

TILE TODAY

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106

**COVERINGS
2020 VIRTUAL
EVENT**

**MASSA
IMPORTS
AND CERBIS
CERAMICS SA**

**COLD WEATHER
IMPACT ON
TILES**



Hampton



White



Ivory



Grey



Ash



30x30 External P4 30x60 Matt P2/ P5
45x45 Matt P2/ P5 60x60 Matt P2/ P5



TILE TODAY



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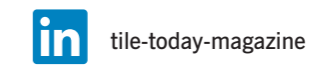
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When writing about the tile industry, it is easy to come across stories of resilience and resolve from business owners who seem to have “seen it all”. In this edition, Massimo Sedano from Massa Imports tells us his story and how he moulded his business to become more competitive in today’s more digital-driven market.

Angelis Tsirbas of Cerbis Ceramics SA is a shining example of how the next generation of a well-established and highly regarded family firm can lead it to the next phase of its development.

This issue also includes a feature about the cold weather impact on tiling, something that is often overlooked when it comes to installation. Thank you to Tim Christopher from Consultile Consulting for writing it and RLA Group for supporting it.

International correspondent Joe Simpson has also been busy with his coverage of the virtual Coverings event and writing about the response of tile companies in the United Kingdom and Europe to the global pandemic.

On the local front, we provide coverage of Trowel Trade Awards organised by Holmesglen TAFE in the Industry Roundup pages.

We hope you enjoy this issue and invite anyone to contact me on betty.tanddo@elitepublishing.com.au for feedback or story suggestions we can follow up.

Just click here to subscribe:

<https://bit.ly/3jiv9vd>

Until next time,



Betty Tanddo
Editor

FRONT COVER IMAGE

Boost Pro Leaves from Atlas Concorde features three decorations for large slabs (278 x 120cm). Leaves of beautifully painted, water colour images, evoke movement and depth to the installation. This contrasts to the more traditional ridged structure of the large, concrete effect porcelain tiles that Boost is known for. The large Leaves slabs recreate the intensity of a tropical forest or banana leaves dancing in the wind, a striking vision for homes, hotels and restaurants.



Underneath this stylish red mask is Massimo Sedano

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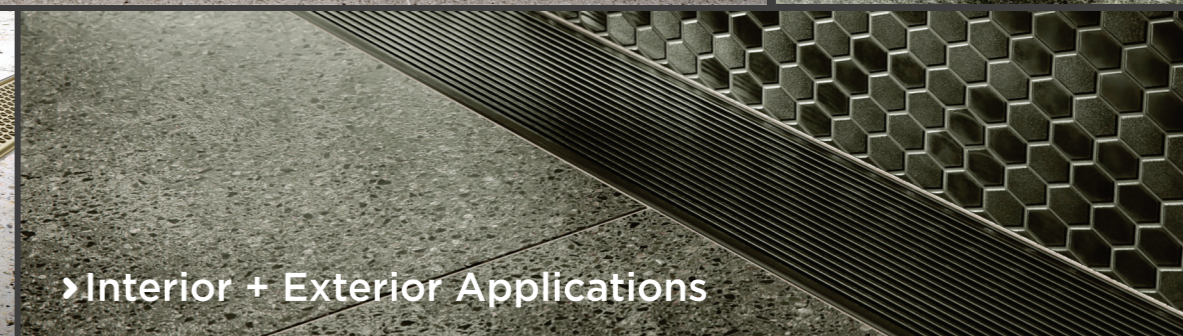
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“ Andersens isn't just a group, it's like a family. The country town service and strong family values are what sets Andersens apart. ”

– James and Angela from Andersens Ipswich, QLD

Andersens is looking for both new and existing business owners to join their respected brand and benefit from the group's buying power and support. If you have a successful business in the flooring industry, there is typically no cost to join the Andersens brand. With a world class training and support structure in place, franchisees are guided through a smooth, seamless transition.

Andersens strongly believe they need successful franchisees to be a successful franchisor. The CEO regularly visits stores as well as the dedicated field team. Andersens have franchisees that have been with the brand for well over 30 years and stores are often handed down or sold onto family members as the original owners retire.

COMPANY PROFILE

Andersens was founded in the late 1950s in the town of Gatton, just west of Brisbane in Queensland. Perhaps it is their country roots, but from the beginning, Andersens has always maintained that their customers are their livelihood and they are therefore 100% committed to ensuring that their satisfaction comes first.

Andersens was founded on the principles of honesty, integrity and respect in all aspects of the business – a philosophy which is still paramount today, and which, combined with their professional, leading-edge business operating systems and practices, has earned them the reputation of being one of the most respected names in floor coverings for over 60 years.

Andersens takes pride in supplying their customers with a superior product range and is continually sourcing quality brands to add to their comprehensive range. Many products and product ranges are developed exclusively for Andersens by Australia's leading flooring manufacturers, which is one of the many compelling reasons customers make Andersens their first choice in flooring.



Andersens understand that customers want fast, professional service and so they ensure that all requests, no matter how large or small, are handled with a sense of urgency and efficiency. Their centralised warehousing facility allows them to have large volumes of stock readily available at all times, so customers can rest assured that in most instances they can supply, deliver and install their new floorings with minimal turnaround time.

In line with changing market trends, Andersens has expanded its range of flooring products from carpet and vinyl flooring to include timber, timber laminates, bamboo, tiles, and window furnishings. Every type of floor covering and budget is catered for, making Andersens a genuine one-stop flooring retailer.

Their commitment to service doesn't stop once the sale is over and the product installed. Andersens offers a number of exclusive service and installation guarantees including ongoing maintenance and care advice to ensure customer satisfaction.

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Andersens Helensvale in Queensland



Andersens offers training and support for franchisees

The practical optimist

Massimo Sedano has seen many things in the tile industry, and he seems to enjoy looking back at his experiences with a sardonic wit. His humour belies his determination to survive and thrive in the midst of some major market challenges.

At first contact, Massimo Sedano sounds like everything you expect a charming Italian business owner to be: a little slow at first to chat as he considers what to say. But once he gets warmed up and becomes more comfortable, he is full of funny anecdotes and offers sharp observations about the industry.

Massimo, along with his wife Sabrina, started out in the early 1990s as representatives for a number of Italian tile manufacturers before importing products directly. Today, Massimo is leveraging this experience and all his knowledge to develop the latest addition to the business, Elegance Tiles.

Expansion into retail

Finding that margins were being squeezed in the wholesale business, Massimo did what most savvy entrepreneurs do when they are being challenged: He transformed the business to meet market needs. So, after more than 20 years, in mid-2013, Massa Imports expanded into being a retail group named Elegance Tiles. As Massimo tells it: "The intention was always at some point to have our own retail system. I had been talking to my clients about it for a while [before it actually happened] ... But it wasn't until the industry was becoming difficult for small independent retailers that they suddenly started to listen. As soon as they did, we were able to quickly, over a period of six to nine months, set down some ground rules and get the ball rolling. It was actually easier than I expected because there was a willingness from everyone to do something."

Currently there are 13 members of Elegance Tiles, all based in Victoria. Massimo and the group plan to increase that number to 20 in both metropolitan and regional areas. Interstate stores could also be an option in the future.



The purpose-built Massa Imports facility in Laverton North (VIC). Massimo and his staff moved into it in 2006.



Massimo Sedano is a "practical optimist" when it comes to the tile industry

To become a member, expressions of interest are submitted for a license agreement. According to Massimo, the group assesses the application to see if the store location is appropriate and available. He explains, "If they are in an area that is free, we examine who they are, if we know them and what sort of reputation they have. Then the members vote if we want them in."

As the chairman of the group, Massimo does not vote unless there is a tie, and he has the casting vote.

(Read more about Elegance Tiles Pakenham later in this story.)

Business model

Before Elegance Tiles became over

50% of his company, the pre-digital tile industry was a very different place to do business. According to Massimo, that changed due to a couple of "seismic" events.

"It's a very different industry now from what it was then. There have been two big changes since we started in 1991-92. One is related to supply chain. When I got involved, if you had the right supplier in Italy or wherever you bought from ... it was much easier to have a successful enterprise. Simply because the world was not digital then. If you had the right factory, that factory could have tiles that were far superior to other manufacturers.

"If you had the best tiles, you won every time. Once the digital world came into the equation and almost any manufacturer could buy digital machines from Italy, then basically everyone had the ability to produce whatever they wanted, whenever they wanted. All they needed was a digital file. The rest of it was not that difficult," he said.

When it became easier to produce tiles, Massimo said, "It became a world where virtually all the manufacturers could make the same products. [Almost] every supplier, every manufacturer makes the same marble, the same wood, the same slate and so on. It really becomes an economy of scale battle.

It's all about price and volume."

Despite this, Massimo does not seem to yearn for the "romance" of the past. Instead he has adjusted to the dominance of Chinese imports in the Australian market. He said, "Their economy of scale is amazing compared to other countries ... [It] changed the market forever."

Builders and developers now go to China to buy directly from the factories which also took a large slice of the market. "People like us [smaller companies] used to also get some commercial work but that became a bit more difficult too," he said.

Margins, he tells us, have decreased substantially. "For us [that is] because almost every single product has become a commodity. Eighty per cent of the products that we sell, you could call them commodities. You have to sell them at a certain price, otherwise you don't sell them. It's as simple as that," he explains.

Commodification

As tile products became more commodified, Massimo saw a market that was forming into three main groups: medium-sized tile shops, small boutiques and large corporate-owned or franchise groups. "There is a distinct difference between a sizeable shop with between five to 10 employees ... that need to turn over \$2 million



Blast from the past: (l&r) Massimo (in the white top) with his brother-in-law Joe in Massimo's garage in 1992 when the first container arrived



Stock in 1993 when Massa Imports moved to the Preston (VIC) premises

or \$3 million a year just to break even ... Now they have to sell a lot of volume in order to be able to stay open. And the little boutiques that have one or two operators, they are selling more exclusive products, but obviously they don't turn over as much. The other thing that has changed in a very big way, is that two players in the market became bigger and bigger," he said.

Alongside digital processes, the internet was another contributing factor to these changes, according to Massimo. He looks at how the industry has developed as a result of the internet. "In the eighties and nineties as an independent retailer, all you had to do is spend your \$15,000 a year in the Yellow Pages. [This] basically gave you some sort of marketing and following. As soon

as the internet became the number one source of leads, and you didn't need to spend \$15,000 anymore, the small independent store could not afford to compete with the bigger players.

"Slowly but surely, the bigger players gained market share. So to give you an idea, in the 1990s and even in the early 2000s, as a wholesaler in Victoria alone, we had over a hundred accounts. Now we have 25, 30."

Massimo said he could have more active accounts but chooses not to because economies of scale make it more viable for Massa Imports to deal with stores that are only going to buy a very small amount. "So you're better off having better arrangements with a smaller amount of stores and getting more volume ... → 10

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→ which is basically what we've done with Elegance," he explains. Diversifying into retail was one way to compete in a commodified market. Massimo believes it was the only way the business could survive.

Response

Many businesses do not have the flexibility to respond as deftly as Massa Imports did to the changing market around it. Massimo was quite quick to realise that the days of making large profits in the industry were gone. He is the first to admit that he did well in the 1990s and most of the 2000s but when it came to change, Massimo actually did it rather than waiting for the market to "rebound".

"Even though Australia is a growing country and there's usually plenty of building going on, the margins are not going to be what they used to be. The competition is getting stronger every day. If you don't learn how to improve in the way you do business such as buying cheaper, better products, reducing your costs internally, or gaining more market share, then you're not going to be in business for long," he said.

Massa Imports is a leaner business today because Massimo managed to transform it. Elegance Tiles generates about 55% of revenues, approximately 10-15% comes from commercial work and the rest is wholesale to non-Elegance customers and interstate distribution.

Future

Massimo sees digital platforms as having a starring role in the future of Massa Imports-Elegance Tiles. "We spent a lot of money on digital ourselves, and through COVID-19, we've been inundated. Our figures have gone up threefold in terms of internet inquiries," he said.

The company differentiates itself by offering more tiles than many of its competitors. "Our website alone has 1200 products and our stores are able to buy from other wholesalers as well. They don't have to buy from us," he added.

To compete, Elegance stores offer over 2000 products so there is a strong chance that consumers can find something "interesting and new", according to Massimo.



Product development manager, Mike Portelli



Sales manager, Michael Spiroch



Massimo has transformed the business to compete more effectively in a digital world



(l&r) Michael Spiroch and Mike Portelli in the Massa Imports showroom

"Massa Imports is a leaner business today because Massimo managed to transform it. Elegance Tiles generates about 55% of revenues, approximately 10-15% comes from commercial work and the rest is wholesale to non-Elegance customers and interstate distribution."

"What we've seen is that if people have got more time for research, more often it is the little shop, the boutique stores that has a greater appeal, a better chance of getting their attention.

"So my hope is that the world will change and we go from globalising and making the strong, stronger, that there is a chance for the

smaller players to appeal to the market in their own way.

"What we're providing with Elegance is the ability for the smaller players to jump in with us and be a presence on the internet ... with a marketing presence out there so that the consumers can reach them and they know about it." ■

ELEGANCE TILES PAKENHAM



A view outside the Elegance Tiles Pakenham store

Sean Somers, director at Elegance Tiles in Pakenham, an outer suburb south-east of Melbourne, heads a retail business that has long-standing relationships with local builders and bathroom renovators.

Approximately 60% of the store's customers are made up of builders and bathroom renovators, and the rest are tilers (20%) and retail DIY (20%).

"We've also got a really good trade base [of customers] as well, with a lot of tilers. And we also have a retail showroom so we try and cover as many aspects of the tile supply chain as we can," explains Sean.

It is a well-established store that was started by Sean's father in 1988. Since his father sadly passed away in 2018, Sean has firmly taken over the reigns of managing the store after already working in the business for 15 years.

Being able to maintain a loyal customer base with builders is a significant achievement because of the complexities involved with demand, pricing and service levels. Yet Sean modestly puts it down to locality.

"Pakenham operates very much like a local community, so we're pretty connected with a lot of the local businesses and builders. We've been here a long time, we've got some great experience and a good team," said Sean.

Not surprisingly, Stage 4 restrictions in metropolitan Melbourne have brought challenges to the store.

"Naturally it's been challenging, it's been challenging for everyone. We've tried to provide a bit of technology, and we're obviously using click and collect. We are also offering to deliver up to six sample tiles for \$6 which people can order online, and we have a virtual tour of our store [on the website].

"Clients can jump on our landing page and



Sean Somers, director, Elegance Tiles Pakenham

can literally click through the showroom without having to come in. So that's been really handy, especially during Stage 4," he explains.

Elegance Tiles Pakenham has had the 3D virtual store operational for the last couple of years but it was updated at the start of this year.

Online promotions have been effective,

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→

perhaps an indication of the COVID-19 economy. There are web-based specials on the Marfilia and Conazzo ranges that have worked well, and the store's presence on social media has increased awareness of these offers.

Ecommerce facilities are the natural next step for the business and there are plans to include this functionality soon, according to Sean.

Customer service and support are strong points of difference for the store. "We're really focused on making sure the customer gets what they want. We support our clients with their [product] selection or with the problems they might be facing with their jobs and the critical information related to them. So we are very knowledgeable and we've got some good expertise [with our staff]," he said.

Sean is very supportive of his staff gaining as much training as they need because he believes it can only benefit the business.

"We look at all sorts of training, whether it's from the industry or our suppliers ... or short courses and training certificates.... At the end of the day, if your staff are trained then they can only help the business too. So providing skills for them is upskilling everyone, is my thinking," he said.

In addition, Sean provides training in technical aspects of the products as well retail merchandising, and courses that cover sales topics like relationship building.

Elegance Tiles Pakenham is one of the

founding members of the group. "The reason we joined is to get group marketing power, buying power, helping to bridge the gap between franchises and sole operators. There's more of a market presence with having 13 stores," he said.

Prior to Elegance, the store was part of Ultimate Tiles, another group it helped to start from just a few members. After it disbanded, Sean and his father decided to become a founding member of Elegance Tiles, helping to further grow the model that had been developed with Ultimate Tiles.

To maintain its appeal to building and renovating customers, Elegance Tiles has an extensive range of builders' products and systems. "We've got a dedicated building department. Customers can contact and deal with all their inquiries and jobs through our specialist building staff," said Sean.

Some of the major suppliers that provide stock for Elegance Tiles include Massa Imports (naturally), GNS Ceramics, Stoneworld, Volare and Designer Stone. Sean said jokingly with a lot of laughter, "They might shoot me if I didn't say Massa Imports! But of course, Massa Imports is our number one supplier. We also choose other local suppliers and wholesalers. We don't import much product direct. And we buy a bit of product from NCIA in Newcastle. Supporting local and national companies is what we like to do." ■

The Elegance Tiles Pakenham store, as seen from different vantage points



Second generation continues Cerbis Ceramics' success

Beginning operations as Ceramic Tile Centre in 1987, Cerbis Ceramics quickly grew a reputation for importing the latest European fashions in floor and wall coverings. A wide range, large stock, value for money and impeccable service became the foundations for the business' longevity and success.

Today, over 25 years later, the very same foundations are still the base from which Cerbis Ceramics' operations are built. Cerbis is a second-generation family owned and operated business dedicated to sourcing, stocking and supplying the latest European tiles. Its large and modern showrooms showcase huge stocks of inspiring floor and wall coverings to suit most applications and budgets.

As everyone in the tile industry knows, tiles are about much more than just, well, tiles. It's easy to wax poetic about their origins, which is a complex history where practicality and utility interweaves with aesthetics and — in the 20th Century — even hygiene. They show up everywhere we look in the past and the present day — from the walls of New York's subways, to Le Grand Trianon in Versailles, where France's King Louis XIV decorated it with Delft tiles.

It's the blend of artistic expression with pure industry and trade that many find so fascinating. Those Delft tiles, for example, were originally an effort to copy Chinese porcelain by Europeans in the 17th Century (Europeans would not understand the Chinese techniques until the 18th Century). The tilemakers of Delft (a Dutch city near Rotterdam) were adept at using a tin-glazed technique, where images were painted on fired tiles, before a second firing which rendered the images indelible. By the early 19th Century, however, the tiles from Delft became more rare, as the British developed industrial techniques to manufacture these products more cheaply.

With that kind of complex background, it should come as no surprise that many of the most successful tile merchants in



The team at Cerbis Ceramics in South Australia. (l-r front) Eleni, Elanna (middle) & Zoe and (l-r back) Angelis, Hannah & Alex

Australia come from Continental European backgrounds. While they are adept at the pure business of tiles itself, they can also provide an introduction that the rich, deep, pre-industrial baseline to tiles, the humanitarian context to an increasingly commodified, digitised trade.

Cerbis Ceramics is one of these tile companies, with stores both near Darwin in the Northern Territory and in the northern Adelaide suburb of Dry Creek in South Australia. While the business was established by George and Athina Tsiarbas in Darwin in 1987, since then some of its focus has shifted southward. That came after their son, Angelis Tsiarbas,

the general manager of Cerbis Ceramics SA, moved down to Adelaide with his wife and opened the company's showroom there five years ago. In fact, the second generation has taken over the management of Cerbis Group.

History in tiles

It's evident in speaking with Angelis, how much both the tile industry and his cultural heritage mean to him. "I have spent almost my whole life within the tile industry," he tells us via email.

"I fondly remember the days that my family migrated from Greece to Australia and my parents

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→ took on the challenge of starting their own tile retail business. From a young age, my brothers and I were involved in all elements of the business — from packing, to selling, procurement and logistics. These experiences have been invaluable for my understanding of the industry and management of my business.”

If you need physical evidence of this engagement, you need look no further than the company's Adelaide showroom. As the photographs indicate, is amazing. Designed by the Adelaide architecture firm of Walter Brooke, the showroom is designed to help guide both consumers and industry professionals in choosing the very best tiles for their purposes.

It does this by providing a series of room "vignettes", which illustrate the way different tiles and installations can be used to produce a room "feel" and effect. Along with that are displays of tiles themselves, to aid customers in comparison and selection.

Angelis sees the physical showroom as having real advantages over, for example, an internet-based presentation. He said, "All our products are on display in our architecturally designed showroom. Most of our displays have been created to showcase the true variation in colour in pattern of each tile which cannot be fully appreciated in online photos."

But the real point of the showroom, Angelis reveals, is the way it can promote interactions with the Cerbis staff. "Our current focus is on personally servicing clients. We are passionate about providing our clients with not only the latest products that represent



The Cerbis retail outlet is backed up by onsite warehouse facilities



The real point of the showroom, according to Angelis Tsirbas, is the way it can promote interactions with the Cerbis staff



value for money, but a level of service that builds relationships and referrals. We have a fantastic, energetic team that is driven to provide clients with the best solution for their project from both design and budget perspectives.

"Most of the team have studied interior architecture and have an appreciation of architectural products and how to bring together different elements together to create a space.

"I encourage our sales consultants' involvement in the process of product selection. This keeps them abreast of emerging trends and technology. We also engage our suppliers for specific product training. Training is delivered to staff by international sales representatives for new product ranges and technology. Suppliers within the industry also provide ongoing technical training for installation products.

"Our showroom is open to retail customers and we have dedicated architectural and commercial representatives to service those specifying our products."

Diverse range

While a fantastic showroom and an enthusiastic team are a good start, in the end no tile business can survive without great product. Cerbis excels in this area as well, through its range and direct, exclusive deals with major European tile manufacturers. Angelis said, "Back in the 80s, we

imported predominately from Italy. While Italy remains the leader in tile design and manufacturing, many countries now contribute to the array of designs available in our showroom.

"Nowadays our collection not only includes the finest designs and quality from Italy but also Zellige tiles handmade in Morocco, natural marble from the islands of Greece, encaustic tiles crafted in Vietnam, Japanese styled finger mosaics, and innovative furniture engineered from tiles in Brazil. There is also a strong presence of tiles manufactured in Asia which provide a cost-effective option for the budget conscious.

"Our product range is diverse. We offer intricate mosaics, decorative ceramic tiles, porcelain floor tiles and pavers, natural stone tiles and wall cladding, as well as large format porcelain slabs. Most of these are stocked and offer a great alternative to glass and engineered stone both in style and price point.

"The latest collections of 41Zero42 which represent the cutting edge in design, have been very popular with architects and designers. Our terrazzo and large format tiles and sheets have been particularly popular lately.

"We are the exclusive supplier in South Australia for Ecostone Terrazzo manufactured by Agglo Baghin. Although there are many terrazzo products on the market at the moment, the Ecostone

range is unrivalled in quality and durability."

Expertise

The Cerbis retail outlet is more than just the lovely face of the showroom — it is backed up by onsite warehouse facilities as well. Angelis said, "Our stock is onsite in the warehouse facilities behind our showroom which gives me the ability to oversee and manage the entire process from the point of selection to delivery. Stocked items are readily available.

"Our customers don't need to wait for us to bring stock in from interstate warehouses. We find that our customers, particularly tradespeople, really appreciate being able to collect any extra material when needed."

The final element for the tile business, of course, is the issue of price. Here Angelis leverages both his knowledge of the European market, and the way this has played out in Australia.

"As one of the newer players in the Adelaide market, we have introduced very competitive pricing on European products that have carried an inflated price in Adelaide. We strive to bring to the Adelaide market, the latest from trends and technology from Europe at the most competitive prices."

Like most tile businesses, Cerbis has found 2020 to be a bit of a difficult year. However, the company has been fortunate in that South Australia has proven itself very resilient in the face of the pandemic brought on by the Sars-CoV-2 virus. Angelise said, "This last quarter has certainly presented its challenges due to the coronavirus pandemic. Initially retail foot traffic and selection appointments were heavily impacted as people were reluctant to interact and there was a lot of uncertainty regarding the economy and job security.

"However, as people are adapting to social distancing and active cases here in South Australia have dropped, retail and selections appointments have recovered. Commercial developments already in the



There is a series of room "vignettes" in the showroom



The showroom effectively showcases the latest fashions in floor and wall coverings



Cerbis Ceramics' showroom is designed by the Adelaide architecture firm Walter Brooke

pipeline carried on during the retail lull.

"As we always hold considerable stock in our on-site warehouse facilities, we were able to draw on existing stock while supply chains in Asia and Europe were affected."

The tile industry is one of the few industries still active today that can claim having survived past pandemics, especially the

third bubonic plague, which ravaged China and Europe in the mid-19th Century, and only really came to an end in the 1960s.

What those centuries of industrial practice have really taught the tile industry is the value of both patience and persistence — qualities that are evident in the way Cerbis has carefully built and expanded its business in Australia. ■

PORTOBELLO

Portobello is probably the best-known ceramic brand from Brazil. Always one of the stand out exhibitors at Expo Revestir, Portobello is one of the few factories in South America that can compete in terms of both design and product quality with the finest Spanish and Italian producers.

The In & Out and Movement range launched in 2018 resulted from close collaboration with three renowned designers: Ruy Ohtake, Jader Almeida and Hideko Honma. This, and other recent product launches, have leveraged Portobello's expertise in very large formats, notably 1,200 by 2,400mm.

Another range typical of Portobello is Pavilion. It is inspired by the Pavillon de l'Esprit Nouveau, a temporary construction designed by Le Corbusier for Paris in 1925. This



design draws on the architect's hugely influential thoughts on colour, Architectural Polychromy. ■

PANARIA CERAMICA



Panaria Ceramica, founded in 1974, is a key component of one of Italy's top ceramic tile businesses, Panariagroup. The tile group is a prominent international player that has the Lea, Fiordo, Cotto D'Este, and Blustyle brands in Italy, as well as Margres and Love in Portugal.

Panaria's reputation was forged in the high-end residential sector. Recent highlights include the Horizon collection, inspired by the elegant shades of marble and the texture of granite. This is a range that goes beyond the interpretation of nature to give a unique effect, a modern style characterised by refined and innovative aesthetics.

A recent addition is large, ultra-thin slabs reinforced with fibreglass, combining the technical performance of ceramic porcelain tiles with benefits of the 5.5mm thickness. The latest products belong to the Protect antibacterial range, an exclusive Panariagroup line of products that come with an antibacterial shield, developed with the world leader in the sector, Microban. ■

QUINTESSENZA CERAMICHE

Since it was founded in the heart of the Sassuolo ceramics district in Italy a decade ago, Quintessenza Ceramiche has forged a growing reputation for exquisite, small format, glazed tiles.

The three stand-out new ranges are Modulo, Dintorni, and Pigmento. Pigmento is a 60 by 370mm porcelain stoneware collection that celebrates colour, via delicate matte surfaces and rich hues.

Dintorni is a 75 by 300mm range that takes the colours of the Pigmento collection and enhances them with a distinctive finish that plays with the contrast between matte and gloss effects.

In order to achieve material consistency and visual appeal, Modulo – 56 by 232mm – flirts with the style of perforated bricks. Its matte, finely granular surface



absorbs light to enhance the purity of the collection's five colours: Classic Brick, Coal, Powder Grey, Chalk White and an intense Moss Green. Modulo has two surface structures, one smooth (Modulo Base) and one ribbed (Modulo Inciso). ■

AGGLO BAGHIN'S ECOSTONE

Over the past couple of decades, a large number of prestigious commercial projects in Australia have been using Agglo Baghin's Ecostone. Produced in Italy using Breton Terastone System's technology, Ecostone is formed from a mixture of marble, calcareous rock, granite, and siliceous stone with cement and water.

The result is a completely natural product that, due to its winning combination of aesthetic appeal and technical performance, is an ideal surface solution for public spaces that enjoy a high footfall.

All Ecostone products consist of natural and eco-friendly materials, making them a leader in sustainable design, and suitable for use in both commercial and residential applications including apartment buildings, shopping centres, airports, hospitals, and schools.

Ecostone is available in a wide range of colours, aggregates, sizes,

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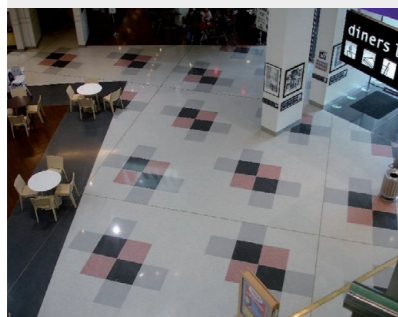
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and finishes which provide effective flooring and cladding solutions. They can be readily applied to diverse spaces and architectural styles including internal and external floors installed on screed, raised access floors, interior and exterior cladding, and ventilated facades.

Ecostone comprises around 75% natural stone in its composition but is still relatively light in weight due to the limited thickness of the tiles when compared to other cement-based products.

The roll call of Australian projects include shopping centres around the country including Eaton Fair (WA), Ellenbrook Central (WA), High Point (VIC), The Pines Elanora (QLD), Secret Harbour Square (WA), Stockdale Baldivis (WA), Broadway Plaza (NSW), Westfield Hurstville (NSW), and Elizabeth City Centre (SA); Sunshine and Box Hill hospitals in Victoria; Perth, Melbourne and Sydney airports; Chanel boutique in Melbourne's CBD, Members Pavilion food court at the Sydney Cricket Ground; Geelong Library; Country Road stores; and apartment developments in Sydney and Melbourne. ■



41zero42

An innovator in terms of design and marketing, 41zero42's unique identity begins with its name, using the simplicity of its ZIP code to identify both a place of belonging and all the values that are related to it.

The company aims for excellence and emphasises the vital importance of research and development. Its portfolio delivers a strong narrative. This means that although the designs are all very different, the trained observer can detect their shared DNA, often a genuine sign of a successful design-led brand.

Typical is Pack, a collection that explores new colour combinations, represented by solid, full colours on which irregular decorations emerge, inspired by the fragmentation of the polar ice floes. Manufactured in 150 by



150mm, it is available in five colour combinations: White-Cream, White-Black, Ice-Green, Grey-Rust, and Graphite-Black. Pack can be used as a wall or floor covering, creating an enveloping all-over effect. ■

ATLAS CONCORDE

Atlas Concorde is the leading brand of Italy's largest ceramic tile company, Concorde Group that also includes the Keope, Supergres, Mirage, Caesar, Fap, Minerva, Marca Corona, and Refin brands in Italy, Novoceram in France, Landmark in the USA, and Italon in Russia.

With such a pedigree, it is little wonder that Atlas Concorde has a vast product portfolio and an enviable reputation for creating high end ceramic surface solutions. Boost Pro is a collection of porcelain floor tiles and white body wall tiles designed to decorate indoor and outdoor spaces with a metropolitan appeal. Boost Pro adds five warm colours that complement the cool tones of the concrete-effect Boost. Produced using the same surface structure, they offer a unique colour



palette in terms of breadth and variety, providing architects, and interior designers many creative options. ■

COLD WEATHER IMPACT ON TILE SYSTEMS

Tim Christopher from Consultile Consulting writes that It is important to the resilience and longevity of tiling installations that cold weather is considered. The entire industry is negatively affected through failing installations of tile and waterproofing. There is also a huge environmental cost to rectifying failed work, particularly as tile is intended to be a long-lasting quality finish. Waterproofing has a function to protect aspects of a construction and when this fails, the damage is usually significant. Undertaking the installation process multiple times contributes needlessly to waste of product and resources and has a significant reputational detriment to the tiling industry.

Although many of the effects and characteristics mentioned in this paper are quite possibly well understood on a scientific level by chemists and manufacturing experts, the impact of cold weather is an issue that needs addressing, and awareness of problems associated should be raised across the waterproofing and tiling related construction industry.

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Tile systems fail more frequently from the effects of cold weather on tile adhesives than is commonly understood and acknowledged. Problems which often become apparent some time after installation, such as aesthetic defects, bond failure, and waterproofing fillet failures, are commonly attributed to poor installations or products. Failure to correctly diagnose the source of these problems can result in costly rectification orders, which could be avoided.

Failures that could have their source in cold weather include the following:

- Leaking / Failure of waterproofing to internal and external areas;
- Some subfloor (screed) failure/ degradation;
- Tile delamination, either partially or completely;

- Leeching of various types of residue from grout joints, perimeter and surrounding area of tile work;
- Discolouration or appearance issues in some types of stone;
- Grout failure or degradation;
- Discoloured grout;
- Efflorescence; and
- A combination of the above occurring either with internal or external situations

WIDESPREAD REGIONAL EFFECTS

In general, the effect of cold weather on tile installation tends to be under-estimated. It is difficult to always make accurate tiling and waterproofing assessments for many areas where climate and temperature variations are unpredictable.

There are certainly areas where

these assessments are undertaken as a matter of course. This would include areas such as North America, Canada and northern Europe, as these are commonly regarded as naturally cold regions, and tile installers would typically take steps to accommodate cold weather where needed.

However, the range of areas where tiling is affected by cold weather spreads far beyond these accepted areas. For example, many large cities such as Sydney, Rome and Shanghai experience temperatures which can frequently drop below five degrees Celsius in winter. Yet these might not be automatically be considered as cold areas.

More widely, areas affected by weather that is cold enough to be significant include Australia, southern Europe, South America, and even into regions of Africa at higher altitudes. Temperatures in such areas can consistently fall below zero Celsius at night. Daytime temperatures also can consistently be from 15 degrees Celsius down to five degrees Celsius. These are not collated into scientific format as the area affected is too large, and temperature variation too great.

PRODUCT GUIDELINES

Most products used in tiling and waterproofing applications have indicated setting and curing times in their data sheets. Commonly this will be a time to set at 20 or 23 Celsius for the full time of setting — usually 24 hours or more. A level of humidity is also often referred to in relation to the expected time to set/cure. Even a basic generic mortar or screed mix containing cement, sand and perhaps lime, has an expected curing time of approximately one week per 10mm thickness of material.

This applies to normal Ordinary Portland Cement (OPC). However, there is a difference between a set mortar/screed and a dry one. OPC hardens under water, so can be hard and still water-logged. This can cause multiple failures when covered by tile. A rule of thumb for OPC cure could be, speed decreases about six times, dropping from 20 to 5 degrees

Celsius, and virtually stops below 5 degrees Celsius. Cement hardening is a crystallisation process which requires liquid water in the initial stages. If the water is frozen, then no setting takes place. Therefore, from 5 degrees Celsius down to 0 Celsius, setting time increases exponentially. There are special admixtures used in cold climate to enable this process to take place below 0 Celsius. These products work by dropping the freezing point of water. However, these products are seldom found and not usually specified for use in moderate climate areas.

The specified temperatures on a product data sheet are intended as a guideline, not a guaranteed performance outcome in all situations. A variation in setting times can be expected once the temperature and humidity vary from these recommendations. In many instances these setting times are referred to and relied upon by contractors, without considering the impact of temperature or

humidity figures of the actual jobsite, especially overnight.

Cold weather will nearly always result in dramatically extended setting and curing times. Projects are often subsequently scheduled around unrealistic setting and curing expectations. Even in instances where a tiling contractor may attempt to consider extra time needed for setting, other contractors on busy sites will often identify a vacant area which has been left to cure and commence other activities upon the work without consideration of the tile system requirements.

Many people involved in the tile or waterproofing process are unaware or at least underestimate the effect of slower setting times. The combination of some, or all of the following can contribute to problems developing:

- Tile or waterproofing contractors not familiar with and understanding the full meaning of setting times on data sheets;

- Building contractors being used to “always doing it that way”;
- Product sales representatives, failing to grasp the full impact and the extent of cold weather on their product;
- Product sales representatives, retailers, architects and building contractors not fully explaining the extent of how cold weather will affect setting capabilities and the likely impact on the end user;
- Product representatives not being fully aware of temperature variations in a given region because site visits to such regions occur on limited basis;
- Incorrect product selection for application to a potential cold weather climate environment; and
- Inadequate product range being available to suit application as the location for use is not regarded as a cold weather climate environment.



PHOTOGRAPH 1: This image shows a waterproofing membrane two days old, applied over a fillet bond breaker. The temperature is insufficient for curing of the membrane to take place. The membrane curing remains in a liquid state.



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PHOTOGRAPH 2: This image displays lack of adequate bond in the centre of the tile. The trowel technique has added to the ability to retain moisture. The tiles are 600mm x 600mm. Installation was done directly to waterproofing membrane during winter in Sydney, Australia. There was rain on the installation and the average temperatures in the installation period range from a high of 18 degrees Celsius and average low is nine degrees Celsius

→ **POSSIBLE PROBLEMS**

The combination of problems that can arise through slowed curing and setting at different stages are extensive and almost limitless. However, major issues are those arising from uncured underlays/screeds, waterproofing, tile adhesive, grout and lippage control devices (clip systems).

Uncured underlays/screeds:

Underlays and screeds which are not cured properly and are impacted by foot traffic or commencement of the tiling process can degrade quickly, especially on the surface. Crumbling and delamination can occur at the surface layer and separation can also occur at the point of bond to the substrate. Even once tiles are installed, the adhesive setting time required can be impacted by excess moisture in the substrate. Subsequent access by others to the tiled surface can easily result in partially broken bond at the weakest point in the installation. Failing to account for the impact of cold weather can create several points where there could be issues arising in the future.

These underlays/screeds also

need to be dry. This term is often misunderstood and confused with “cured”. If a screed contains moisture, there is a large potential for leeching from efflorescence or adhesive polymers if tiles are installed over a wet substrate. Rain and low temperatures can combine to cause such problems as there is no way for the moisture to escape.

It is also important to note the thickness of a screed/underlay. The drying rate follows Fick’s Law of Diffusion which says that the time to dry increases by the square of the pathway length. This means a screed or underlay that is twice as thick needs four times longer to dry. This calculation assumes no further rain or moisture impact throughout the drying process.

Waterproofing

Depending on membrane selected there can be multiple issues for this step in the tile installation process. Single part acrylic/SBR membranes require specific humidity and temperature to cure. Again, it is also important for the substrate to be dry as well as cured. There can be confusion when comparing with cement/concrete where cured and dry are intermixed. Membranes must

dry and stay dry long enough for film form properly as per the data sheet. When these requirements are not met, this type of product will be impacted heavily if not allowed to cure adequately. Issues such as excessively damp substrate, impervious substrate including silicone/polyurethane bond breakers of various types, and rain/moisture impacts while curing, all will negatively affect this type of product. Most Liquid Polyurethane membranes for example, will not start to set until the temperature is well over 10 Celsius. They can actually take months to cure.

(See photograph 1)

Tile adhesive

Although there are many types of adhesives, popular products with an “E” classification (for extended open time) are particularly vulnerable [5]. Any adhesive that hasn’t set adequately is subject to delamination by having the adhesive bond broken through people accessing the installation before setting has taken place. This can be due to early setting, which comes from the cement component.

However, the polymer

component does not film form well for at least a week, under good conditions. This is more important as the tile size increases, and if the application is subsequently applied onto a waterproofing membrane or non-porous surface.

Most drying of tile adhesives comes from absorption by the substrate. Water cannot dry out through the tile and can only leave upwards through the grout line. If the tile is installed over a membrane, particularly one which has been laid for some time and is well cured, then the water in the adhesive can only escape through the grout line.

Both low temperatures and impact of moisture such as rain will slow the curing of the adhesive significantly. If there are installations that are exposed to rain or mist continually, any voids under the tiles, such as those from un-collapsed notched trowel application will further retain water. This in turn retards the setting of the adhesive dramatically.

(See Photograph 2)

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RLA FastSet

RLA FastSet is a high quality and cost-effective rapid setting, polymer modified, grey cement-based tile adhesive. Ideal for use in situations where the adhesive must dry quickly or when grouting must be completed shortly after fixing of tiles.

It is suitable for tiling in situations where residual moisture can cause affects like water staining, discoloration and efflorescence in some natural stone tiles Class (A). It is also suitable for domestic and commercial applications, and for use over 24-hour green sand/cement screed.

RLA FastSet is non-slump and ideal for large format tiles. It is designed for bonding porcelain, ceramic and stone, for example, natural stones*, terrazzo and mosaic tiles.

This adhesive can be applied onto a variety of substrates like concrete, render, rendered brickwork; block work, Gyprock, and fibre cement surfaces. It can be used internally or externally on wall and floor surfaces. It can also be used for fixing both high and low porosity tiles.

RLA Fast Set can be used for fixing tiles over most waterproofing membranes. However, it is advisable to contact the manufacturer prior to commencing. It can be used for fixing low to medium moisture sensitive tiles* stone that is classified as Class A. Dimensionally unstable (curling) stones must be confirmed suitable with the adhesive and conditions prior to laying by the installer.

*Please consult the RLA technical data sheet for further details.



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Some documents such as ISO guidelines (ISO17870-2), indicate that the time frame for drying could be measured in weeks for an application such as thin gauged porcelain panels. I have observed installations over waterproofing where the centre of the adhesive in the panel is still completely wet after two years. Efflo-rescence and/or polymer leeching from moisture contact with uncured adhesive is also a possibility.

(See photograph 3)

This is particularly likely in the event of rain contacting externally installed work. In some cases, once the uncured adhesive has been impacted enough by moisture the degradation of the adhesive is permanent and its performance will be permanently adversely affected. Subsequent bond failure is very likely in this scenario.

(See photograph 4)

Grout

All grouts are affected by low temperatures. Setting is slowed in cementitious, polymer modified, acrylic and epoxy products. This could result in discolouration, efflorescence, or poor resilience once put into service. If the grout process is undertaken too soon, then efflorescence will occur. It is often assumed that the only requirement for grouting to be undertaken, is when the tiled floor is trafficable. However, grouting work can trap moisture beneath tiles which can accelerate adhesive degradation.

Lippage control devices (clip systems)

Premature removal of the lippage control devices even under normal temperature conditions can have serious consequences. (This issue has been raised previously in 'Issues with tile installation levelling devices' by Colin Cass at Qualicer 2016.) Cold temperatures which have slowed or halted the setting process of an adhesive would impact the bond of a tile when lippage devices are removed before adequate setting has taken place. In instances where tiles have been forced or "bent" flat against their natural shape, this is even more critical. The pressure of the tile to



PHOTOGRAPH 3: This image shows extensive polymer leeching which began to take place early after completion. There was rain on the installation and the average temperatures in the installation period range from a high of 18 degrees Celsius and average low is nine degrees Celsius.



PHOTOGRAPH 4: This image shows degraded adhesive which is weakened and crumbling through lack adequate curing and moisture impact.

revert to its original profile would cause increased pressure on uncured adhesive. This could lead also to bond failure after a time.

LONGEVITY OF PERFORMANCE

The impact of the above possible problems (not an exhaustive list) plus other factors may not become obvious for some time. It could be a few months or a few years until any combination of the problems

listed become apparent. Less drying shrinkage at an early age means more drying shrinkage at later age. If the shrink-age occurs when the adhesive is still soft, there is little built in stress. If the adhesive stays wet for a long time, it will set and harden, but the polymer will not film form properly.

(See photograph 5)

When it then begins to dry, the drying shrinkage causes a harder

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→ mortar to form and the stress build up on the tiling system is greater. Combined with poor results for the polymer, which is added to manage shrinkage stress, the tile is more likely to pop. ISO 13007 (Grouts and Adhesives) has the heat stress test as part of its scope to determine the characteristics in this type of circumstance. It should be noted that some adhesive manufacturers only show the dry bond and wet bond strengths, and not the 70 degrees Celsius heat stress test.



PHOTOGRAPH 5: This image shows adhesive on tiles in various states of final curing. The tile bonded around the edges strongly, then less well towards the centre where prolonged moisture content and slow setting has retarded the outcome. Poor trowel method has exacerbated this problem.

Experts or adhesive manufacturers may be consulted to assess the cause of a tiling system failure in the case of warranty claims. At this point it is likely that unrelated or additional influences are blamed for the problems at hand. Issues such as notch trowel sizes, trowel method and back buttering and movement joints are factors which could be identified to indicate incorrect installation but may not be the major factor of influence.

Expansion joints, slab construction, membrane thickness, type of adhesive product, environmental impacts such as sea air exposure and even mixing procedure of the product used, can (sometimes incorrectly) be found as the cause of many of

these problems. Of course, it isn't always easy to prove the impact or occurrence of some of these factors without expensive lab testing.

Often the adhesive manufacturers or consultants don't know how to go about testing, and facilities to carry out such work

are not readily available. If other causes are cited as the origin of failure, it is quite possible the same products, methods and weather constraints are used and will impact the rectification work. Cold weather is usually never considered as its impact at the time of failure is extremely difficult to prove.

CALCULATING THE IMPACT OF COLD WEATHER ON PRODUCTS

For the user of tiling products, it would be sensible to attempt to calculate the setting time as adjusted for the temperatures that are impacting the installation. There are usually no guidelines on adhesive packaging to calculate this adjustment, only limitations of use. As a result, the contractor is obliged to estimate setting time based on the conditions which are going to impact on the project.

Many products have 20 degrees Celsius as a quoted temperature to achieve setting time. Installers could attempt to calculate setting times based on that guidance. They might, for example, consider that a reduction in temperature down to 10 degrees Celsius would mean the setting time would double, and they might double that for temperatures that then go down to 5 Celsius, and so forth. This is clearly

unscientific and better described as a guess. Unfortunately, the effect on setting times is actually worse than this example as the response is nonlinear. It would be more accurate to triple these calculations. Unfortunately, once again, this type of calculated guess is neither accurate nor reliable.

Many products are restricted for use below five degrees Celsius. It is important to note that ambient temperature and surface temperature often differ. Surface temperature of the substrate is commonly lower than ambient temperature, which further exacerbates error in judgement in suitability for product application.

Two important matters need serious consideration in the context of ambient and surface temperatures. What is the measurable impact of these realities and how is it applied to any given situation? What are the calculations and steps

necessary to be taken at any given temperature for the contractor? This information is not on product packaging or data sheets.

To compound these issues, the additional heat sink effect of a cold slab is almost impossible to estimate, but it is safe to say it is usually grossly underestimated. Many product labels only reference that they aren't to be allowed to freeze. This is probably an obvious and reasonable requirement. However, this doesn't give an indication of how much longer it will be before the products have set/cured enough in order to commence the next step of installation.

In reality, an accurate calculation is not possible. The setting is slowed and increased at different rates for different products as the temperature changes. Temperature and humidity are also regional and local variables add even more combinations of influences.

RLA StoneSet

RLA Stone Set is a premium grade rapid setting, polymer modified, white cement based tile adhesive. Ideal for use in situations where the adhesive must dry quickly or when grouting must be completed shortly after fixing of tiles.

It is suitable for tiling in situations where residual moisture can cause affects like water staining, discolouration and efflorescence in some natural stone tiles Class (A).

This adhesive is suitable for domestic and commercial applications and for use over 24-hour green sand/cement screed.

RLA Stone Set is non-slump and ideal for large format tiles. It is designed for bonding porcelain, ceramic, stone, for example natural stones*, terrazzo and mosaic tiles.

It can be applied onto a variety of substrates like concrete, render, rendered brickwork; block work, Gyprock, and fibre cement surfaces. The adhesive can also be used internally or externally on wall and floor surfaces.

It can be used for fixing both high and low porosity tiles, and for fixing tiles over most waterproofing membranes. However, it is advisable to contact the manufacturer prior to commencing.

RLA Stone Set is suitable in immersed situations like swimming pools, spas etc. It can be used for fixing low to medium dimensionally* sensitive tiles* stone that is classified as Class A.

*Please consult the RLA technical data sheet for further details



PHOTOGRAPH 6: This image shows external work exposed to rain during winter. Some joints aren't filled allowing ingress of water.

→ Indeed, products such as some polyurethanes used in the waterproofing process become static below five degrees Celsius, and can cease setting at all.

It can also be safely assumed that 10 degrees Celsius is the temperature required to start the setting action of many adhesives. If 10 degrees Celsius is the desirable minimum temperature for many chemical processes in adhesives to take place, what can be expected if an installation experiences fluctuating temperature both above and below this figure? So, if for example, temperature fluctuations are unknown overnight, it isn't realistic to expect a tile contractor to accurately calculate the length of time a series of products will take to dry/cure in such a changing environment.

By way of a practical example, I will refer to research and subsequent calculations I made for the application of a popular waterproofing product in a particular region in Australia. The region of the Australian Capital Territory could be regarded as having a moderate climate in a global context. Maximum temperature ranges of 8 to 40 degrees Celsius for winter-summer periods, and 0 to 20 degrees Celsius minimums for winter-summer periods.

I found when cross referencing weather records for a 12-month period for the area of application, that there were only nine days in that year likely to provide the conditions required by the manufacturer to achieve setting as stated on the data sheet. By making further reference to the Australian Bureau of Meteorology data and matching these to a popular C2S1 (as defined in ISO 13007) adhesive, I found there were only six days of the year in which the weather was in accord with setting times. In alternative lower altitude, more temperate areas, it was apparent that between 20 and 30 days per year would have optimal weather conditions to suit setting requirements.

To calculate these results, I made an allowance for an additional one degree Celsius

to give a best-case scenario for what appears on the data sheet of the adhesive, so as to meet manufacturer's conditions. This is not to say these products won't set, but that setting is likely to be different from the data sheet. The additional time required for setting to take place in order to satisfy manufacturer's conditions is difficult to know without further practice and research.

It is safe to conclude that areas all over the world having similar weather variations to Australia, would also face the same risk with product not drying/curing as per manufacturer's product guidelines. It is arguable that weather variations are not fully considered by the industry when using and specifying waterproofing or similar products.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

There are some possible solutions to the cold weather influences. They are of varying practicality depending on individual sites.

Heating the jobsite

It may be possible to heat the jobsite for internal works to a level that can facilitate more realistic setting times. In reality, many new build construction sites are not practical to heat due to issues such as expanse of site, ability to seal off the area due to uninstalled windows or doors and the size of the heating unit to achieve the temperatures required. Indeed, even the type of heating can be detrimental, for example, gas heating which can cause chalking carbonation that weakens mortars and grouts. This solution is obviously not possible for external applications.

Hot water/heating of products

Hot water can be used in adhesives to speed up or initiate the setting process. This has a variable effect as it depends on the magnitude of the cold weather pre-sent and the appropriate timing as to when to commence/halt/slow/cease the process. This method is only useful if there is access to hot water at the jobsite. Keeping liquid and powders components warm prior to use can also help to initiate setting the process.

MAPEI'S FAST TRACK SYSTEMS

Mapei said it offers fast setting adhesives for tile and stone installations in high pe-destrian places such as hospitals, shopping centres, schools and commercial facili-ties.

One and two-component fast-setting adhesive systems are formulated and developed in the Mapei R&D laboratories around the world. These adhesives form part of the "Fast Track" installation of tiles and natural stone. They help to ensure that public access areas are available for use in the shortest possible time with the same quality outcome.

According to Mapei, the benefits of using a fast setting adhesive all year round (not just in the colder months) includes the surety that tiles installed at the comple-tion of the day will be ready for light foot traffic in a very short period of time and can be walked on or grouted the next morning.

This gives contractors installing porcelain tiles over a waterproofing membrane (when there is no absorption in the tile or substrate) a huge advantage with the re-duced setting times required when using a fast-setting adhesive. This type of application when using a normal setting adhesive can unwittingly break or weaken the adhesive bond causing tiles to break or become drummy. This often occurs once the room is put into service or the heating or air-conditioning units are activated.

Benefits of a fast setting adhesives at a glance:

- Can be used all year round to ensure tiled areas are completely bonded in a short period of time
- Ideal for use when installing porcelain tiles on non-porous substrates (including waterproofing membranes)
- Ideal for natural and reconstituted stone that are sensitive to moisture and staining
- Allows light foot traffic on tiles and grout in 2-3 hours and ready for use in 24 hours
- Ideal for winter and alpine environments where normal setting adhesives experience an extended setting time due to cold temperatures
- Rapid tiling in public and commercial areas where pedestrian traffic cannot be disrupted for extended periods of time

Products in Mapei's fast setting adhesives range include Adesilex P4 (AS ISO 13007-1 - C2F), a self-buttering, quick-setting grey cementitious adhesive for ceramic tiles and stone material. Keraquick S1 (AS ISO 13007-1 - C2FT S1) is a quick-setting, deformable cementitious adhesive with no vertical slip for ceramic tiles and stone material stable in the presence of humidity (thickness of adhesive up to 10 mm). Granirapid (AS ISO 13007 - C2F S1) is a two-component, deformable, quick-setting and drying cementitious adhesive for ceramic tiles and stone material (thickness of adhesive up to 10 mm). Recommended for moisture-sensitive material.

Mapei said they are all high-performance adhesives and suitable for both interior or exterior applications.



Use of fast set products

There are many options available for fast setting components to the tile/waterproofing system. Screed additives, fast cure membranes, fast setting adhesives and grouts are available. These are often an overlooked solution and should be utilised far more regularly. Not all fast setting products will be a total solution as many still need optimal temperatures to be effective.

Cost is also something to consider when utilising this type of product. Using a system of these products will certainly cut down on the moisture retained and slow setting of the whole process. This approach should be considered as a recommended method during colder periods.

Installation practices

Installation which minimises voids for moisture to gather is also critical. Any voids created by poor installation practices should be eliminated. Failing to properly collapse notch trowel ridges, for example, will allow moisture to gather and possibly be retained. This will retard the curing of adhesive. If grouting is in-stalled over moisture such as this, then it can prevent adhesive from curing properly at all.

Covering work

In external situations, covering methods such as tenting should be utilised as common practice. As already mentioned, rain on exposed work will introduce moisture which will be difficult to remove.

(See photographs 6 and 7)

For installations such as pools, it is critical to allow the entire construction to be protected from unwanted moisture ingress. The curing of the shell and any subsequent installation of tile systems is essential for long term performance.

Utilising moisture meters

Using moisture meters to determine the suitability of substrates for an indication of dryness can be beneficial. This can be of particular value for external applications as it would give a more realistic

indication of when it is suitable to proceed with each step of an installation.

Longer setting allowances

Allowing longer times for each process to set and cure is of course optimal. This has become increasingly less practical as time frames on most construction projects tighten. It remains an unlikely option but may be a cost-effective option in some instances. Adhesive that appears to be set in a tile joint is not an indication of the progress of a curing process in the centre of a large tile. External applications subject to freezing would simply have to be delayed to an optimal time of year.

Improved guidelines

Adhesive manufacturers could introduce further guidelines which help install-ers decide on correct process and product selection based on temperatures experienced. Further testing of adhesives could be carried out by manufacturers to de-termine the parameters of adequate curing and setting. The ISO (13007) guide-lines such as the "pull up test", which establishes a "C" classification, could be used to determine this information in a universally beneficial measurement.

Conducting various pull off tests at various temperatures (for example 10 de-grees Celsius) for various time frames. One, two or three plus days at a reduced temperature would provide information about how a particular adhesive will perform. This is important as contractors only have classifications such as C2S1 for adhesives, to use as performance guides. These classifications do not provide enough information to gauge the impact of cold weather on a tile installation. Some products could be described on packaging as "Summer" or "Winter" products for an easier choice by contractors.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Cold weather characteristics are influences that many contractors should consider more seriously. Each contractor should be aware

→ of their own regional weather impacts on installations and should design them accordingly. Extra time for setting and curing should be insisted upon when required.

Product suppliers should consider broadening their range of fast-setting products to customers in colder areas. This would have the effect of improving the range of products available across the market by encouraging other manufacturers to develop quality fast cure products.

Adhesive manufacturers should stress the importance of cold weather and moisture issues when conducting training and trade days.

Product manufacturers should clarify the extent of setting delay due to the impact of cold weather, rather than just acknowledging that it exists. It may be beneficial to have "Summer" and "Winter" products.

Training organisations such as trade schools should include in their relevant syllabus the challenge cold weather and moisture presents, and provide solutions to mitigate risks facing new trades people in the industry.

Architects and building contractors should acknowledge cold weather and moisture as a possible risk issue and adjust actions, schedules and specifications on projects before and during construction to mitigate those risks. This is particularly important in relation to waterproofing as it is part of a critical aspect of the construction. ■

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PHOTOGRAPH 7: This image shows adhesive on tiles in various states of final curing. The tile bonded around the edges strongly, then less well towards the centre where prolonged moisture content and slow setting has retarded the outcome. Poor trowel method has exacerbated this problem.

About the author

Tim Christopher has been in the tiling and construction industry for 21 years. He was awarded ACT Tiling Apprentice of the Year after completing his apprenticeship in ceramic tiling. Soon after, he established his own business based in ACT then later NSW.

As a tiler, his business has completed work at Australian Parliament House, Australian Treasury and a number of other government agencies. Tim has also undertaken a lot of work in the private sector to install stone and tile in conjunction with architects and designers.

As a consultant, he has been called upon to investigate many different types of problems involved in stone installations, swimming pool issues, acoustic underlay problems, optical hazing, tile crazing within the glaze, as well as general tiling, waterproofing or drainage problems.

Tim is a current member of the Technical Committee on both the Australian Standards AS3958 (Guide to Ceramic Tiling) and Australian Standards AS3740 (Waterproofing). He also serves as the vice president of TTIAA (Tiles and Tiling Industry Association of Australia), and is a technical advisor for TANZ (Tilers Association of New Zealand).

According to the Consultile website, the company has experience in reconstituted resin composite stone installations and Green Star compliant projects. Its reputation is based on a thorough knowledge of theoretical and practical guidelines that underpin tile work including Australian Standards, the Australian Building code and relevant Fair Trading legislation.

Consultile has been an expert consultant and witness before Consumer Affairs Tribunals in the ACT and NSW for individuals and business seeking dispute resolution about tiling issues.

For more information about Consultile, please go to the website: <https://www.consultile.com.au>



THE BEST OF AUSTRALIAN INTERIOR DESIGNS

TILE SURFACES MADE SOME HIGH-PROFILE APPEARANCES IN A NUMBER OF PROJECTS THAT WERE PART OF THE AUSTRALIAN INTERIOR DESIGN AWARDS



Script Skincare by Hecker Guthrie won the award for Retail Design. Photography Shannon McGrath.



Budge Over Dover by YSG won the Residential Award. Photography Prue Ruscoe.

Celebrating its 17th anniversary this year, entries to the 2020 Australian Interior Design Awards (AIDA) represent “a focus on the human experience, with considered design elements and rigorous craftsmanship used to show that the functional can be exceptional”.

The work by architectural firm Hassell for Italian restaurant, Di Stasio Citta, known for providing patrons an art gallery experience and a hospitality offering received a triple accolade. It won the Premier Award for Australian Interior Design, the award for Hospitality Design (jointly with Richards Stanisich for Hotel Rose Bay) and Best of State Commercial Design (Victoria).

Theatre, art, drama, exchange and contribution to the street are all addressed in contemporary, interesting ways. In particular, the integration of significant artworks within the overall scheme/ throughout the space and playful yet restrained stylings.

Sustainability has been approached from the perspective of longevity, which is evident in the construction, and one jury member commented that you can imagine the restaurant being here in 50 years’ time.

HOSPITALITY DESIGN

For the award for Hospitality Design, the jury found that Di Stasio Citta “conveys a thorough investigation of the history of the restaurant, its restaurateur and the hospitality culture of Melbourne. One gets the sense a genuinely rigorous design process has taken place and the result is a strong conceptual offering that’s original, brave and highly impactful.”

Joint winner for Hospitality Design, Richards Stanisich for Hotel Rose Bay in New South Wales, the jury agreed the project represents an incredibly sophisticated response to the renovation of an



Bourke Street Apartment by Fowler and Ward was shortlisted for the Residential Design award. Photography Tom Blachford



Triple award winner, Di Stasio Citta by Hassell. Photography Peter Bennetts.



Hotel Rose Bay by Richards Stanisich was joint winner for Hospitality Design. Photography Felix Forest.



Leigh Street Wine Room by studio-gram received a commendation for Hospitality Award. Photography Lewis Potter.



Florence Coffee by CoLAB Design Studio was shortlisted for the Hospitality Design award. Photography Hannah Caldwell Photography.



Little Sky Gelato by Ewert Leaf was shortlisted for Retail Design. Photography Fiona Storey.



Marthas Table by Melissa Collison Design Electrolight was shortlisted for Hospitality Design. Photography James Geer.



The Pavilion by GSID Georgie Shepherd Interior Design was shortlisted for Residential Design. Photography Christopher Morrison.



iconic 1929 pub. There's consideration of both the materiality and motifs relevant to the building's history, which sees the original Art Deco style retained yet delivered in a fresh, modern way.

RESIDENTIAL DESIGN

Other award-winning projects worth noting for the tile industry is Budge Over Dover. It won the award for Residential Design. The jury commended the designer, YSG for showing great skill in working with the existing building fabric.

The palette of materials, colours, textures and accents uniquely responds to the client's brief without relying on a conventional vernacular and the result is completely unexpected, while still being restrained and elegant. A sculptural aesthetic defines the overall scheme and there's also a clear relationship to the exterior, resulting in a seamless integration between inside and out.

YSG for Budge Over Dover also won the award for Residential Decoration. This project was acknowledged for its confidence in the selection and curation of objects and furnishings. The jury commented that its otherwise mundane floor plan was elevated through a genuinely creative process, giving rise to a striking yet restrained colour approach. More importantly, it looks like an authentic interior, not one that's been styled for a photoshoot, and so presents as a highly personalised response to the client's brief.

The jury found the seamless integration between decoration and interior very appealing and was impressed with the innovative material palette. Finishes complement the overall scheme and the contrasting bedroom treatments also add drama and elements of surprise. The attention to detail is outstanding and the art and furniture call attention to the home's handcrafted qualities, while highly textural surfaces lend it a rich, sensual appeal.

RETAIL DESIGN

The award for Retail Design was given to Hecker Guthrie for Script Skincare. There's currently a growing appetite amongst consumers for the knowledge and science behind what we buy, especially around products for health and wellbeing. Script Skincare's interior design meets this demand by demonstrating a new way to showcase skincare. To this end, a curious, elegant balance between high-technology science and humanitarian sensitivity has been expertly achieved.

The jury applauded the designers' fresh approach to gender neutrality, beauty and wellness, which has resulted in a bright interior that feels quite androgynous and also global in its handling of skincare branding. It's particularly successful in its use of scale, while possessing a multi-layered grasp of visual merchandising.

More importantly, there's a real clarity and rigour

to the detailing and materiality, which reject all preconceptions of what a beauty retail offering should be in this day and age.

VIRTUAL EVENT

In response to restrictions on public gatherings, organisers were tasked with finding another way to present this year's awards. For the first time, the AIDA announcement was held online and live streamed via Facebook Live, with Australia's leading interior design and architecture practitioners and professionals participating from the comfort of their own homes.

Delivered through a partnership between the Design Institute of Australia and Architecture Media's Artichoke magazine, AIDA is Australia's most distinguished awards program for the sector.

For more award winners, go <https://australianinteriordesignawards.com>

COVERINGS MAKES THE SWITCH

With global travel restrictions and lockdowns restricting the usual round of sales presentations, showroom tours, and global tile events, more emphasis is being placed on digital communication platforms.

International correspondent Joe Simpson reports on what happened when the Coverings trade show was called off as a result of the coronavirus pandemic.

The cancellation of Coverings, the largest tile and stone exhibition in North America, came after most of the big factories had already selected the latest designs to spotlight, prepared supporting photography and literature, and designed the stands.

As soon as Tile Today was informed that the New Orleans event was off, I wrote to all exhibitors to ask them to forward their product information. My aim was to compile a virtual Coverings story, the edited highlights of a show that never was.

The manufacturers' response was overwhelming. In the course of editing and selecting from this massive mountain of material, some clear trends emerged along with a few real gems.

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→ EMERGING TRENDS

One tile design I was most looking forward to seeing at Coverings was the influence of maximalism, with its emphasis on colour and pattern. This has led to fresh directions like the bright, bold, colourful marble-effects that so caught the imagination at Cevisama in Spain back in February.

With Wabi Sabi, or deliberate imperfection, also influential in design, many top European tile manufacturers have gone back to their roots and reinvented glaze effects, patterns, and formats from tile's glorious historical heritage.

Peronda is a brand that has perfected the Wabi Sabi distressed-effect look, with care-worn decors. It has managed better than any other tile maker to translate a Japanese world view centred on

the acceptance of transience and irregularity, delivering beautiful tiles that are "imperfect, impermanent, and incomplete".

The growth of inside-out design has fuelled the expansion of 20mm thick external grade tiling. Some factories have chosen to specialise in this area, producing 20mm tile lines for their own catalogue, and exterior grade tiles for other brands who do not have the production capacity in this specialised area.

Factories are now able to produce so many different formats such as 1,200 by 1,200mm floor tiles, extra wide and long plank formats, and every other format down to the classic 100 by 100mm. So in the 2020 tile market, anything goes including matte, satin, and gloss glaze combinations, geometric shapes, 3D forms, textured reliefs,

and historical architectural styles like Art Deco. All these trends would have come together in New Orleans in a glorious banquet of ceramic eye-candy and technical porcelains.

Visitors to Coverings may have been drawn to Ceramica Sant'Agostino's Lakewood featuring oiled wood-effect planks with a hand-planed surface, or Vallelunga's Cava range of satin finish marble designs. Or would they have preferred the SICIS Vetrite Gem Glass line of 13 semi-precious stones captured and amplified between giant sheets of glass. Another potential star was Refin's Stardust that combines the nebulous veining of alabaster with elegant metallic effects.

One design direction that would have turned heads is rare marbles and semi-precious stones shown

→ alongside tiles with a pearlescent finish such as Rhapsody by Naxos, Oro by LaFaenza, Onyx & More by Casa Dolce Casa, Moon Stone by CoEm, Infinito by Fondovalle, and Nolita by Vallelunga.

I also think that visitors to New Orleans would have loved the latest sculpted wall tiles like Peronda's Donna range, the Underground collection from Keraben or Natucer's fantastic Custom d'Autore series. In all these ranges, the emphasis is on creating authentic, one-of-a-kind looks.

New Orleans would have provided further evidence that sculpted, shaped, and decorated tiles — with ridges and creases through to more sculptural surfaces like boiserie — are enjoying a full-scale revival. Ample evidence comes in the form of Cevica's Chintz, Roca's Rockart, Apavisa's Intuition, Vallelunga's Soffio, Made+39's Drapes, Atlas Concorde's Aix, Fap's Lumina, Piemme's Materia, and Vogue's Dekorami.

I was also keenly awaiting the tropical garden vibe, encapsulated by the Tahiti tiles from 14 Ora Italiana. More tile manufacturers have drawn on horticultural illustration to create bold floral forms on XXL porcelain slabs. The resulting hyper-realistic wallpaper-effects takes "tile" to another dimension. Outstanding examples include Colli di Sassuolo's Extra, Florim's I Filati di Rex, Francesco de Maio's Verde Verticale, Casalgrande Padana's Limpha, Emilceramica's Tele di Marmo Revolution, Fap's Nux, Ragno's Maiora, and Vallelunga's I-Sense.

Manufacturers are marketing these products as ceramic wallpaper, offering digitally printed patterns on gauged porcelain panels. To my mind, the leader in this arena is ABK that has introduced the Dark Edition capsule collection — inspired by the Gothic side of nature — to its peerless Wide&Style portfolio.

Marazzi is leading the way among tile companies looking back to

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Zip is a collection of rectified glazed porcelain tiles for both floors and walls. It incorporates the joint, making it a creative element as well as joining the tiles. Pictured is Zip in ivory white.



Italian brand Cerdisa has a wood-look collection called Megeve. Teak, pictured, comes in a natural effect finish.



Fioranese rethinks marble in an intense green shade in its Sound of Marbles collection



Lume, part of the Crogiolo series by Marazzi, introduces a new size: 6x24 cm



North African tradition meets industrial ceramics in Zellige, part of the Crogiolo series by Marazzi



Metallica by Armonie Ceramiche combines the appealing aesthetics of cement and metal.

their own history for contemporary inspiration, with its Crogiolo series.

But my personal preference is for ranges that reference the 1960s and 70s. Featuring psychedelic colours, playful geometries, and trippy patterns this should be a fertile design field for years to come. Examples include Aparici's Altea, Arcana's Komi, Imola Ceramica's Let It Bee, Vives' Pop Art, Ceramica Vietrese's Oro di Napoli, Bardelli's Fleurs, Caesar's Join, Emilceramica's Dimore, Fioranese's Cementine OpenAir, Marca Corona's Paprica, and Ornamenta's Décor.

Wood-effect tiles remain a major trend this year, with a vast number of styles and timber varieties available. A great alternative to real timber, today's wood-effect tiles offer unmatched durability and style. The beauty of timber grain, now enhanced by some of the leading manufacturers with dual-printer technology, comes to the fore in the larger plank formats. BUT timber-effects can also play to the shabby chic and country cottage aesthetic, with distressed tiles and faux parquet looks.

It is pleasing to note that we are now seeing wood-effects make an impact on wall applications, and emerge in unexpected forms,



Zellige salvia lux tile in 10x10cm, part of the Crogiolo series by Marazzi



RETOUR by Flaviker is inspired by recycled materials, in this case a "return" to cementitious stone



The Join collection from Casa Ceramica combines cement with resin in one product



Les Bijoux de Rex from Florim is inspired by rare and precious marble that can be compared to works of art



BLAZE from Iris Ceramica brings harmonious tones together in a single space

→ such as hexagons. Good examples include Provenza's Alter, Piemme's Materia, Emilceramica's Millelegni Remake, Floor Gres's B&W Marble, and Sant'Agostino's Timewood.

Given post-modernism's recent comeback, it is not surprising that seminato surfaces have returned. Micro and macro fragments, technicolour dots, and playful interpretations of terrazzo have all played a starring role in dozens of new range introductions. The best examples include Casalgrande Padana's Macro, Refin's Risseu, Del Conca's Frammenti, Ergon's Medley, and Florim's Le Palladiane di Rex.

Hexagonal tiles and fish scale tiles are still very popular. They are sharing the limelight with rhombus-shapes and dots or larger circular tiles.

STAND OVERVIEW

The following companies would have exhibited at Coverings. Here, we list some of the major tile brands and the products that would have been showcased in-person.

Blaze wall tiles from Iris Ceramica come in a classic 100 by 300mm metro format. Featuring a matte, shaded surface, Blaze has a neutral colour palette with precious metal tones in four matte colours, complemented by four different glossy decorated backgrounds: Decor Yellow, Decor Pink, Decor Avio, and Decor Grey. The elegantly linear, simple motifs are counterbalanced by a careful gradation, giving any room a glamorous gold effect. The matte finish plain tiles, all 7.5mm thick, are available in Yellow, Pink, Avio, and Grey.

The concept of "authenticity" has driven tile manufacturers towards ceramic surfaces that offer both visual and tactile appeal, what may be thought of as authentic simulations. This is clearly evident in the new generation of wood-effect tiles, like Blustyle's Green Wood. These porcelain stoneware slabs have a hyper-realistic finish that evokes the true beauty of the

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Brickup is the three-dimensional covering project that combines the look of natural materials with the convenience of NovaBell porcelain stoneware



Ultra-Crystal from Ariostea are marble-effect large slabs in dark grey



Classic marble is transformed into porcelain stoneware with high graphic definition in Fior di Bosco Gloss from Blustyle by Cotto D'este



Zellige gesso + china mosaico lux tile in 30x30cm, part of the Crogiolo series by Marazzi

→ natural timber itself. The range offers three colour shades: Ash, Oak, and Bay. These highly durable 9.5mm-thick 200 by 1,200mm plank format floor tiles are both elegant and sophisticated.

The Royal Stone and Great Royal Stone collections by Iris Group brand Porcelaingres are billed as the creative meeting place between the solid heft of stone and the timeless elegance of marble. Royal Stone comes in a traditional tile format while Great Royal Stone is made in XXL slabs. Combined together they are suitable for both interior design projects and outdoor spaces. Royal Stone is available in five colours: Black Diamond, Imperial Brown, Palladium Grey, Noble Beige, and Platinum White (indoor and outdoor). Great Royal Stone comes in three colours: Platinum White, Palladium Grey, and Black Diamond.

Maiora, the concrete-inspired slimline large slab range from Ragno, is now being produced in a 1,200 by 2,780mm rectified format in three main colours: Bianco, Grigio Chiaro, and Grigio Scuro. This new size, to be offered alongside those already in the range, provides slabs able to cover the full height of a standard wall, with no cuts or additions.

Adding impact to this eye-catching range is Maiora Concrete



Heritage from Ricchetti is modelled on a recycled stone originally from castles in the south of France. It features an uneven texture and shaped edges. Pictured is the Noir option.



VIRTUAL COVERINGS

When the physical exhibition had to be re-scheduled for 2021, the organisers of Coverings, rolled together many elements from the event itself, including its press conference and highly regarded educational program, and hosted them online. Called Coverings Connected, this web-based event took place from 20-23 April, the original dates for the exhibition. (Another one was organised for 26 August.) It attracted nearly 4,000 industry professionals who took advantage of educational webinars and online networking opportunities.

Attendees could engage with over 900 exhibitors through its online Exhibitor Galleries and the New Product Showcase. Exhibitor information was available during the event, and it remains online. Visitors can search products,

access exhibitor press releases, set appointments, and learn the latest trends in the industry. The popular demonstration stage experience was recreated online, as well as trends tours provided through videos and webinars.

“Our goal is to support Coverings 2020 exhibiting companies by providing them with an opportunity to feature their products and announcements in a digital environment,” explains Jennifer Hoff, president of Taffy Event Strategies, organiser of Coverings.

Highlights included a presentation on “Application and Specification of Tile for Outdoor Use” by Martin Brookes, president of Heritage Marble & Tile and Woody Sanders, president of DW Sanders Tile & Stone Contracting. Another

installation and fabrication topic for discussion was “Don’t Let Water Be the Boss: Wet Area Tile Installation” by Mark Heinlein, technical director of the National Tile Contractors Association.

Ryan Fasan, technical consultant for Tile of Spain, Kristin Coleman vice president (VP) of Novita on behalf of Ceramics of Italy and Lindsey Waldrep VP of marketing at Crossville Tile presented on “Global Tile Trends 2020”. Jim Olson, assistant executive director of National Tile Contractors Association held an online “Installation Trends Tour”.

Coverings Connected information can be accessed through the website at <https://www.coverings.com/>

Effect Botanical, the decor that reflects the world of nature and floral patterns. It comprises three modules of 1,200 by 2,780mm that can be used individually and together, with horizontal graphic continuity between the three slabs. Two new colours have been added to the range. Paonazzetto, inspired by the highly prized Carrara marble of the same name, has a white and pale yellow background with very deep, striking vein patterns ranging from shades of green to purples and blacks. Bianco Extra, is a selection of choice Statuario marble with an exceptionally white background, variegated by subtle black vein patterns.

Arioste’s XXL format Crystal reinterprets the mineral world in top-of-the-range porcelain stoneware. Available in soft shades of Dark, Grey and Sky, the texture of the Crystal range is characterised by inclusions that add depth to the surface. The large 3,000 by 1,500mm format, 6mm thick, is ideal to convey the delicate design nuances that explore tones of grey and powder blue. Crystal is also available in 1,500 by 1,500mm, 1,500 by 750mm, 750 by 750mm, and 750 by 375mm, all with a gloss finish.

Ceramiche Refin had chosen Coverings 2020 to present its latest spring collections to the US market. When the event was cancelled, Refin chose to virtually recreate the stand designed for the show in a digital experience that allowed customers to see a preview of the collections that would have been on display.

These included Prestigio Onyx, a range that reinterprets onyx in a contemporary style. The attention to detail and colour contrasts define a surface with refined aesthetic depth. It offers a choice of two surfaces, Soft and Lucido (shiny) and three delicate shades: White, Grey, and Beige. The formats are 750 by 1,500mm, 750 by 750mm, 600 by 600mm, and 300 by 300mm, plus a 300 by 300mm gloss mosaic.

Also new from Refin is Pedra Azul, which draws inspiration from

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The Cromatica collection from Florim comes in large porcelain stoneware glazed sheets



KRON by Museum has a neutral background with crisscrossing fine white veins, and comes in a 260x100cm format. Pictured is the Kron tile in the Charcoal option.



Zellige carbone lux tile in 10x10cm, part of Marazzi’s Crogiolo series

→ a limestone sourced from the Iberian Peninsula. The surface is characterised by a slightly wavy graphic, in which light areas and dark ring marks alternate in a gentle harmony of forms. The presence of delicate fossil inclusions embellishes and defines a skilfully balanced surface.

The colour Natural is faithful to the original material, and flanked by the earthy, warm Greige, the light-coloured Ivory, and the Grey cold nuance.

A structured version is added to the matte finish, characterised by light, regular incisions that run along the surface in a longitudinal direction, giving it continuity and liveliness. The range is completed with two mosaics: one with regular tiles and the other, Mosaico Mix, that alternates matte and structured surfaces of different sizes.

ABK's latest collections include Atlantis, an elegant stone-effect range inspired by volcanic stone.



Green Wood from Blustyle offers high quality porcelain stoneware slabs with a finish that evoke the beauty of nature



Odine is a stoneware tile inspired by aged marble, made by Argenta Ceramica

Here, neutral, dusty colours are interrupted by veins of varying intensity, giving each piece a natural and distinctive look.

Atlantis comes in four different finishes. The natural version stands out for its sober, contemporary sophistication. The lapped surface is tasteful, and the hammered surface offers a digital reproduction of the manual stone working technique. The non-slip R11 grip finish version, essential for outdoor applications, is available in both 9mm and 20mm thicknesses (OUT.20 section).

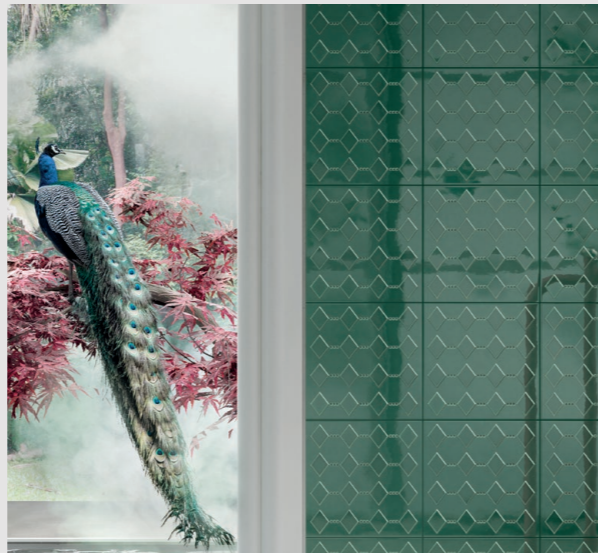
This range can be used in many applications including floors, walls, countertops and furniture surfacing. The colour options are Smoke, Grey, Sand, Moon, and Taupe.

Iroc from Antica Ceramica Rubiera is suitable for floor and wall applications in residential and commercial buildings, both indoors and out. This through-body porcelain stoneware range is offered in Greige, White, Multicolor, and Black. The 9.5mm thick 600 by 1,200mm rectified gres tiles have an R10 slip rating, while the 9mm thick natural finish 310 by 620mm porcelain tiles have an R9 rating. Additional design options are provided by matching listellos and 310 by 310mm mosaic tiles.

Ariana's Luce collection combines the visual appeal of plaster with an on-trend colour palette specially created for the world of contemporary architecture and interior design. The collection's elegant minimal chic aesthetic is enhanced by the translucent effect of the surface, which varies in intensity according to the ambient lighting conditions.

Luce comes in six cultivated colours. Along with the two shades, Verderame and Gold that arte reminiscent of brushed metal surfaces, there are four other colours that feature a manual trowelled effect and are inspired by plaster and resin palettes: Piombo (Lead), Peltro (Pewter), Acciaio (Steel), and Perla (Pearl).

Its decorative potential is enhanced by the small white body



Dekorami is a line of glazed stoneware tiles designed by studio Marcante-Testa for Ceramica Vogue. It makes use of simple geometrical shapes.

50 by 250mm brick format tiles, which are available in both satin and gloss finishes.

Luce surfaces can be combined with the Ariana Decora slabs, which allow the field tiles to be customised with metallic screen-printed effects in 1,200 by 2,700mm, and 600 by 1,200mm sizes.

Blustyle by Cotto d'Este has added to its portfolio of contemporary Italian ceramics for commercial and residential settings. It was originally intended to make Coverings the launch pad for three new series: Élite, Green Wood, and Outdoor. The last two are fairly self-explanatory. Élite, however, is something a bit different. The range takes the timeless charm of precious marbles and reinterprets them with surprising realism. The search for natural inspiration stretched from the most prestigious Italian quarries, through Spain, to the African hinterland.

The resulting collection offers six types of marble, including two genuine classics: Calacatta, and Statuario. Onice offers voluptuous shades with a luminescent effect. An exquisite grey colour with thin irregular white veins in the Fior Di Bosco is particularly versatile thanks to the simplicity of its marbled structure. Pietra Grey has a charcoal grey background crossed by thin white veins, while Dark Brown is



For 2020, the secret is combining grey tiles with accent hues, such as saturated pastels. Grey can work with mint, gold, and various green, blue, and red hues. Pictured is the Maiora Concrete Effect tile from Ragno,

→ distinguished by its dark colour and warm veins.

This collection is presented in the traditional 10mm thickness in 600 by 1,200mm, 600 by 600mm, and 300 by 600mm formats. The collection is completed by book matched or "macchia aperta" compositions.

Join by Ceramiche Caesar combines the modernity of concrete with organic nature of resin in one product. The collection has a precious, material feel, with a softness to the surface finish and impressive adaptability of use.

There are four innovative surface finishes. Soft, with a tactile finish gives the product a sense of originality to a setting. Matt R10 A+B is ideal for combining performance levels with aesthetics. This finish is suitable for settings which require an increased anti-slip coefficient without compromising on the pleasant feel of the surface.

Graph is inspired by the continuous brushing resin application technique. This finish creates a three-dimensional surface, with a fine 3D scoring that can bring originality to any space.

Aextra20 is characterised by a structure that guarantees a R11 A+B+C non-slip coefficient and a thickness of 20 mm. This finish can enhance outdoor living.



The coloured and shaped joint in the Zip tile becomes a graphic sign, creating a continuous surface. Zip becomes a zipper, in all respects. Pictured is Zip in terracotta.

The tactile nature and structure of the Ceramiche Caesar tiles are unveiled in the 10 different colours, seven sizes and three thicknesses available, ranging from inviting shades of grey to ethereal white and imposing black. There are also three colour accents. Completing the range are the Dusk, Hoop, Reed and Deco decorations and a number of special pieces.

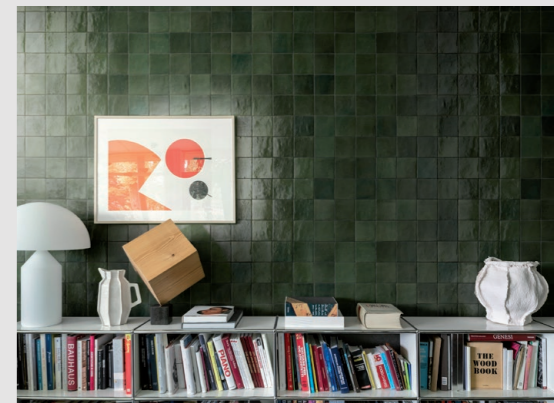
Stemming from the collaboration between Ceramica Bardelli and Meneghello Paoletti Associati, Zip is a collection of designer tiles with a bold twist that transforms ceramic tiling into a dynamic visual system. The 600 by 600mm and 600 by 1,200mm rectified porcelain tiles, 10mm thick, are available with shaped edges to create unusual decorative effects reminiscent of the full and empty volumes of zips.

With their matte finish and uniform surface texture, the three colours of Zip – Anthracite Black, Ivory White and Antique Terracotta – act as a neutral background capable of enriching the decorative role of the joints. These form an essential element of the design, bringing the tiles together in a single, continuous surface.

Flaviker's new Re_Tour collection marks a symbolic return to a material from the past, a distinctive



Iroko by Cerdisa is part of its wood-look collection called Megeve



The hand-crafted look tiles in Zellige, part of the Crogiolo series by Marazzi

→ French stone that has been reprocessed in accordance with the industrial-style mood board used for the company's latest-generation products. Re_Tour reproduces the aesthetic appeal of French rustic stones in large sizes (1,200 by 1,200mm for floors and 1,200 by 2,700mm for walls), exploiting the material's varied colours.

Produced in four colours – Fog, Mud, Ivory and Rope – the range is also available in 600 by 600mm, 600 by 1,200mm, and 900 by 900mm sizes, as well as a pre-mixed selection of three different formats that offers wide scope for composition. The collection's vintage appeal also makes it ideal for creative mix and match solutions together with the latest wood, metal and marble effect surfaces from the Flaviker catalogue.

Heritage by Richetti redefines the concept of a romantic lifestyle. The collection is modelled on a recycled stone that originally came from castles in the South of France. The calculated, uneven texture and shaped edges embellish the surface and the material, highlighting the



Grey tiles are here to stay. Pictured are tiles from Luce by Ariana, inspired by the unique appeal of resin.

nuanced effects that help create an aged, artisan appearance.

An eclectic decoration, either installed alone or with the base tile, either randomly or to create a rug effect, makes this a suitable range for many types of light commercial and residential use, in floor and wall applications. Thirteen different graphic patterns are available in all the colours – Blanc, Sable, Cendre, Noir and Multicolor – and mixed randomly in the boxes (10 tiles per box).

Dekorami is a collection of glazed stoneware tiles designed by the Marcante-Testa firm for Ceramica Vogue. The design of the 3D structures uses simple geometric shapes that bring to mind decorative elements from the past, as suggested by their names: Kolonne, Koriandoli and Kodici. It features three designs in the 260 by 260mm format, available in Blue, Green, Seta and White, and is characterized by the brightness of its glazes. A softer matte version in White is available in any of the designs. A selection of backgrounds and décor details complete the collection.

If Florim had been able to appear at Coverings, the focus would have been on Magnum Oversize XXL porcelain slabs, displayed in many different applications. For example, contemporary and minimalist indoor and outdoor settings using Floor Gres (B&W_Marble), Rex products (i filati di rex, and les bijoux de rex), and Casa dolce Casa – Casamood (Motion and Onyx&More), and Cerim (Rock Salt e Elemental Stone).

All of this would have been enhanced by the use of FlorimStone surfaces for applications requiring thicker materials such as countertops and furniture, and design surfaces from CEDIT, Florim's ultimate designer tile brand.

Inspired by an exquisite natural stone, Kron is offered in a choice of three neutral backgrounds that sit behind criss-crossing fine white. The collection offers a choice of three different shades of grey. The palest, Pearl, and mid tone, Gray, are ideal for creating restful settings while the darker option, Charcoal, creates surfaces with added personality and drama. It comes in a 2,600 by 1,000mm format in a natural finish.

→ The Kron 4D collection is designed to harmonise with other designs by Museum such as Supreme 4D and Calacatta 4D marble-effects, Witsman Oak and Sherwood Oak 4D wood-effects, Lave stone effect, and Iron 4D metallic-effect ranges.

Odine by Argenta is a stoneware tile inspired by aged marble. The veins bear the markings of the passage of time, while preserving its rich variety of details. This range has a natural elegance that stands out thanks to the warmth of its smooth matte finish. The medium and large formats (300 by 600mm unrectified and 600 by 1,200mm rectified), used in Argenta Cerámica's porcelain range, make this a very commercial product.

Metallica by Armonie is a hybrid project that combines the most appealing aesthetic aspects of two contemporary materials: cement and metal. The material texture of the first is enhanced by the marks left by the incessant course of time on the second in a play of muted oxidation and delicate colours. Interpreted in four shades in 300 by 600mm, 600 by 600mm, and 600 by 1,200mm formats, Metallica offers a touch of metropolitan style with added industrial appeal.

Century, part of the Fincibec Group, has added Stonerock to its portfolio. This stone-effect porcelain stoneware range features characteristic veining, with a bold directional orientation emphasised by elegant variations in hue. The grip surface, available in the normal thickness or a 20mm option, is specifically intended for outdoor spaces.

This range comes in five colours: White Stone, Light Stone, Ash Stone, Rust Stone, and Black Stone. The format options are 600 by 1,200mm, 600 by 600mm, 300 by 600mm, and 150 by 150mm with a natural surface and rectified edges; 300 by 600mm with a grip surface and rectified edges; and 300 by 600mm with a structured surface and rectified edges. There is also a mosaic on mesh backing, skirting, L-shaped pieces, steps, large step, corner step and special pool pieces.



Zellige cielo lux in 10x10cm, part of Marazzi's Crogiolo series

The 20mm thick option comes in 500 by 1,000mm and has an R11 A+B+C slip resistance rating.

NovaBell's BrickUp is a 3D range that combines the look of natural materials with all the convenience of porcelain stoneware. Vibrant BrickUp surfaces create strikingly realistic walls, and are suitable for all uses, both indoors and outdoors. The two Ocean and Street modules, in association with the corner special trims, enable the realisation of unbroken wall coverings. Alternate installation and tone-on-tone

grouting reinforce the material's tactile power and form more realistic surfaces.

The stone and wood looks of the BrickUp modules have a rich assortment of patterning and precise natural details. The collection's three-dimensional surfaces are still very easy to clean. This tactile, pleasantly textured material is water-repellent and does not retain dirt, making it particularly suitable for locations such as bathrooms and kitchens.



Zellige china lux tile in 10x10cm, part of the Crogiolo series by Marazzi



Florim brand CEDIT has a unique celebration of colour in its Cromatica collection

Pandemic accelerates digital in the UK and Europe

From digital communications campaigns to the surge in ecommerce, international correspondent Joe Simpson writes how tile companies in the UK and Europe have responded to COVID-19.

The ramifications of the coronavirus will continue to play out for many months, if not years, so the industry will soon see if the adapted retail environments and promotions that emerged in 2020 will become the new normal or if companies will simply reset the clock and return to its old, familiar work patterns.

COVID-19 has turbocharged the shift to online shopping. Even as social-distancing rules start to ease, this trend should consolidate.

In countries such as the UK (as compared to Australia) where the online retail sector is more developed and the geographic challenges less severe, many web-based retail brands such as Tile Mountain, Walls & Floors, Tiles Direct, and Porcelain Superstore traded strongly through the lockdown. Many even found they were able to benefit from the initial closure of brick and mortar rivals, such as builders' merchants and DIY big

box stores, to supply ancillary products such as adhesives, grouts, tools and tile backer boards, alongside porcelain and ceramic tiles. This had the effect of boosting average online transaction values.

With couriers adopting paperless drop services, helped by the fact that most customers were self-isolating at home and available to receive deliveries throughout the day, some UK-based online tile stores actually enjoyed their best trading months during the lockdown.

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→ **Tile production**

While many manufacturers in international tile production hubs like Sassuolo (Italy), Castellon (Spain), and Morbi (India), were forced to shut down by the pandemic grew, the highly mechanised nature of modern tile factories meant that production was able to resume quite rapidly once successive governments gave the green light. Bulk raw material hoppers, automated product flows and quality scanning, robotic kiln cars, as well as digital decoration lines are well aligned to low density labour and social distancing at work.

The main areas that continue to hold up the resumption of normal service in terms of manufacturing and distribution are packaging, logistics, and freight where labour inputs are higher. Ceramic tiles are just one of a number of products impacted by seismic changes to road, sea, and – notably – air freight services.

But the tile manufacturing sector has shown remarkable resilience and creativity during the lockdown. The path taken by leading brand, Porcelanosa, is an excellent example.

At the end of March, the company wrote to all its customers and trade partners the following message: "We are experiencing one of the most extraordinary periods in our history, and so we need each other more than ever. In view of the COVID-19 health crisis, we have followed each and every one of the measures laid down by the Ministry of Health to protect the health of our employees, suppliers and customers. It is time to look after ourselves so we can look after others.

"For this reason, Porcelanosa Group has closed its stores and will halt production from 28 March until further notice. It is a difficult but necessary measure in view of the current circumstances, and it demonstrates the commitment of our eight companies to flatten the curve of COVID-19..."

While its production stopped, Porcelanosa ramped up a marketing campaign appropriate for the time. It posted stories on its company blog such as "Redecorate your home during the quarantine with feng shui" and "Confinement and Butech terraces".

These posts were extended into a comprehensive set of online CPD presentations for architects and interior designers, with subjects such as "Quarantine listings: Six online documentaries for understanding the architecture of tomorrow" which appeared in its in-house magazine, Porcelanosa Lifestyle.

Porcelanosa also added more general information to its online communications with topics such as, "Lockdown cinema: Films to watch with the family during the quarantine" and "Are you a PRO of architecture? Find out in this quiz".

But it was not long before the company announced it would resume operation on 20th April. Having been the first Spanish ceramic



ABK Ceramiche's WIDE&STYLE combines tile technologies and creativity that can lend a distinctive look to any project



WIDE&STYLE is a popular collection from ABK Ceramiche that brings together the qualities of large panels and high-resolution digital decoration

company to announce it would halt production, Porcelanosa was also one of the first to resume manufacturing.

At the time, chairman Héctor Colonques stated that the group will not make use of the ERTE (Expedientes de Regulación Temporal de Empleo), the mechanism that temporarily allows Spanish companies to suspend employment contracts or reduce working days due to force majeure while keeping workers on full pay.

Porcelanosa was not alone. Another of the Spanish giants, Pamesa, was another ceramic



The Resina collection by Casalgrande Padana has been created with the environment in mind. The company holds ISO 14001 and EMAS certification

company in the Castellón district to resume production after the 15-day shutdown. The Pamesa Group started up its first plant on 10th April, becoming fully operational by 14th April.

The Pamesa group, led by Fernando Roig, purchased masks for all its employees, and performed dual testing of all of its 2,220 employees to minimise the risk of contagion and to guarantee maximum worker protection. The first was a serological test that gave almost immediate results, and the second was a swab test that delivered results within 48 hours.

Mr Roig confirmed that the company would not make use of either the ERE or the ERTE. "I am



Panaria's Pierre des Rêves series in Nuage Structurato used in an outdoor setting

proud to be able to keep all workplaces," he said. "We are working to assure a good 2020 and, if this should not be possible, I am sure that next 2021 will be positive."

One common theme from the tile manufacturing sector has been a steady acceleration of product hygiene messages. As well as the ease of cleaning, and stain/liquid resistance due to glazing or vitrification, there has been significant emphasis on tiles with self-cleaning and air purification properties.

Typical is the message coming out of Panaria, which has concentrated on Protect, an exclusive

→ 50



Glitch is the new collection of porcelain stoneware tiles designed by London firm Benoy for Piemme. The word "glitch" refers to the flickering produced on a computer screen by an unforeseen error, encapsulating a design that favours imperfection as a sign of uniqueness.

→ line of high-performance anti-bacterial floor and wall coverings for healthy, safe, and protected homes.

This, and other tile-specific marketing initiatives, seem to mark a difference between the industry's response to the novel coronavirus pandemic and the three most recent economic recessions in 1982, 1991, and 2008/09. This may be something to do with the speed with which the pandemic took hold, or the simple fact that no continent, country or economic group was immune.

The key factor may be the availability of online conference platforms like Zoom and Teams, plus the better connectivity afforded by high speed broadband, and 3G and 4G telecommunication networks. This crisis has been marked by an upswing in marketing activity, new approaches to customer and staff communication, education linked to entertainment, sales connected to brand building, and a very global approach to messaging.

Retail

As consumers become more accustomed to COVID-19 restrictions, the communication from retailers has become clearer and more specific. At Tile and Floor Superstore in the UK, the customer

service update on 5th June 2020, really helped set the scene. It said:

"Due to unprecedented demand, our customer services team is experiencing exceptional levels of contact which is resulting in slower order processing times. We pride ourselves on our excellent service and we do not want to let you down. To help us to help you as efficiently as possible, please limit your contact to amendments or cancellations only. Your order will be delivered as quickly as possible and we will keep you updated via email.

"Please be aware there can be small delays in the courier network. All customers will receive an email once their order has been shipped."

"As the UK's largest online builders' merchant our colleagues are now working seamlessly from home. We are in constant contact with our supply chain and we are working hard to ensure your deliveries reach you in good time.

"You can continue to enjoy safe 24/7 contactless ordering with no queuing necessary across our specialist stores. Our product experts are available by phone, email and chat with next day nationwide delivery available on many items.

"In these difficult times you can trust CMOstores.com to deliver, so let's Keep Britain



Gigacer is just one manufacturer that has placed a strong emphasis on tiles with self-cleaning and air purification properties, as a response to COVID-19

It also appears as though the need to offer 1.5 or 2.0 metre social distancing has allowed retailers to more creative store layouts, one-way systems, impulse buying pinch-points and better education displays: which may create a more engaging and satisfying retail experience.

But for a well thought out, comprehensive, and engaging campaign through the pandemic, Building Adhesives Ltd (BAL) would take some beating. This UK-based adhesive company's Coronavirus Update started on 24th March. It sent out the following statements:

"In order to support material supply for any construction projects that have been advised or requested to continue within government guidelines, our manufacturing facilities will continue to operate for customers of Building Adhesives Ltd.

"Here, we are enforcing the strictest measures to ensure first and foremost the safety of our operational teams and the safe provision of material, including revised shift staff and structure to ensure safe distances are maintained in all areas at all times, no contact between shifts and the highest hygiene measures in operation.

"For your awareness – every single office

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Porcelanosa campaign supports fight against coronavirus

PORCELANOSA
LET THE DISTANCE BRING US TOGETHER

#The200Challenge



The Spanish tile giant joined #The200Challenge and launched a new design to raise awareness of the importance of social distancing.

The logo, in which the 11 letters that make up the company's name are 200cm (2 metres) apart, in line with the protocol established by the health authorities. "We have respected the original typeface of our logo and the only thing that has changed is the space between the letters.

"This is an appeal to people to act responsibly: only if we respect the minimum separation can we flatten the curve and prevent new cases of infection. It is now that positive action must take precedence over any other consideration, because public health is everyone's concern," said the company.

Under the slogans, "Distance makes us stronger" and

"Let distance bring us together", Porcelanosa stresses the collective effort that is being made to stop this pandemic.

"We are aware of the tireless efforts that people are making from their homes, and that is why we want to send them a message of encouragement. A message of support and appreciation, because although we are all separated, never before have we been more united for the same purpose: protecting ourselves to protect others. The solidarity and dedication that can be seen every day in hospitals, supermarkets and in our own neighbourhoods is emphasised by each of the letters that make up our new logo," said a Porcelanosa representative.

This message complements its digital campaign, #TheBestThingAboutStayingAtHome that suggests positive aspects of confinement with plans and ideas that can put into practice while people are in isolation.

IF ONLY THEY KNEW...

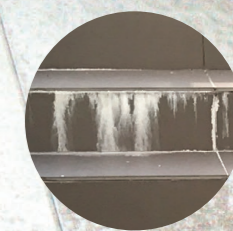


Meet Ed and Sarah. They love their home and recently retiled their balcony. The job was perfect and they were thrilled.

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Denis Suess – 0418 422 858
(Agent for Southern & Central regions NSW, South Coast, Riverina & ACT)

Chris Garling – 0408 275 369
(Agent for Central & North Coast NSW, Hunter & New England)



Panaria has released Protect, an exclusive line of high-performance anti-bacterial floor and wall coverings.



Firenze Leon Battista by Officinarkitettura is the design on ABK's Wide&Style large-size porcelain slab range

→ employee – across all departments - that can work remotely, will be working from home as required in the current period. Our digital infrastructure ensures that whenever you need us, all our office teams are still available and working to support you ... All the team are available, fully operational and contactable by phone, email and video calls where applicable, to support our customer base.

“The only exception within our office premises is the suspension of training at our Innovation & Technology Centre. All training has already been cancelled and will not resume until it is safe to do so, whereby we will advise. We will be providing seminars, webinars and digital training experiences through this period though, to allow any customers to develop their education and understanding remotely...

“Finally, we will continue to follow all recommendations from the Government and best practice. The health and well-being of our people, their families, our customers and supply partners is paramount as we look to support the need of current projects and services required in this difficult period...

This was followed every week, as part of a “Stay Positive, Back Stronger” campaign, with an A-Z of Tiling Terms. It combined in-depth description of many of the common tiling terms, plus some expert insight or top tips from the team. At the end of the process, customers could download the full A-Z of Tiling as a PDF document for reference.

Another key element of this campaign was a new suite of Technical Tiling Notes. Developed by BAL's Technical Advisory Service, these notes provide up-to-date technical information on key tiling subjects, plus some top tips.

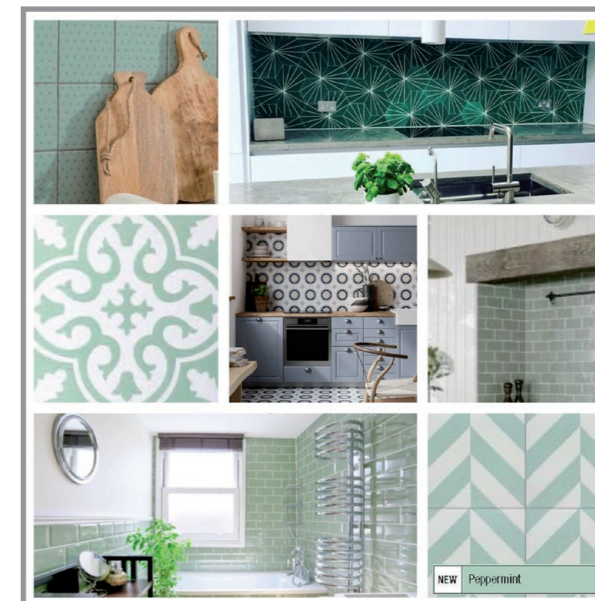
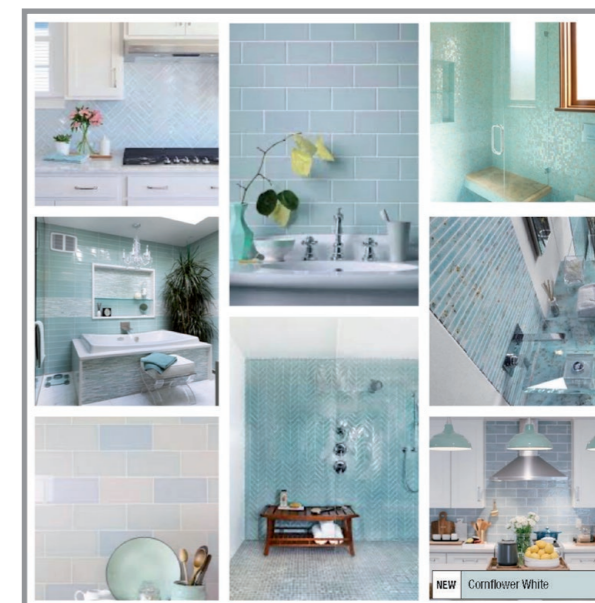
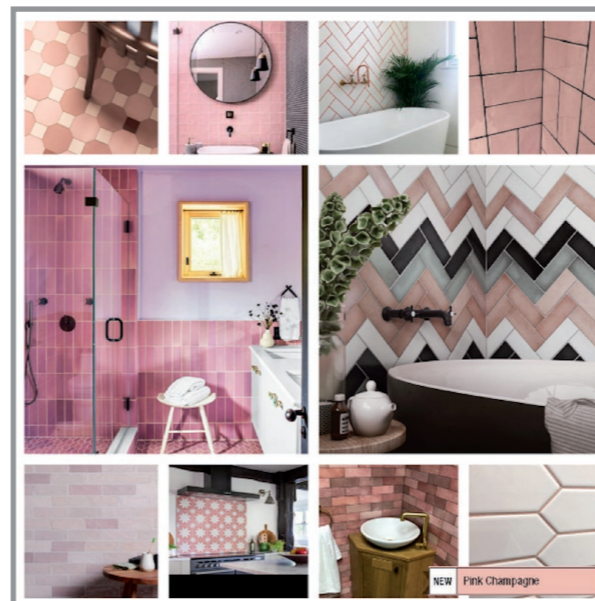


UK retail brand Tile Mountain traded strongly through the lockdown. Pictured is the interior of a showroom.

The first instalment covered the “Use of Cement-based Products in Warm Weather; and Common Issues with Grouting”. To download these notes, site users had to join the YOU+BAL partnership program. This provided access to exclusive technical articles, downloadable BIM objects, Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) approved CPDs, sample testing service, and more.

BAL also used the lockdown to reach out to architects and other specifiers with CPD content, starting with an External Tiling CPD webinar. This presentation covered external tiling solutions for balconies and terraces.

Other seminars covered tiling in wet rooms and swimming pools, tiling to internal walls



“Vivid Views – Grout Colours Inspired by Summer” is part of a digital campaign by Building Adhesives Ltd (BAL). It looked at the design impact of four new Vivid Views: Peppermint, Primrose, Cornflower White, and Pink Champagne.

with large format tiles, floor tiling for the modern build, tiling for heavily trafficked areas and leisure centres, and specifying natural stone.

Another component of the BAL campaign was aimed squarely at tilers. It hosted “The Tilers Arms Pub Quiz” on Facebook Live. This series of quizzes offered weekly prizes for 1st, 2nd and 3rd places. Teams could be as small as a single person and could include family members within each tiler’s household. To make this event as inclusive as possible, BAL added some child-friendly questions.

And now, BAL has completed the circle with a series of posts aimed at aspirational homeowners. Typical is a recent feature titled

“Vivid Views – Grout Colours Inspired by Summer” that went live in mid-July. This looked at the design impact of four new Vivid Views: Peppermint, Primrose, Cornflower White, and Pink Champagne. These colours evoke shades of greens, soft yellows, blues, and natural light to bring vibrant splashes of spring and summer to any tiling project. At the end of the post, viewers could download an inspirations brochure or request a grout sample case.

From BAL's campaign through to Pamesa's ground-breaking staff testing program, the tile industry world-wide has responded to this coronavirus pandemic with creativity, customer focus, and determined calm. ■

The Australian Tile Council comes of age

In the past, the Tile Council has mainly been a volunteer-based organisation. More recently, it acknowledged that a paid post would help the association deliver more value to members.

The Australian Tile Council (ATC) has been the only recognised association that represents the tile industry for over 50 years.

When it was first formed in 1965, the association was a unification of bodies in NSW, Victoria, South Australia, and Queensland, with membership restricted to just tile merchants. By 1995, other states joined and membership was extended to all professionals in the tile industry, and the ATC was incorporated.

Throughout its history, the ATC has been proactive in reducing import rates on tiles, advocating to remove the sales tax on tiles, and eliminating cost burdens related to quarantine inspections of all tile containers. The council has also helped to provide clarity on key issues such as the GST with experts who guided members through its implications for the industry.

The ATC has always acted to protect the interests of its members, preventing the miscommunication by Worksafe that wall tiles potentially contained asbestos. It has representatives on other national industry committees that are critical in protecting the industry.

The ATC has formal agreement with the National Tile Contractors Association of America to allow members access to the highly regarded Tile Reference Manual, as well as having written and published its own Tile and Tiling Guide.

Peter Carter, president of the ATC, recognised the association has achieved a lot in its past, primarily through the efforts of part-time volunteers in each state. "They have done a wonderful job juggling their 'day job' and largely giving of their



Peter Carter, ATC president

personal time to achieve the advances the council has made over the years," he said.

"But we acknowledge that we must allocate paid resources to focusing on bringing the ATC into the 21st century and delivering greater value to members. We want to make the council even more relevant, and more engaged with its members ... We recognise we could be communicating better, more often, listening to and doing more for our members".

Since contracting the services of an experienced national administrator, the ATC has improved its administrative practices, making it easier and more responsive to a growing membership base. The ATC now has an active presence on social media, with many followers on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Newsletters to members have begun, and bi-monthly member webinars are starting very soon. In the coming months, the ATC

will be forming a Technical Committee to increase the amount of quality reference information available exclusively to members.

Carter also recognised the rapid change in the ATC over the past four months. "Since the appointment of Bryan Vadas as national administrator, we are delighted with the progress of the council, and the amount of advancement we have made in a short period of time," he said.

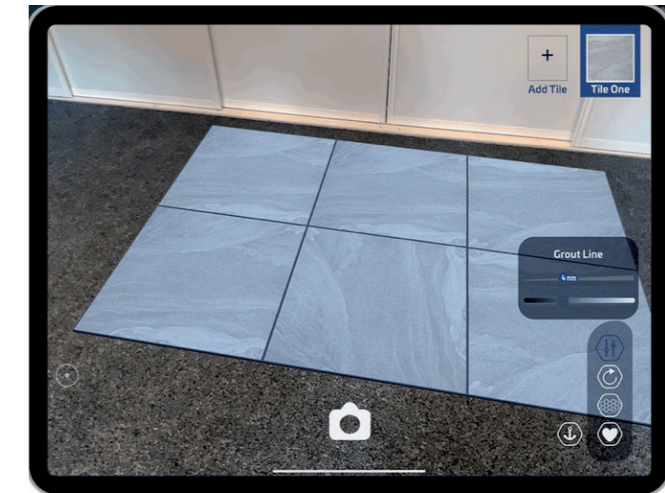
"We are now in the best position in my 8-year tenure as president to move forward quicker than ever before, and expand our services and connection to our members, current and future. It is really an exciting time for us. State presidents will continue to be a local presence in each state and representing the views of members in their state, but with a dedicated resource driving communication, we are becoming more dynamic and relevant than ever before." ■

QuickView offers AR for tiling projects

An augmented reality (AR) app developed by QuickView can deliver clear visual communication of how an entire tiled floor will look, simply by looking through a smart phone or tablet.

The app allows tiles to be viewed through a mobile device, as if they are already laid as part of the room or space. It is easy to use, and interactive so that the customer or salesperson can simply tap to tile the floor in front of them. Many tiles can be placed, with all interfaces displayed in a very realistic way. Even the grout lines can be changed.

QuickView AR uses virtualiser technology to provide a more cost effective and faster flooring or tile supply chain. Manufacturers can get product samples to market. Wholesalers can save time and money when it comes to



choosing flooring or tile samples for distribution. Retailers can also enable customers to see exactly how a new tile would look like before they make the commitment to purchase.

The first 20 tile retailers, installers and wholesalers who click on the following link for a demo will receive a FREE branded light version with their tiles. <https://www.quickview.nz> ■

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- Paul Cannizzaro Director - Designer Stone Solutions

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Future tilers of Australia

The Trowel Trades Awards ceremony organised by Melbourne's Holmesglen TAFE earlier this year saw Stephanie Craven win the Best First Year Apprentice award. One of the judges, tiling teacher Frank Vanzella said the main qualities that helped Stephanie win her award include her "persistence and drive in sticking to what she wants to achieve".

Despite a number of different employers — her current employer Regeneration Tiles is her third — Stephanie continues to improve over time. As a result, her confidence has grown and her determination to succeed has inspired her teachers.

Stephanie told Tile Today that before coming to Holmesglen TAFE, she worked in the family business, a bakery. "I came to an open day at Holmesglen for trades and took an interest in tiling," she said. "I learnt a variety of different skills in my course, one of the most important being teamwork and communication skills."

According to Vanzella, there are currently 50 students in the CPC31311 Wall and Floor Tiling course. "There are five female apprentices or 10%, and numbers are steady," he said. "Holmesglen has always had a very inclusive attitude towards trades and female tradies are most welcome."

"[Recruitment] mostly starts at secondary schools, where career advisors will bring TAFE to their attention. But this is not happening as much as I would like. Kelly Ann Darlington from Head Start apprenticeships and traineeships is one person who is actively spreading the word of the benefit of trades."

From Stephanie's perspective, Holmesglen provides a wide variety of opportunities, and she found trades a particularly rewarding choice. In terms of the tiling industry, she said, "I personally enjoy the attention to detail and math involved with tiling, along with the accomplished feeling of finishing a beautiful job. My main aspiration right now is to finish my apprenticeship and continue doing



Sponsors, teachers, administrators and students from the Holmesglen TAFE Wall and Floor Tiling course at the Trowel Trades Awards in Melbourne



Stephanie Craven hard at work



Corey Farrelly, Best Second Year Wall and Floor Tiling apprentice



(l&r) Marco Parisella and Gyan Singh, Best International Student Wall and Floor Tiling



(l-r) George El Khouri (RLA Group), Mitchell Cashen, Best Third Year Wall and Floor Tiling apprentice and Jeff Kirkley (RLA Group)

tessellated tiling but also branch out and learn new skills too."

Apprentice tile trade awards cannot happen without the support of sponsors. This year they included Ardex, Top Notch Tools, Davco (Sika), DTA, RLA Group, B.A.T. Trims, Laticrete and Bostik Australia. Vanzella said, "Sponsors have donated adhesives, grouts, tools and waterproofing products over the years. They have also donated a trailer as a prize for the best third year apprentice tiler."

The Wall and Floor Tiling teaching department would also like to give special thanks to Jeff Kirkley, product manager and national key



(l-r) Marco Parisella, Frieda Wachsmann (Regeneration Tiles) and Stephanie Craven, Best First Year Wall and Floor Tiling apprentice

account manager at RLA Group who works closely with Holmesglen TAFE to co-ordinate sponsorship.

Dulux Design Effects for feature walls

Accent walls have long been an affordable way to give a space a facelift. Dulux's Design Effects range offers textured specialty paints that mimic the effects of otherwise expensive materials, making it easy to achieve a modern, contemporary room transformation.

Dulux colour expert Andrea Lucena-Orr says when it comes to creating a feature wall, it should harmonise with the existing colour scheme, furniture, and accessories. "Consider the kitchen, for example; Dulux Design Stainless Steel Effect used on cabinetry will complement an already industrial-looking space, whereas the Dulux Design Suede Effect is more suited to creating a luxurious and moody feel – perfect for a formal living or dining room.

"Other popular design trends we are seeing include concrete and metallic accents. Dulux Design Concrete Effect in Pale Elements in a casual living area or hallway entrance pairs beautifully with raw materials, such as timber, linen, wool, stone and leather; and Dulux Design Metallic Effect can be created as a contemporary backdrop for artwork," she explains.

Whatever space homeowners are looking to enhance, it's important to consider how exposed the room is to natural light as this will affect the textural features and impact of the accent wall, according to Lucena-Orr. "If the Dulux Design Glitter Effect is your desirable effect, choose a room with an abundance of light – both natural and artificial – so you enjoy the most benefits from the luminescence," she said.

"To optimise a feature wall's impact on a space, colour consideration goes hand-in-hand with lighting. Like standard paint, always ensure you do a sample patch on large cardboard to see how it works alongside your fixtures, furniture and accessories before making the full commitment."



Dulux Design Suede Effect in Spellbound Black.

Image Credit: Dulux Australia. Stylist: Bree Leech & Heather Nette King. Photographer: Mike Baker.



Dulux Design Gold Effect in Gold Vintage

Image Credit: Dulux Australia. Stylist: Liberty Interiors. Photographer: Amelia Stanwix.



Dulux Design Glitter Effect

Image Credit: Dulux Australia. Stylist: Bree Leech & Heather Nette King. Photographer: Mike Baker.



Dulux Design Concrete Effects in Onyx Edge

Image credit: Dulux Australia. Stylist: Bree Leech & Heather Nette King. Photographer: Mike Baker.

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Houzz for professionals

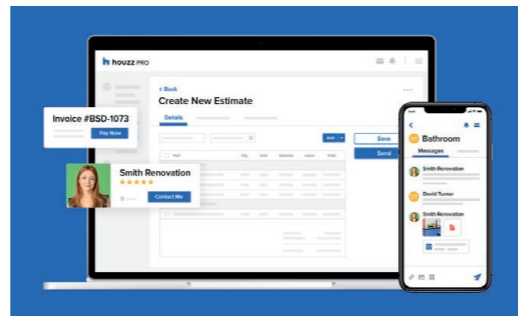
One of the leading online platforms for home renovation and design, Houzz has launched Houzz Pro, an all-in-one software-as-a-service (SaaS) solution that empowers professional end users to stand out, win more clients, increase profits and stay connected.

With Houzz Pro software and the new, dedicated mobile app, pros can manage all of their business activities and client communication from anywhere, at any time. "Now, more than ever, home building and renovation pros are asking for tools that will help them run profitably and efficiently, and deliver an amazing client experience," said Alon Cohen, Houzz co-founder and president.

"Houzz Pro was born from listening to feedback from our pro community, and it is important to us that this powerful solution is both affordable and easy-to-use. We understand pros in our community are facing new challenges with COVID-19 and, given these unique demands, we are providing the software to all our existing pro subscribers as part of their subscription."

Using Houzz Pro software, industry professionals can:

- Stay connected with client – A built-in messaging tool supports and unifies real-time chat and email communication with clients, including photos and document sharing, payment requests, invoices, change orders and timelines. The tool tracks the entire communication history, including client approvals and key activities.
- Communicate proactively – Pros can share updates throughout the project via a built-in client dashboard. Features include a graphic project timeline showing key milestones and phases, daily logs providing detailed project updates, plus communication history and shared documents.
- Manage leads – An integrated lead management tool helps pros manage their client pipeline from Houzz and any other source to stay top of mind and win more projects. Pros can communicate cly with prospective clients,



Houzz Pro is an all-in-one software-as-a-service (SaaS) solution

add internal notes about the project and attach relevant files or photos. A scheduling tool integrates with the calendar, making it easy to book calls and meetings.

- Create and send estimates, get online approval – The new estimate creation tool enables pros to build fast, accurate estimates with products, materials, and installation costs specific to the project. Pros can also upload their own estimates and save templates they created for use on future projects.
- Track change orders, schedule payments – Pros can easily create, send and track change orders, and also get client approval through a digital signature. The payment scheduling feature can be automatically set up to invoice clients.

A new, dedicated Houzz Pro app is also available on iOS and Android for Houzz Pro subscribers. It has all the functionality of the desktop software.

Marketing and advertising features include enhanced analytics, professional website building and hosting services, a company highlight video and the ability to feature the best reviews. All client communications are automatically branded with the logo and company name, for a professional company image that builds credibility with clients.

Houzz Pro is available to all home renovation and design professionals in Australia and New Zealand. ■

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