by the irregular pattern of cracks formed by aged paint and plaster. Crafted on hexagonal shaped-tiles, Van Duysen wanted to create a non-repetitive pattern and avoid the stereotype of a self-repeating design. "Daedalus," designed by Jean-Marie Massaud Design, was introduced as a prototype in 2008 and is now in production. It is a revolutionary new material that combines the best features of organic and mineral materials. Naoto Fukasawa Design set out to soften a traditionally hard surface material. To do so, Fukasawa developed a tile that mimics the texture and feel of Japanese cotton. Manufactured by Brix, it is appropriately called "Linen." Last but not least, Brix's "I Frammenti," the 5x5x5mm mesh-mounted mosaic designed by Claudio Silvestrin, was shown in even more tile and grout colorways. Its patent is pending under the Regulation of Community Design (RCD).

Bardelli is another manufacturer widely known for its designer relationships. Since 1999, they have produced a number of Piero Fornasetti's iconic patterns on an 8"x8" ceramic tile. Now they are adding even more to the collection including "Flying Machine" and "Sexy Witch." Also extremely noteworthy are their collaborations with Dutch designers Marcel Wanders and Ronald Van Der Hilst. To paraphrase Wanders, "Tiles clothe our homes as fashion clothes ourselves." His new series of wall tiles named "Iris" is hand painted by Bardelli's artisanal craftsman, flaunting evocative floral arabesques, optical effects and beautiful colors. Also hand-crafted, the second introduction, "Carmen," exudes luxury with its glittering gold delicate floral motif. Van Der Hilst stuck to the Netherlands' signature flower, a tulip. "Tuli Art" and "Tuli Charme" feature oversized flowers while "Tuli Tuli" shows the pattern on a smaller scale. Both transform drab walls into contemporary, functional art galleries.

Spanish designer Patricia Urquiola added new shapes and materials, including recycled glass mosaics and laser-cut tiles to the "Déchirer" collection that she designed for Mutina. Using the hexagonal shaped tiles from the series, the talented designer, in collaboration with Asturias, has created the company's first line of furnishings - a range of tables with ceramic tops cleverly named "The Bugs Collection."

Lea Ceramiche continued its partnership with Italian architect Diego Grandi. The latest introduction “Mauk” evokes the look of basalt stone and conveys a 3D effect like that of an Escher puzzle. Art designer Giulio Candussio joined forces with Trend Up to produce its “Liberty” collection of transparent and hand-cut tesserae in different colors and shapes.

Wood & Wallpaper looks

Get the look AND the lasting qualities! Thanks to ink-jet technology, tile surfaces mimic any look – from wood to wallpaper. Their performance qualities including low water absorption, low maintenance, and durability make them suitable for areas where other materials could not be used.

In the wood-look category, Emilceramica’s “Golden Wood” and Rex’s “Le Essenze di Rex” would make anyone do a double take. Marca Corona’s “Old Wood,” has an aged charm while Fioranese’s “Wellness Wood” comes in the traditional style or decorated with glazed flowers. A handful of manufacturers opted to combine two popular trends into one that could be known as “slim-wood.” Cerim’s “I Legni Naturali Slim/4” and Cotto D’Este’s “Kerlite Oaks” are prime examples. Likewise, Mirage’s “Parquet” is available in a reduced-thickness version (4.8mm thick) or the traditional format.

If walls could talk, they’d be speaking about the new wallpaper-esque styles in tile. From bas-reliefs to finely textured surfaces, these collections are adding another dimension to the marketplace. Sculpted sand dunes, mosaic tribal patterns and tropical flowers are three different decorative options included in Settecento’s “Dunes” series, while Coem “Pietra Vicentina” is a two-piece compositional decor of a tone-on-tone forest scene. From forests to flowers, big blossoms like those found in Naxos’ “Vanity” and Marca Corona’s “Tropical” are always in vogue. Other fresh florals include: Francesco De Maio’s “Fiori Scuri,” Ceramica Vietri Antico’s “Giochi d’Acqua” and Ce.Vi’s “CEVI Edizioni.” There are many great examples of damask such as Fioranese’s “Nu Travertine.” For a modern twist, the decor can also be selected with a pixilated effect. Gambarelli’s “Ritmo” offers a similar damask design, but with a metallic finish. From modern to mid-century, “Joe,” a new collection from Monina by Tagina, was triple-fired to give it an antique look. It features concave and convex ceramic tiles in a rich, lustrous color scheme. Decoratorstyle’s “Beat” brings back the enthusiasm and nonconformist vitality of the 1960s.

Ceramic wainscoting is a durable alternative to wood. Ceramica Colli di Sassuolo’s “Kebel” looks just like the traditional wallcovering, but its application options are endless. Impronta Ceramiche took the look even further and features a textured quilted pattern, in either black or white, in its “Bianco Nero.” Similarly, the pillow-top look really pops in Viva’s “Douce France” and Settecento’s “Maharaja.” Moving from the bedroom to the kid’s room, Coem’s “Pietra di Lavagna” can be used as a chalkboard.

Tile As Art

Ceramic tile is taking on a new art form as manufacturers are taking inspiration from classic paintings, drawings, photographs and more.

Mosaico+ offers large-scale customized murals and photographs recreated in 4mm thick mosaic tile. Ceramica di Treviso named its new collection after the iconic symbolist artist Gustav Klimt. The hand-painted mosaics feature elegant gold and colored decorations in Klimt’s signature style. Inspired by Andy Warhol’s original New York City studio, “The Factory” by Settecento is a hand-made collection of ceramic tile art, with compositional pieces that depict famous movie

stars and musicians, as well as iconic landmarks. Also notable are Viva's "Art Deco" series and Cottovento's "Gocce d'Acqua" and "Calligrafie" collections.

The wall is not the only beneficiary of this trend. According to Chris Coleman, a New York-based interior designer, "Glass facades are on the rise thereby leaving less wall space for artwork. With this, the floor has also become a canvas for creativity." Etruria Design's "Hex" is a prime example. The cool hexagonal shape and multiple color options combine to create stunning motifs that immediately draw the eye downward. Hand-made encaustic patterns from Arkadia's "Colori Naturali" collection add an artful look to the floor. Also eye-catching, the surface of Vietri Ceramic Group's "L'ORO di Vietri" is infused with 18-karat gold.

These trends highlight the importance of continued research, development and innovation. As pioneers of the monocottura (single-fired) tile and - more recently - porcelain technology, architects, designers and consumers alike can look at the proven track record of Ceramic Tiles of Italy manufacturers and their immediate reaction to any and all market needs. For additional information on Cersaie, visit www.cersaie.it. To access a complete inventory of new products, including high-resolution images and descriptions, click on Ceramic Tiles of Italy's new link dedicated to products and trends: <http://products.italiatiles.com>.

For more information on Ceramic Tiles of Italy, visit their gateway www.italiantiles.com - with links to four key industry sites: www.italiatiles.com (the official website of Confindustria Ceramica), www.italytile.com (the official website for the Ceramic Tile Department of the Italian Trade Commission), www.s-tiles.it (a tool that tracks the Italian tile industry's commitment to sustainable design) and www.tilecompetition.com (a digital guide to the Ceramic Tiles of Italy Design Competition).

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