

TILE TODAY

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109

TILING TOOLS GUIDE

**PORCELAIN PANEL
BENCHTOPS**

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VIRTUAL EVENT**



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NATIONAL TILES SYDNEY NOW OPEN
55 BOURKE RD ALEXANDRIA

national tiles Sydney now open!



// National Tiles is more than just a business ... It's a family, we will never forget our humble beginnings and we'll always look to the future. //

When National Tiles' founder Frank Walker first launched the business in 1979, he did so with one small store in Geelong West in Victoria. The business quickly grew with several stores across Melbourne plus a few franchise stores. Now under the leadership of Frank's son, CEO Nick Walker, National Tiles operates over 40 stores and franchises in Victoria, NSW, South Australia and Queensland.

Next on the list, Sydney. It has always been a vision for National Tiles to take the business to Australia's largest city. NSW purchases around 45% of all imported tiles into Australia, so that market is the biggest in the country. "It's very fragmented though," explains Nick, "with hundreds of competitors creating a melting pot of tile offerings with no

real stand-outs. The market is driven by some strong independent retailers. So we decided to take our business model to Sydney and create something very bold."

After searching for the right property for a number of years, the team found the ideal site Alexandria. A very large building at over 3,800sqm, it's much larger than was originally anticipated. However it was the perfect location for making a statement and launching into the Sydney marketplace with maximum impact. "It's a cracking location, a great traffic hub and ideal for creating the biggest National Tiles store in Australia," says Nick.

The store will bring a fantastic 'in stock' range to Sydney offering great value. "There are currently a number of high-end expensive tile retailers in Sydney and some very cheap alternatives

too, but I don't believe any other retailer offers the breadth and depth that the brand new National Tiles showroom will present. Stock is king, so having stock on hand is a key feature of the new store. We understand that when customers visit, sometimes having traveled some distance, they want to be able to select their tiles and either take them with them or have them delivered within a few days. We will bring a fabulous offer of European tiles at incredible prices that are in stock, delivering what the market needs."

The new National Tiles store in Sydney will have a multi-layered approach. As well as the cash and carry facility where customers can pick up their tile purchases on the day, there is a 2000sqm double lane trade drive through right in the middle of Sydney. Importantly, there is a strong

NATIONAL TILES SYDNEY NOW OPEN
55 BOURKE RD ALEXANDRIA



national tiles alexandria

- 2000sqm trade store
- double lane drive through access
- unparalleled range
- unbeatable prices
- access to industry leading technology
- in-house design team

focus on design. "We have an unbeatable retail offering for consumers with \$4million to \$5million worth of tiles on the floor at any one time. We will also be working very closely with architects, high end builders and interior designers and will offer personal consultations by appointment with our in-house design team. We have incredible technology on site with our bespoke Tile Bar and Tiles Express, and we have created an inspirational space where design professionals can dwell, meet their clients and take their time selecting the perfect tiles to create the very best custom solution for their projects."

"National Tiles is more than just a business," says Nick. "It's a family, we will never forget our humble beginnings and we'll always look to the future. Our core values are our compass – respect, teamwork, customer commitment, relentless improvement and innovation are what keep us on target as the ultimate tile destination."



now open
National Tiles
Megastore
55 Bourke Rd,
Alexandria
Sydney



NATIONAL TILES SYDNEY NOW OPEN
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**Stainless Steel
Notched Trowel**

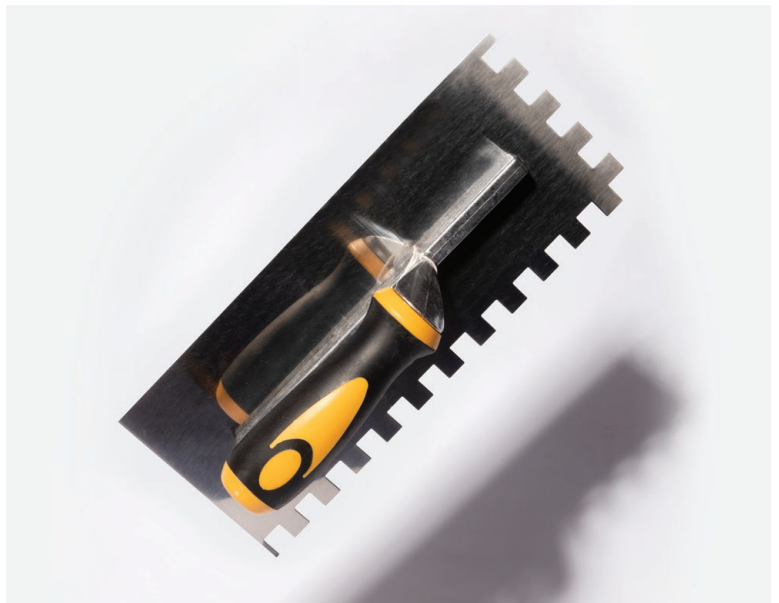
\$12_{ea}
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low price**



great brands better prices

At National Tiles we are committed to working with the most innovative and progressive trade brands in the market. We foster strong partnerships with these key brands so we can continually and consistently offer our trade customers the best possible solution for all tiling requirements, at the best possible prices.

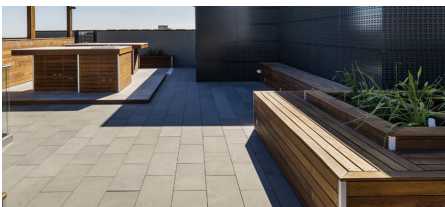
Collaborating with leading brands like Mapei, Roberts, Clip It, Maximus and B.A.T Trims, along with developing our own in-house brand - Grants, ensures we have the best offering available to satisfy the high standards of the Australian tiling industry.



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maximus pedestals

**eliminates need for
3-4 pedestals**



Maximus Pedestals are taking the tiling market by storm. Developed, designed and manufactured by Phil and Andrew who own and operate a large Australian tiling company, Maximus pedestals are ideal for tilers who prefer best practice principles when it comes to installing raised decks and paving.

Says Andrew, "As tilers, the issue for us was that most other pedestal systems available had small adjustment range – they would less than double in size. Hence we could never pre-order pedestals as we didn't know what size we would need for the job until we started on site. The result was that we would require three to four different sized pedestals and have opened boxes and pallets of stock left that we couldn't return. We realised that if we created a pedestal with a huge adjustment range our issues would be

solved. So Maximus Pedestals are the brainchild of frustration."

Andrew and Phil developed two adjustable pedestals that they are perfect for any raised floor applications and allow access to the waterproof membrane. The Maximus Junior range expands from 20mm to 45mm and the Maximus Senior range extends from 45mm to 145mm. No other pedestal gives a 100mm of adjustment, minimises wastage and ensures the best possible result.

The lead time from concept to market was less than 12 months. Explains Phil, "We decided we were going to develop this product in December 2019, and we had it available for retail by September 2020. We knew the design would work and we had a great relationship with the factory, so the process was reasonably smooth." The Maximus system has been load tested to 1,000kgs in an Australian NATA certified laboratory, and can be

used with engineered porcelain (min 20mm), natural stone, marble, granite, prefabricated concrete and decking.

National Tiles' Camron Whittaker enthusiastically embraced the product because it means that stores only need to stock one pedestal to suit any and every project. The two SKUs can replace every other pedestal on the market and satisfy any tiling requirements. To work in with the Maximus Pedestals, Phil and Andrew also designed a high speed chuck to rapidly adjust the pedestal, which can be used with an electric screwdriver or a drill on low clutch setting making on site installations even faster.

The Maximus Pedestals are the most innovative solution that can be used on all installations, and it's the simplicity and functionality of this system that makes it universally appealing. Available from National Tiles stores nationally.



rapid water
outflow



durable + load
rated



speed of
installation



increased thermal
insulation



elevated system
to run services,
conduits and
pipes



ease of
maintenance



excellent
absorption
for expansion



installs level
with seamless
connections

high speed
unscrew

hand
unscrew

triple
screw
thread

removable
base



national tiles

exclusive



national tiles

TILE

TODAY



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Moke

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CERAMICS

EXCLUSIVELY WHOLESALE

Bone

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Greige

30*30 P3

45*45 P2, 45*45 P5

Tile Today has changed in many ways since it was established in 1993. From a print publication delivered by post to a digital publication that is now sent via email to subscribers. Our content can be easily accessed through mobile devices at the jobsite, retail store, architectural or design office, and anywhere in between. As a digital magazine, Tile Today also offers interactivity with brands and companies with live links from their advertisements or contact details.

In this edition, we provide a guide to prominent, specialist tile tool suppliers along with a brief overview of the best power tool kits deals for tilers and installers. In terms of planning, we feature data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics that looks at spending on renovations.

The main tile category that we focus on in this issue is large porcelain panels and their specific use for kitchen benchtops. We believe there is a big market opportunity for the tile industry because they offer a great alternative to natural and engineered stone slabs.

Overseas, we have coverage of the Brazil-based Revestir show that was digital event earlier this year.

In Australia, it's an exciting time for National Tiles as it enters the Sydney market with a brand new mega store located in Alexandria. This special feature starts on page 2.

At the same time, it's a time of change at Beaumont Tiles as it goes through the process of becoming part of Bunnings.

To be remain informed about the tile industry, just click here to subscribe or go to the ad at the bottom of this page:

<https://bit.ly/3dJ5EBc>

Until next time



Betty Tanddo
Editor

FRONT COVER IMAGE

The Atlantida collection by Spanish manufacturer, Baldocer is a ceramic product that has high resistance and offers significant technical performance. Among its main qualities include that this tile is not a porous material and is resistant to temperature changes.



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Please note: Shade variation is an inherent feature of tile production. The Publisher is not liable for any discrepancy between images published in *Tile Today* and actual products.

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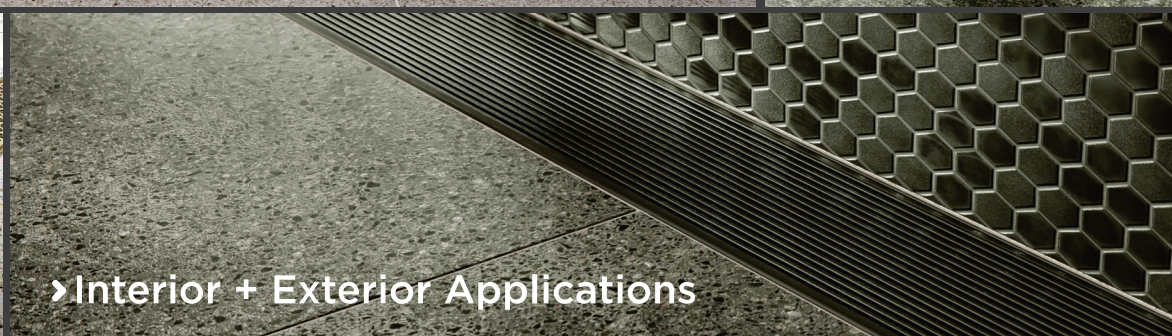
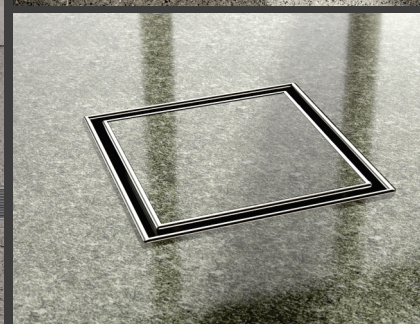
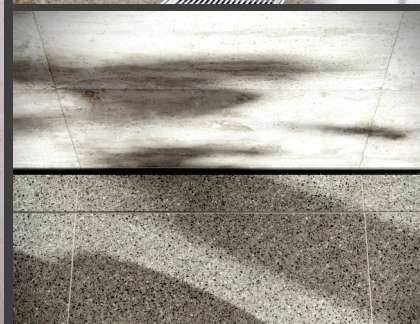
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RLA + Gripset join forces

By acquiring Gripset, RLA Polymers has taken on its extensive digital and training experience, as well as its influential connections to professional end users

The building industry in general has been reluctant to embrace digital technologies. Gripset, a market leader in waterproofing technologies, has been an exception to that reluctance. The company was early to developing digital media as a part of its Gripset Accredited Practitioner Program (GAPP), which launched in 2018. Even before that, Gripset had built an active YouTube channel in 2015, named “Sealed for Good”. GAPP added a smartphone app, which enables practitioners to record their work and share this with clients. It’s the kind of transparency that helps to build both genuine collaboration and trust in the building industry.

That approach to technology, education and transparency was just one of the factors which encouraged RLA Polymers to acquire Gripset in early 2021.

Another key factor was how well the company’s products fitted with each other. From the perspective of Troy Hogan, managing director of RLA Polymers, the fit was obvious, as was the similarity in their approaches to building high-quality, reputable brands in the marketplace. As Troy puts it:

“We at RLA are committed to the waterproofing market and could see the opportunity to secure this high quality brand, an exciting group of industry experts and the ability to build scale and efficiencies in the production plants.”

“Although Gripset are market leaders in waterproofing, where we were lacking was in the floor adhesive finishes that are often sold in conjunction with tile adhesives. So it made really good sense for RLA who are strong on the tile adhesive side, to combine their tile adhesive knowledge and flooring knowledge with our waterproofing expertise. And combined, it provided a more rounded offering for domestic and commercial construction.”



(l&r) Phil Scardigno (Gripset) and Troy Hogan (RLA Polymers)

Two entrepreneurs

There was also something of a relationship between the two, with Troy aware of Gripset and Phil for over 15 years.

Troy’s own story starts with his family business, ASA (Architectural and Structural Adhesives) which he managed up until 2000, when he sold it to Bostik. Following the sale, Troy moved to Hong Kong to run the Bostik business in Asia Pacific. Upon his return to Australia, he started and managed the CTA business until he sold it to Sika.

Since arriving at RLA three years ago, Troy has led the team to achieving over 35% growth in that time. “There is plenty to do and a very exciting opportunity,” he said.

Like Troy, Phil has always seen himself as an entrepreneur. Gripset began as a purely innovative company. “We’ve been sort of a unique Australian made innovator ... We’ve punched above our weight for many years, with offerings that were not the cheapest in the market. but always at a high quality [point] and [which] pushed the industry forward,” he said.

“We were first to market with an Australian-made fast cure membrane, liquid membrane, unique sheet membrane systems, priming systems. It was really about the speed of application without compromising quality. That’s the biggest part that we’ve played [in the industry].

“And our major achievements really have been, I think, in combining the training component of what [both] waterproofers and tilers need in a technical business.

Essentially, waterproofing is a technical process, [and] a lot is required from those who are installing.”

Digital advantage

Describing the success of Gripset’s YouTube channel “Sealed for Good”, Phil emphasises that it’s not all about the company and its products because it provides general advice about waterproofing.

“It has been a big success for the business because it’s a sort of thing that has a very loyal following and a growing following across the industry. We’ve had TAFE colleges that use that program to show their students when they’re doing Cert three certification courses and apprentice courses,” he said.

“More importantly, [the channel] is not about Gripset product, it’s really talking about industry matters, education and awareness. And between the YouTube channel, our Facebook and Instagram pages, we have a very big following every month when we do our Facebook and YouTube live events. We’ve got a number of trades and builders and authorities following, and it’s an open communication when we normally talk about a specific topic. And they stay involved.

“So it’s a fairly holistic approach we’ve taken toward building, and it’s all been designed around the challenges and what the industry is facing. Compliance [issues] are always growing. Building has become more litigious, and it’s not a difficult thing to do, waterproofing, but it’s just a matter of following a process while you’re there, and that’s really what we’ve done from end to end.”

It’s easy to see how Gripset’s success with YouTube and social media helped lead to its successful GAPP product. “We brought GAPP out in 2018. We’d been [doing] training for decades around the country, but the GAPP program was instigated to give the serious waterproofer, not just training but also a quality control program,” explains Phil.

“So the digital media that went with our

training has given them the ability to record their jobs. There's an app that goes with it. It now allows them to, in real time, record their jobs, and share with their clients, providing total transparency. Any issues or challenges can be identified on site."

The power of integration

Both Troy and Phil see strong synergies between the two companies. Troy explains the advantages their combined scale will help create:

"Along with further strengthening their relationships with key distributors and adding value with the RLA range of products, the additional scale in production will allow us to invest in process automation and continue to offer reliable quality product."

Phil sees one of Gripset's big advantages as being the breadth and width of its engagement in the market: "We've got [professionals] with architects, engineers, we deal with a cross section of people. Often they come to us to know more about what the best solution might be, and sometimes it's not always a Gripset product that we can solve it with. It's more about

ensuring that the industry gets it right.

"It's had a lot of bad publicity for many years ... There's, there's a 'near enough is good enough' attitude, unfortunately, in the market. But we've always gone the other

way and we have never talked about the cheapest option. We have always talked about the option that's going to last, and survive and perform, and that's been the key for us."

MyRLA app for trades

RLA has always prided itself on providing the most comprehensive support available to all trades. The MyRLA app is specifically created to give users direct access to RLA's nationwide technical and support team, right in their pocket.

The MyRLA app gives users the power of a dedicated team offering trade trusted, industry advice, with the best products for a project, solutions to make your project easier – and technical know-how. With just a few clicks, the app will help you to take advantage of RLA's market leading support network. Other benefits include:

- Access to all of RLA's technical and safety data sheets
- Access to RLA's jobsite specification services
- Easy product search features
- Product usage calculators – to ensure you're never caught short
- Weekly prizes to be won where RLA can showcase your best work

The MyRLA App is available on the App Store and Google Play. Download today to find out why Tradies Trust RLA.



DOWNLOAD IT TODAY



TRADE TRUSTED ADVICE



The MyRLA app gives you instant access to a nationwide technical & sales force, at your fingertips. To help with project advice, product selection and job support.



MyRLA APP

Project & Product Advice
Usage calculators
Specification services
Data Sheet Downloads
Weekly prizes & more

TRADIESTRUST

THE BIG PRE-TAX TOOL-UP

Tilers buy specialist tools – tile cutters, mixers, trowels, etc – when they need them. But for more generic power tools – drills, drivers, grinders – it's a good idea to benefit from the discounts offered in "end of financial year" sales. Worried if future cashflow will support the decision to buy now? We provide renovation statistics that indicate the tiling market will show ongoing strength.



A good rotary hammer can make a tough demo job removing old tiles both quicker and easier. Cordless versions have become lighter and more powerful.

So, let's talk tools.

But before we get to the tools themselves, we should do a bit of "due diligence". Many tilers are going to be in the position currently, coming to the end of the financial year, where they have significantly more cash on hand than they did one or two years ago. That's good, but what is the rationale behind using that money to invest in tools?

There is always a push every June for tradies in particular to spend on new equipment. Otherwise their profits will be taxed, probably at around 30%. So, investing in tools now will mean paying less tax, which can be seen as a discount applied to those tools.

There is not all that much wrong with that kind of thinking — unless

a situation comes up where it would be a lot better to have the cash, even after it has been taxed, rather than the tools. To help work this out, it is good to develop a quick forecast about what you expect will happen to your business through the next financial year. That will give an indication of how much could safely be spent on tools.

Making that call is really hard this year, due to the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic. We're beginning to get used to the way COVID-19 "works": periods of zero infection rate, followed by "spot fires" of outbreaks that require the re-imposition of restrictions at different levels. While that's not great for business, we can certainly overcome most of the obstacles.

What's of equal importance (in business terms) for people working in parts of the construction and renovation industries is what we might think of as the "secondary effects" of COVID-19. The Australian government reacted to the economic impacts of the pandemic by boosting the construction industry, both through direct grants in HomeBuilder, and by not only radically reducing interest rates, but also committing to low rates through to 2024, at least. That boost has seen house prices rise and construction activity increase, but it has also brought fears of an eventual collapse in the market.

There are also what we might think of as yet another level to the way COVID-19 has changed things (tertiary effects), where

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RDXA4009
730mm cutting length

Ghelfi Squalo top
1320 Bridge Saw 3hp
RDXA4006
1330mm cutting length

Ghelfi Squalo max
1020 Bridge Saw 2hp
RDXA4008
1030mm cutting length

Ghelfi Squalo top
1550 Bridge Saw 3hp
RDXA4010
1560mm cutting length



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→ we've seen the pandemic begin to fundamentally alter Australian (and global) society in ways that will likely be long-lasting. For example, the move to "work from home" (WFH). If that persists — as seems likely — that means a big change in expenditure patterns into the future, with homeowners investing more in where they live.

So, to sum up, we're looking at 1) a relatively moderate negative force, that will be around for the medium term (COVID-19 itself); 2) a strong positive force that will exert a short-term effect (housing boom); and 3) a mild positive force that will persist over the long term (social changes stemming from COVID-19).

One way of getting a glimpse at how those forces are working out in terms of the Australian economy is to look at some statistics. The housing market has been, if anything, over-analysed, and that has produced forecasts that run from a prediction the boom is here to stay for another three years, to an expected price collapse before December 2021.

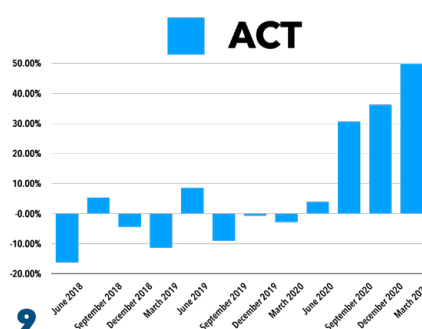
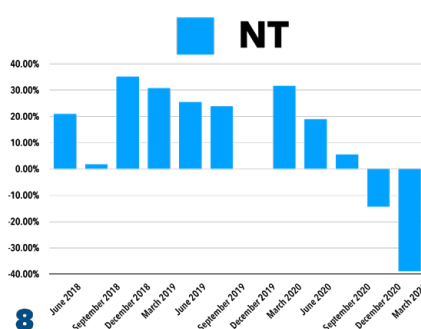
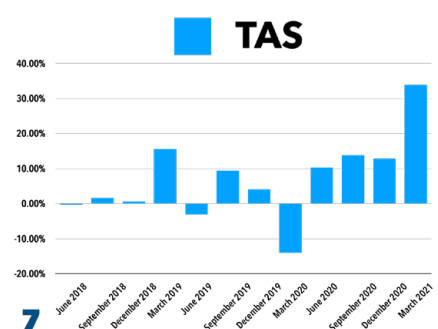
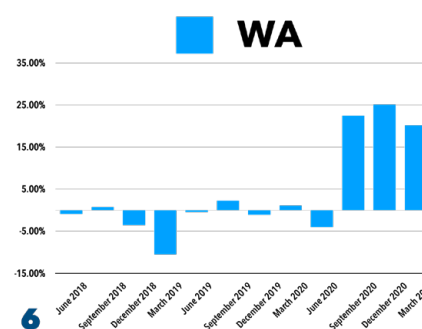
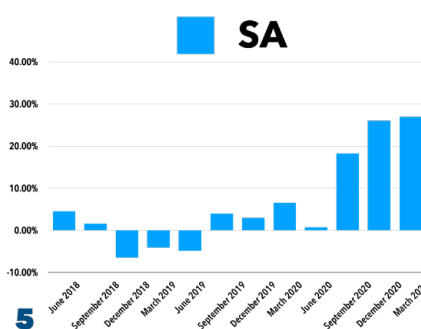
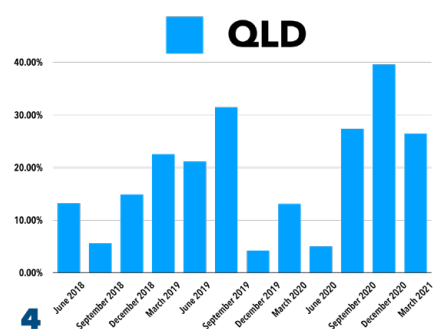
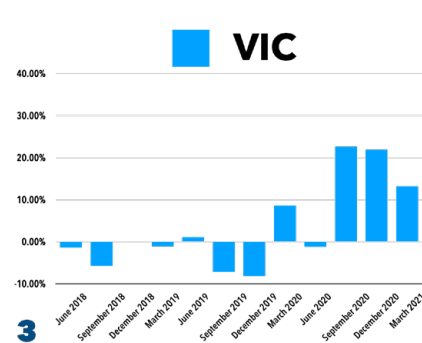
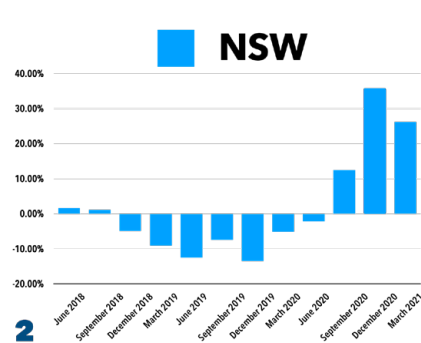
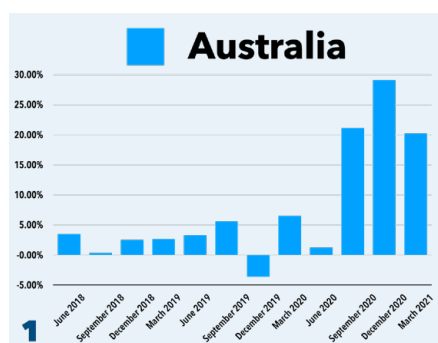
A more predictable market to look at is planned spending on renovations. Some of the most revealing stats from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) are for building approvals related to renovations (which it terms "alterations and additions"). ABS series 87310DO035_202101

provides those numbers for private residential construction.

Charts 2 through 9 show the percentage change between corresponding quarters (so the quarter ending December 2020 is compared to the quarter ending December 2019) in the number of building applications made for renovations. While regions with smaller populations, such as Tasmania, the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory, tend to be volatile, the general trend through the other states shows, in general, strong growth in the December 2020 quarter, and more moderate growth in the March 2021 quarter. That is echoed in the figures for Australia overall shown in Chart 1.

ABS Building Approvals for Alterations & Additions

Private dwellings. Quarter-on-corresponding-quarter, percentage change.



→ Further insight is offered if we look at Charts 10 and 11. Chart 10 shows the percentage change on a quarterly basis for both the total value of renovations in Australia, and the total number of renovations in Australia. This shows negative growth in both for the quarter ending December 2019, followed by a surge up to growth of around 5% for both in the March 2020 quarter. In the subsequent quarter, for June 2020, there is slowing growth, with the number of building approvals not growing at all, and the total value of approvals with negative growth of over 5%.

That's followed by a steep rise, with the number of approvals growing by over 20%, and the value of approvals growing by around 12%, for that September 2020 quarter. That rise continues into

the December 2020 quarter, with both value and number growing by around 30%.

The most interesting shift, however, happens for the most recent March quarter. At this point value continues to grow, increasing by 35%, while the number of approvals grows at a slower (but still considerable) rate of 20%.

Chart 11 confirms what Chart 10 indicates. Here we compare the actual number of building applications to the average value of applications (in thousands of dollars). This shows that as the number of approvals grew for the June and September quarters of 2020, the average value actually fell — falling, in fact, below the median value for the period from the June quarter of 2017 to the December quarter of 2020 of \$87,000. Then, for the March

2021 quarter, this reverses, with the average value over \$98,000, while the number of approvals declines.

Putting this together, in 2020 there was a proliferation of approvals for lower-value renovations, but this has likely shifted in 2021 to fewer, but higher value approvals.

For tilers this is likely to be a "good news" story. Higher value projects tend to result in higher net profits, largely because they call on a wider and more exacting skillset from established and experienced tilers. This means businesses can operate at a high level of efficiency.

While there are no guarantees as to what the second half of 2021 will hold, these stats do paint an overall positive picture. That is particularly the case in that we are dealing with renovations. While a sharp fall in house prices could see new builds

→ 18

ABS Building Approvals for Alterations & Additions

Chart 10: Month-on-Month percent change

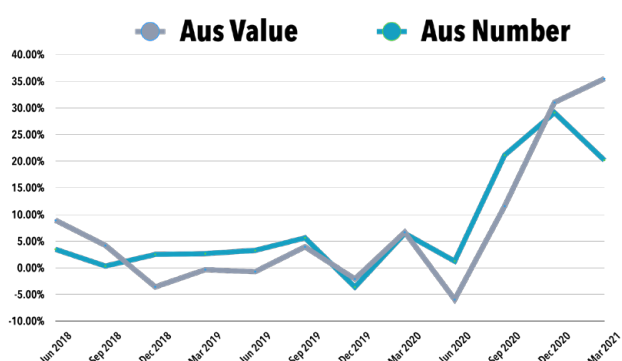
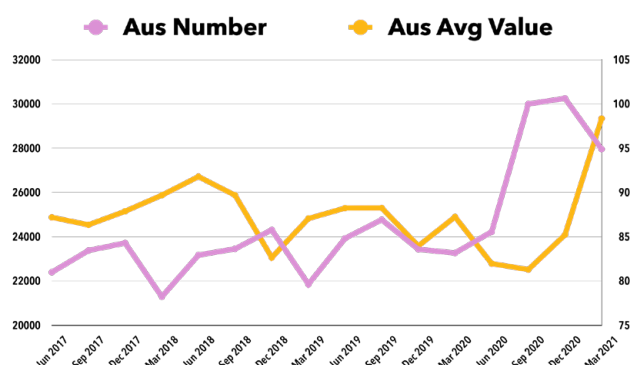


Chart 11: Quarterly

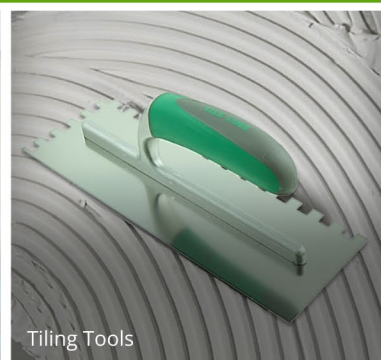


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→ decline, renovations tend to be more resilient, and with a high base already established, could represent a “safe haven” if the housing market declines in the near future.

The tool market

We’re not going to concentrate here on the speciality tools that tilers need — such as the many ways to cut a tile, mixers, tile levelling systems, tile lasers and so forth. Generally tilers will replace these on an “as needed” basis through the year, and that kind of gear is more personal to each professional. Instead we’re going to look at the more general purpose tools that a tiler uses, and we’ve narrowed that down to just four: a drill, an impact driver (for fastening battens, etc), a grinder, and a rotary hammer (for loosening old tiles).

We’ve also narrowed down those tools in three ways. We’re only going to look at cordless tools using Lithium-ion (Li-ion) batteries, and that use brushless motors. (Brushless motors rely on circuitry to switch the charge through the electric motor and tend to be more powerful and efficient than brushed motors, which rely on mechanical wire “brushes for the same purpose.) The third thing is that we’re just going to look at the tools available in discount kits at this time of year, as some of these do represent good value.

Good value, surely, but not really great value. Looking through the kits that are on offer, what is most noticeable is that there are very few that provide the top-notch batteries the manufacturers have to offer. Next year that will likely have changed, which might be something you

will take into consideration when deciding to buy or not buy.

Batteries

It’s worthwhile just saying a quick word about the way in which batteries have changed. Each power tool battery is made up of small, cylindrical batter “cells”, each of which produces a nominal voltage of around 3.5V to 3.7V. At a minimum, it takes five of these cells, joined together serially, to produce the required 18V output. This type of single-layer battery is referred to as a “P1” configuration.

What has changed is that those individual cells now come in two sizes. The old size, first developed in 1991 by the originators of the Li-ion battery, is called the 18650, as it is 18mm in diameter, and 65mm long. The new size, which entered the market in 2017, is called the 21700, and is 21mm in diameter and 70mm long. The latter is not only larger than the former, but its dimensions were scientifically determined on the basis of physics to provide the best performance.

The result is that where the old 18650 battery cell generally gets rated at around 2.5 amp hours (Ah) of output, the new 21700 battery cells is rated at 3.0Ah to 4.0Ah. That has given rise to the familiar 2.5 Ah battery in the P1 configuration with the older style cells. That same configuration for the 21700 battery cell yields up to 4.0Ah. These newer style power tool batteries are a little bigger than the standard 2.5Ah battery, of course, at least 5mm wider, 3mm taller and 15mm longer — but they are lighter and less bulky than a two-row battery of the 18650

cells, and that P2 configuration is the only way for those cells to hit similar amp hours.

For example, the latest Bosch ProCore 4.0Ah battery (21700) weighs 510g, and is 77mm wide by 47mm tall and 117mm long. The DeWalt DCB182 18V XR 4.0Ah battery (18650) weighs 620g, is 72mm wide by 62mm tall and 110mm long. Some of those differences can be seen in the photographs we’ve provided of the battery teardowns.

Milwaukee Tool designates these newer batteries as “high output”, Bosch calls them ProCore, and Hikoki (which gained access to the technology when it acquired Metabo) has a less clear system. For example, BSL36B18 is a 21700 battery, and BSL36A18 is the 18650 battery, in the same range. The situation with DeWalt is even less clear, and some people have resorted to disassembling batteries to work out the cell size. As for Makita, the company does have some 21700 cells in its 40-volt batteries, but not, so far, in its 18-volt range.

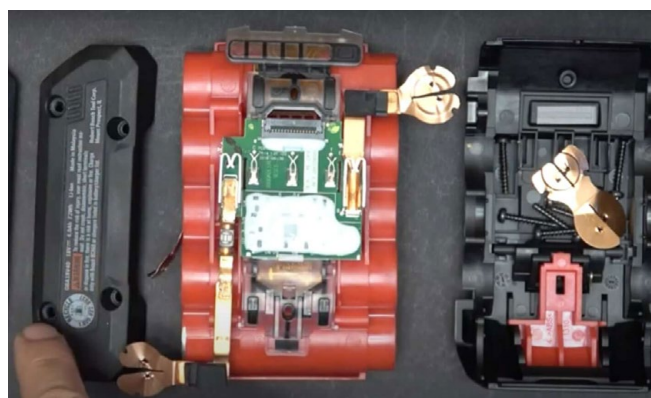
Given the way tilers use their power tools, and the fact that much of the time they do have some access to mains electricity for recharging, it’s likely these smaller, more powerful batteries will likely come to dominate the tool chests of tilers in the future.

While none of the high-value kits we have found this year contain the 21700 batteries, there is little stopping a tiler from adding these batteries, as for the most part they are compatible with the tools offered in the kits. ■

→ Tool kits start on page 22



DeWalt XR 18650 4.0Ah battery pack teardown.



Bosch ProCore 21700 4.0Ah battery pack teardown.

FENTO 200 PRO KNEE PADS

KEVMOR
TRADE SUPPLIES



Engineered Knee Pads designed to prevent knee and back problems by evenly distributing pressure across the pads. These knee pads are co-designed by Medical Professionals & Installers and provide stability and comfort while you work.

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- Durable and very hard-wearing
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- Prevents knee and back complaints through pressure distribution.
- Patented design provides superior knee protection
- Co-designed by flooring installers & medical professionals
- Wide, Flat Base for maximum stability while you work
- Durable, Lightweight construction for better comfort
- Components are washable and replaceable

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- Janser Medical Knee Pads for flooring are specifically designed for flooring installers.
- Medical knee protectors and knee cushions disperse topical pressure on the knee cap and facilitate work when kneeling.
- The Janser german Pro knee protection pad is made of durable waterproof foam.
- The Velcro straps won't mess with the back of the knee. ALPRO has solved this major issue and give you 100% full and optimal mobility along with the safety.

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- 1 x 3/4 inch SDS masonry drillbit
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- 1 x Attachment for vacuums
- Certificate of Calibration
- Floor Map, Instruction Manual & Carrying Case

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TOOL TIME

EZE-CLIP Tile Laying System



This system consists of a 1.5mm red clip, 3mm yellow clip and large blue wedge. The "Big Blue" wedge is ergonomically designed and cleverly doubles as a 3mm spacer. Both clip options feature the "T-Post" design that breaks at the base every time. The 1.5mm clip will suit tiles up to 15mm thick and the 3mm clip will suit tiles up to 20mm thick. Australian designed and manufactured by ACT Australia.



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www.actaus.com

iQ228CYCLONE Dry-cut Tile Saw



This 7" dry-cut tile saw is specifically for professional tile setters. The new iQ228CYCLONE has a depth cut up to 1 1/4" and can handle 18" rip cuts. This innovative tool allows for tile to be cut inside or outside with no water and no dust. It utilizes a three-stage, four-cyclone filtration system which captures up to 99.5% of the dust. Also includes iQ TruCut System and iQ Micro Fence.



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Distar Baumesser 1A1R PRO Gres Blade



The 1A1R PRO Gres grinding blade has a wide 20mm diamond layer on the face. In addition to cutting, this allows users to efficiently grind the edge of the tile, grind irregularities, and perform the curved cutting. The blade is especially effective when cutting tiles at a 45-degree angle, performing the fine grinding of the edge. The diamond layer additionally grinds the edge after cutting, forming a clean surface.



P: 1800 238 668

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RUBI King Tile Cutter



This tile cutter cuts tile products that measure between 3mm up to 21mm thick. It has 1100kg breaking power. Other features include smooth & accurate scoring; large aluminium sliders with linear ball bearings; and anti-corrosion treatment. It is a one-hand operational system with soft-grip handle. The solid steel guides are 25 mm in diameter with high flexion resistance. Its base is made in extruded aluminium with a closed profile. Cutting height is 3 to 21mm (without protector) and 3 to 19 mm (with protector). Also includes 22mm gold bearing scoring wheel and wheels for easy transportation.



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Maximus Pedestals



Developed, designed and manufactured by Australians, Maximus Pedestals are pedestals with a large adjustment range. The Maximus Junior range expands from 20mm to 45mm, and the Maximus Senior range extends from 45mm to 145mm. The Maximus system has been load tested to 1,000kgs in an Australian NATA certified laboratory, and can be used with engineered porcelain (min. 20mm), natural stone, marble, granite, prefabricated concrete and decking. Available from National Tiles stores nationally.



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OTEC Diamond Tools



A broad range of OTEC Diamond blades and core drill bits, designed for fast and efficient cutting. Cut and drill tiles and stone with ease. The range includes ultra-thin turbo blades, continuous rim blades, grinding cup wheels and vacuum brazed core bits.

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THE KITS

Bosch 18V Brushless 5 Piece 2 X 5.0Ah Combo Kit

Hammer drill GSB 18V-85 C 0615990J9S

- » Max torque of 110 Nm
- » Two gears, to 480rpm and 2100rpm
- » Weight: 2kg

Rotary hammer SDS+ GBH 18V-21

- » LED light, Rotation Control Clutch, Variable Speed, and Vario-Lock
- » Modes for drilling, hammer drilling and chiselling

Angle grinder 125mm GWS 18V-7

- » Equivalent to 700W corded motor
- » Includes restart protection, overload protection, soft start motor and a keyless guard

Impact driver GDX 18V-200 0615990M1X

- » Combined 13mm and 6mm bit holder

Batteries (two) 5.0Ah BAT621

- » Works in low temperatures
- » Can survive 3m drop

Extras/Availability

- » Kit also includes a dust blower and charger
- » Buy from Total Tools for \$800



Milwaukee M18FPP4A2-503B 18V 5.0Ah GEN 3 Fuel Combo Kit

Hammer drill M18FID2-0 18V Fuel GEN 3 1/4" Hex

- » Max torque of 135 Nm
- » Two gears, to 550rpm and 2000rpm
- » Weight: 1.45kg

Rotary hammer M18CH-0 18V Fuel 26mm SDS Plus

- » Redlink Plus Intelligence Electronics
- » -Anti-vibrations system
- » Weight: 2.7kg

Angle grinder 125mm GWS 18V-7

- » Redlink Plus Intelligence Electronics
- » 16mm arbor
- » Weight: 2.6kg

Impact driver GDX 18V-200 0615990M1X

- » Max torque: 226Nm
- » Weight: 1kg

Batteries (three) 5.0Ah BAT621

- » Rugged construction
- » Weight 720g

Extras/Availability

- » Kit also includes charger
- » Buy from Sydney Tools for \$1200



DeWalt DCZ498P3-XE 18V 5.0Ah XR Combo Kit

Hammer drill DCD996N-XE 18V XRP

- » Max torque of 95 Nm
- » Three gears, to 450rpm, 1300rpm and 2000rpm
- » Weight: 1.6kg

Rotary hammer 8 DCH274N-XE

- » Electronic clutch
- » Max speed (no load): 1100rpm
- » Weight 3.3kg

Angle grinder 125mm GWS 18V-7

- » Electronic brake stops wheel quickly after trigger release
- » Equivalent to a 1000W corded grinder
- » Weight 1.7kg

Impact driver GDX 18V-200 0615990M1X

- » Max torque: 205Nm
- » Three modes, to 1000rpm, 2800rpm and 3250rpm
- » Weight: 1.3kg

Batteries (three) DCB184-XE 18V 5.0Ah XR

- » Lightweight design
- » Weight: 600g

Extras/Availability

- » Kit also includes a LED worklight and charger
- » Buy from Sydney Tools for \$1300



Makita 18V 2 X 5.0Ah Combo Kit DLX4102T

Hammer drill DHP484Z

- » Torque: hard 54Nm, soft 30Nm
- » Two gears, to 500rpm and 2000rpm
- » Weight: 1.6kg

Rotary hammer 8 DCH274N-XE

- » Electronic clutch
- » Max speed (no load): 1100rpm
- » Weight 3.3kg

Angle grinder DGA504Z

- » Rotating gear housing
- » Max speed (no load) 8500rpm
- » Weight: 2.1kg

Impact driver BTD153Z

- » Max torque: 170Nm
- » Max speed (no load) 3400rpm
- » Weight: 900g, with battery: 1.5kg

Batteries (two) BL1850BL 5.0Ah

- » Gel coating help protect battery in fall
- » Overheat protection

Extras/Availability

- » Comes with one of three bonus additional tools, including a multitool.
- » Buy from Total Tools for \$1030



Hikoki 36V Brushless 5.0Ah/2.5Ah Combo Kit KC36D4A(HRZ)

Hammer drill DV36DA6

- » Two gears, at 500rpm and 2100rpm
- » Torque, hard 138Nm, soft 64Nm
- » Weight: 2.7kg

Rotary hammer DH36DPAH4Z

- » Neutral lever allows for multiple chisel positions
- » Speed (no load) 1100rpm
- » Weight: 3.9kg

Angle grinder G3613DBH4Z 125mm

- » Braking system stops disc spinning in two seconds
- » Max speed (no load) 9500rpm
- » Weight: 2.8kg

Impact driver WH36DBH4Z

- » Torque: 210Nm
- » Triple hammer
- » Four modes, including self-drilling screws
- » Dust/water resistance: IP56
- » Weight: 1.6kg

Batteries (two) A BSL36A18 5.0Ah

- » 36V/18V MultiVolt, automatically switches between voltages based on tool
- » Provides up to 1080W power

Extras/Availability

- » 36V power in an 18V package
- » Buy from Total Tools for \$1250



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Better solutions for installers

Roberts Designs has consolidated its position as one of the leading wholesalers of tiling tools in the Australian and New Zealand market, as a brand owner (Maxisil) and exclusively distributing major Italian tiling tools. The Ghelfi Squalo Wet Saws range is one recent addition.

The pace of the construction industry continues to intensify. Profit margins are tighter, work schedules are shorter. In response, tile installers have moved from simply buying tools, to seeing each tool as a vital part of an overall system, one which is optimised to meet the needs of the projects they will be working on.

Businesses such as Roberts Designs have recognised the needs of its customers. They don't simply sell tools, but instead strive to provide solutions to their customers. Importantly, this means taking a long-term view of how tools will be put to work, meaning that quality and reliability are every bit as important as the pure performance of the tool.

To help customers better meet the requirements of a demanding industry environment, Roberts Designs has put in place a three-part process: "Built trade tough" standards of quality; a tight customer feedback to response loop; and pursuing innovation to make sure they meet both present and future needs.

Built trade tough

As a motto, "Built trade tough" is a central part of Roberts Designs' overall approach and it's a guarantee that they provide to their customers. They understand the tools they sell need to deliver, every day, no matter what happens.

The tools need to be designed well, fit for purpose, and constructed from materials that will ensure endurance and long-term reliability.

Feedback

You can't meet the needs of a customer unless you first understand what those needs are, so Robert's Designs goes out of its way to get it right and understand exactly what a customer is doing in their projects.

Of course, feedback itself isn't enough. Roberts Designs works to make feedback actionable, so that as the insights are passed back from customers, and they result in implementable ideas inside the company.

As Paul Hayes, managing director of Roberts Designs puts it: "As a family

business, the Roberts Designs team thinks globally, whilst being able to be agile and quick to market. The whole team works together and strives to understand our customers' needs intimately and provide exceptional customer service."

Innovation

Roberts Designs is dedicated to developing innovative products that align to market trends, and that provide solutions to reduce overall costs for professional installers. In turn, this makes their job easier and faster enabling them to be more profitable. Above all, they can help produce better results for their clients, which contributes to their reputation of being effective and reliable.

For Paul, it's a matter of the personal pride he and his team put into their work. "We are not interested in just producing the same old products for the industry. Our job is to develop the best quality trade products that provide application solutions. Innovation is at the forefront of everything we do," he said.

One aspect of innovation has been Roberts Designs' ongoing development of better online ordering capabilities. As a leading wholesale distribution business, Roberts

Designs has worked hard to simplify the process for their retail customers, to ensure by a press of a button they can in turn order products that their trade customers need and want, fast and efficiently.

Tiling Tools and Accessories

Roberts Designs has a full range of tools and everyday accessories that professional tilers need to do their work. From floats, trowels and scrapers to caulking guns, levels, mallets and tape measures, as well as sponges, paintbrushes and grouting wash up buckets.

There is an entire range of spacers and wedges, and Roberts Designs are the exclusive distributors of the unique ATR levelling system.

Epoxy grouting solutions are also available. They include the complete implementation tools and clean up kits, specifically tested on the unique challenges of epoxy grouting, to ensure the best outcomes.

Tile Cutting Equipment

Tile cutting is crucial and quality equipment makes cutting all the better, ensuring a quality finish.

→ 26



AUSTRALIA'S LEADING TILING TOOLS WHOLESALE

DESIGNER BATHROOM
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+ ACCESSORIES

TILE CUTTING
EQUIPMENT

SILICONE +
TILE SEALANTS

Visit our website
to see the full range



- Stocking a large qty of various sizes of Sigma tile cutters and the Italian made Ghelfi saw range, exclusive to Roberts Designs, ensure a perfect cut every time.

Ideal for cutting ceramics, porcelain and stone materials, there are four models of the Ghelfi wet saw available. It comes in 2 and 3 HP engine, direct drive. The wet saws have stainless steel head rails and adjustable armoured ball bearings. It has a lightweight aluminium body, enabling a one-person operation.

The water cooling system has an armoured pipe, metallic tap and bilateral blade tray terminals. Its electrical system has a magneto thermal protection and release coil.

Other features include a polyethylene water basin with screw-in cap; a magnetic induction water pump; PVC cable/pipe protection chain; adjustable cutting depth; and the retractable legs include a fall-protection device. Table hands and transport wheels are included.

Roberts Designs also stocks blades, drill bits, diamond hand pad and abrasive pads, plus all the various consumables and replacement accessories to suit.

Bathroom Hardware and Accessories

Finishing a bathroom with quality designer products is the goal of Roberts Designs' bathroom hardware and accessories range.

Within the range, there are tile insert drains, floor and linear shower grates in three designs. There are many colour options such as the popular matte black range, classic stainless steel and the beautiful unique brass.

Ceramic hardware range continues to service a large range of projects and implementations with soap holders, shelves and vents in various colours.

Niche boxes come in three popular and efficient sizes, ensuring we cater for new trends in bathroom decor.

Tile Trim

The range of trim is extensive and covers all requirements including l-shaped, square-edged, round edge, cove, ramp, retro-fit, diminishing, expansion, balcony and stair trim.

This product category has grown in the specification as well as finish. There are various colours available in the products in this range including stainless steel, mill finish, brushed silver, bright silver, white, black, brass and champagne.

New to this range are matte-finished trims: matte white, matte black.

Unique to Roberts Designs is our new range expansion trim with custom colour options. Filled with Maxisil silicone, customers can choose from over 26 colours to perfectly match their tiles.

Silicones and Sealants

Roberts Designs is the home of Maxisil silicone. The Maxisil range has all the product options and accessories to ensure that preparing and caulking is finished to an exceptionally high standard.

With the 3-step Maxisil process of cleaning, preparing and smoothing silicone, the ideal finish is created every time.

Our range of Tasman Tile and stone sealers, plus solvents, strippers and cleaners make up the product range.

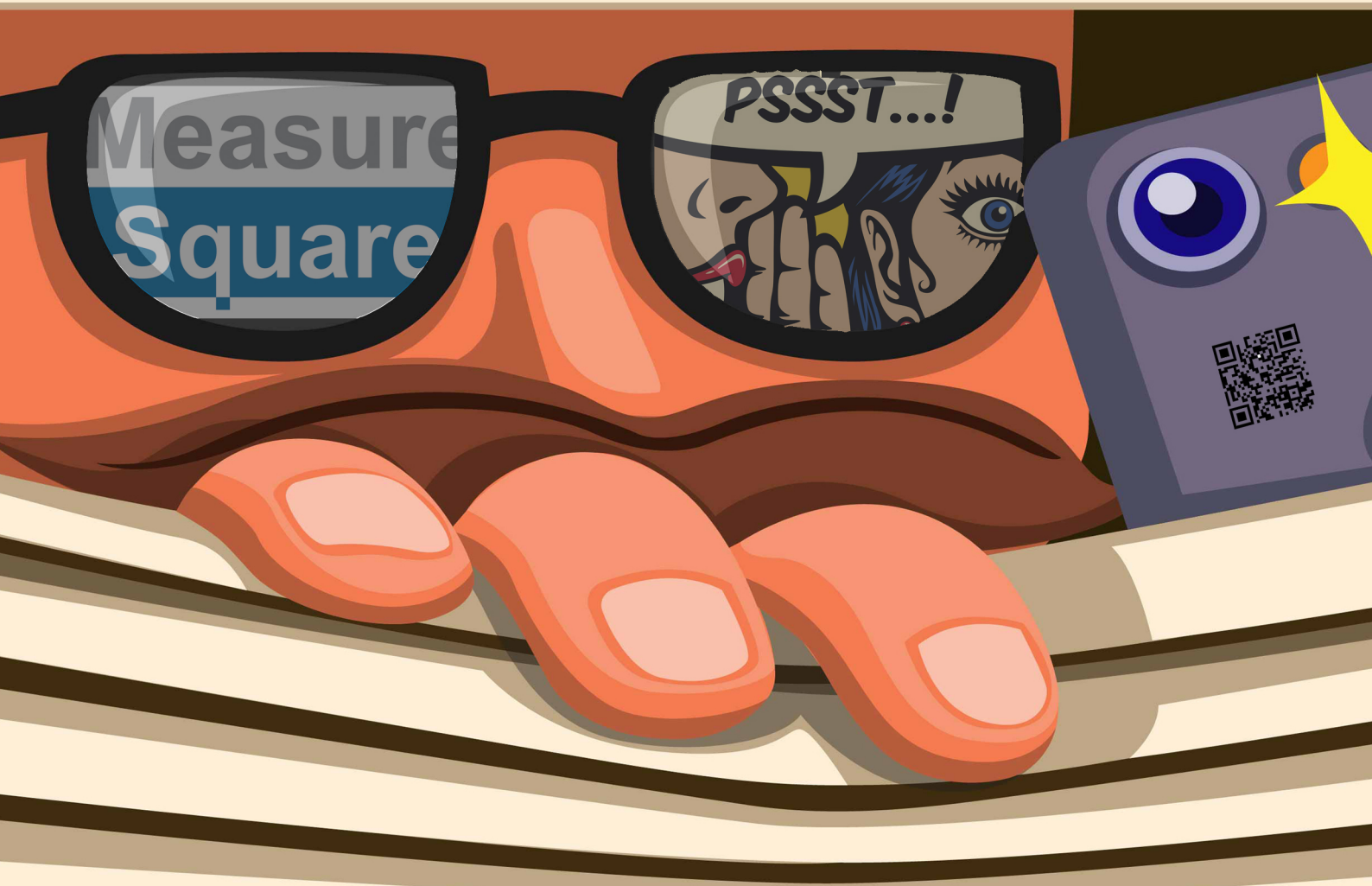
Find a stockist

Roberts Designs products can be found at trade outlets of National Tiles, Beaumont Tiles, hardware stores such as Mitre 10, plus hundreds of independent trade tiling stores throughout Australia and New Zealand.

Visit robertsdesigns.com.au to find a stockist and more about the Roberts Designs range. ■



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XTecGen has a variety of testing bundles including a Starter bundle which provides up to seven tests. These bundles are customisable enabling customer to select from over 50 testing services to suit their needs.

Waterproofing, liquid membranes, damp-proofing, moisture resistant, vapour sealing, sheet membranes, tanking — all terms that are topics of discussions daily in construction. But what do they mean?

One would like to think that it is fairly simple, if you claim a product is waterproof it stops water. Yes? No? Maybe? Well, it seems there is more than meets the eye to waterproof membranes than claims that a product is waterproof. When we delve deeper into this, there is far more to a waterproof membrane than just being waterproof, with membranes being scrutinised from all corners of the construction industry, particularly in situations where floor and tile finishes are applied over the waterproofing application.

One reason for that scrutiny is that, even after years of development, testing and collecting knowledge into standards of best practice, waterproofing is still one of the major causes of ongoing building defects — defects which frequently result in large financial losses, not to mention inflicting real harm on businesses, workers, and homeowners living in affected buildings.

That fact has been highlighted in a recent (2019) study entitled "An Examination of Building Defects in Residential Multi-owned Properties", written by Dr Nicole Johnston of Deakin University and Sacha Reid of Griffith University. (To download a pdf of the study go to: https://www.griffith.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0030/831279/Examining-Building-Defects-Research-Report.pdf)

Summarising the major sources of defects across 13 identified areas, the report states:

"Across the 13 construction systems, 40.19% (n = 1297) of the defects identified in the reports were categorised to building fabric and cladding, followed by fire protection (13.26%, n = 428), water proofing (11.46%, n = 370), roof and rainwater disposal (8.58%, n = 277), and structural (7.25%, n = 234)."

While it seems bad enough that poor waterproofing contributed to around 11.5% of all serious defects, the situation is even worse than that. The report goes on to state:

"The audit reports provided detailed commentary regarding the identified defects including the impact(s) the defect had on the

particular building (identified in this report as consequences) and other defects that have or may have contributed to the particular identified defect. When analysing all the construction systems, water ingress and moisture were identified as the most prevalent consequence and contributor to building defects (29%, n = 936) followed by multiple consequences and contributors (22%, n = 710), safety (20%, n = 645), building damage (15%, n = 484), other (generic category – 10%, n = 322) and rust (4%, n = 129)."

To restate that finding water ingress and moisture were the number one source of problems, responsible for a whopping 29% of all these defects. Outside of direct waterproofing, water ingress mostly happened due to poor installation and fitting of construction components.

To further break down the 11.5% of defects directly related to waterproofing, the report states:

"Membrane related defects were the most prevalent defects reported – balcony (28%), internal wet areas (19%), podium (10.5%), windows and doors (8.6%), caulking seals (7%), planter boxes (5%). Defects relating to paint failures were also a prevalent defect (19%)."

In terms of the consequences of these failures, the report states:

"The main consequence of waterproofing defects is water ingress and moisture (71%). Other consequences and contributors were: multiple (13%), other (10%) and building damage (6%)."

According to the study, when asked about the main source of defects, most interviewees indicated it was about the human factor:

"Many of the interviewees suggested human error plays a significant part in building defects. Misuse of building products (due to lack of knowledge), poor workmanship, time pressures (cutting corners), poor supervision, lack of training, lack of licensing and trade accountability were common factors identified as contributing to defective building work."

This was further highlighted in the response of one interviewee, a building consultant, commenting on failures in waterproofing:

"... waterproofing needs to follow a process that builders need to understand the process more, rather than thinking that they're just going to get a waterproofer in and they're just going to get a balustrade guy in and they're going to get a guy to put the doors in. Really the person who's overseeing it needs to understand all those principals and have one follow the other."

In the report's conclusion, it summarised what interviewees and other experts deemed an appropriate response to ongoing problems with waterproofing:

"Experts in waterproofing collectively recommend that: the Australian Standards relating to wet areas be reviewed and amended to reflect best practice; trade training needs to increase and should include waterproofing as a mandatory module; the NCC (National Construction Code) include a deemed to satisfy provision the industry can effectively rely on; a systems approach be established identifying suitable membranes for different substrates, and a membrane register established that lists membranes that have been independently tested. Further guidance is also required for those rectifying membranes. Standards need to be developed to ensure remedial works undertaken are in accordance with best practice."



XTecGen

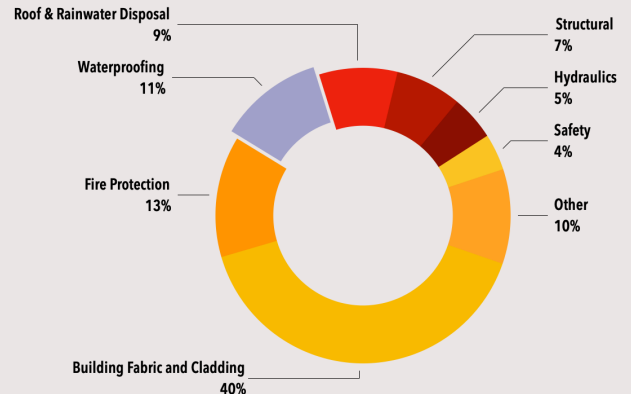
It's important to have some knowledge of that background to understand the important role that XTecGen has to play in the Australian construction industry. The Australian Standards that the industry relies on for internal and external wet area applications are now becoming the "go to" reference point for building authorities. AS3740 guides on the method of waterproofing internal wet areas while AS4858 and AS4654.1 focuses on the performance criteria of waterproof membranes used for internal and external wet areas. When we look into these standards, we see that there is far more to assessing a waterproof membrane than just how waterproof it is.

XTecGen Materials Testing Services, Australia's only NATA registered laboratory to evaluate waterproof membranes to AS4858 and AS4654.1, carries out testing to all the requirements of these respective standards. Manufacturers, suppliers, distributors, wholesalers and importers of waterproof membranes, primers and associated products (eg. sealants, adhesives, tapes) are engaging the testing services of XTecGen to not only ensure their products comply to relevant standards, but to also better understand the performance limitations of their products to drive continuous improvements that will help provide better outcomes for tiling applications over membranes.

Along with providing a full suite of tests and reporting to AS4858 and AS4654.1, XTecGen provides test bundles to specific testing requirements that allows manufacturers and suppliers to select specific test needs for their products. Some of the unique capabilities XTecGen offers through their NATA laboratory testing includes:

- Elongation and Tensile Strength
- Chemical testing to bleach and detergents
- Heat ageing and water immersion
- Water vapour transmission
- Cyclic Movement Tests
- UV exposure and accelerated weathering tests
- Seam testing and Dimensional stability tests for sheet membranes
- Puncture and Tear resistance of sheet membranes
- Bond strength
- Adhesion to substrate or to specific primers
- Abrasion resistance
- Bio resistance
- Temperature resistance

Defects in multi-unit buildings %



Data from "An Examination of Building Defects in Residential Multi-owned Properties" written by Dr Nicole Johnston of Deakin University and Sacha Reid of Griffith University

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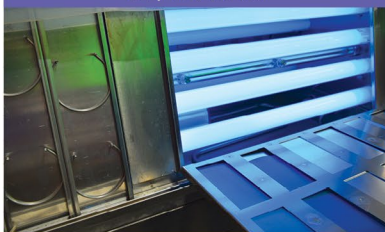


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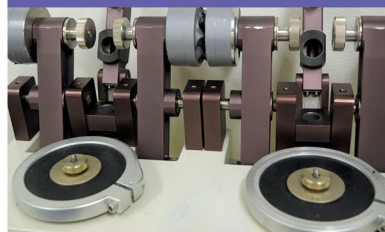
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BENCHTOPS: A NEW MARKET OPPORTUNITY

Large and thin porcelain tile panels continue to gain popularity in the marketplace. In today's market, a myriad of different stone composite materials is available along with natural stone benches, and newer stone composites have been added to the finishes that can be used. Retailers can also benefit from the advantages of selling large porcelain panels over traditional bench tops. For their customers who are architects and builders, saving time and cost of specifying large porcelain panels remains very important.

However, along with advances in technology to create different aesthetic options, other social issues have also become apparent, writes Tile Today's technical specialist, Tim Christopher.

When it comes to installing porcelain benchtops, health and safety has become an increasing concern for both industry professionals and consumers.

The issue of silica and its health implications has gained prominence as government agencies, businesses and the general public have become more aware of the dangers of silica. Industries are more alert to the subsequent rule and legal changes that ensure management practices are in place to protect the health of the workforce.

We often focus on the training of our young workforce but sometimes neglect to consider the health and well-being of the



individual. Addressing the health risks of workers in the building industry, and accommodating their needs is a moral obligation that we can meet.

What is silica dust?

Respirable crystalline silica is the dust that is released from silica-containing materials during high-energy operations such as sawing, cutting, drilling, sanding, chipping, crushing, or grinding.

Breathing this dust over even a brief period of time at high exposure rates or a long time for low exposure rates could eventually lead to life-changing and profoundly serious lung diseases such as emphysema, bronchitis, and silicosis. Lung cancer, kidney disease, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease are also linked to silica dust as a cause. Silicosis also lowers resistance to other lung diseases, such as tuberculosis.

Silicosis results from breathing in the silica fibres, which irritate the lungs. The surface of the lungs work to try to dissolve the silica, so they become inflamed and swollen. This eventually causes them to stop working. The only possible “cure” is a complete lung transplant.

Where is silica found?

Crystalline silica is one of the most abundant minerals on earth, found in many naturally occurring materials such as rock, sand, stone, clay, and gravel.

These materials are the fundamental building blocks used to make building and landscaping materials such as bricks, tiles, roof slate, concrete, glass, ceramics, and some plastic composites. Silica is also present in reconstituted stone bench tops where chips of silica are used to produce the various finishes within the stone.

Left within its material, silica is safe. It is when it is disturbed that the crystalline silica becomes a dangerous workplace hazard.

Approximately 587,000 Australian workers were exposed to silica dust in the workplace in 2011. It has been estimated that 5758 of these will develop a lung cancer over the course of their life because of that exposure. [Source: Cancer Council website, May 2021]

Safe Work Australia, the federal government statutory agency, has made the management of silica dust a mandatory requirement. As a result, this has placed much of the responsibility on benchtop manufacturers and installers to manage the risks involved.

The introduction of large thin porcelain tile panels has provided a degree of mitigation in the risks of silica dust. While porcelain tiles also contain silica, the quantity is vastly reduced when compared to reconstituted stone benchtops. This is due to the material itself, the relative thickness and quantity of material required for these installations. Cutting and shaping is also significantly reduced.

→ 32



→ Manual handling

Another advantage thin porcelain panels have over traditional stone slabs is the weight of the material involved. Stone bench tops range from being 20mm- 40mm thick so there is a significant weight challenge when using this type of material. Thin porcelain panels are generally approximately 6mm thick. This difference means safer manual handling requirements for installers.

Many large panels are manufactured to be 6mm thick, so the use of a simple suction frame will enable the panel to be manually handled. This is a far easier manual handling method than lifting a stone panel of up to one tonne in weight by multiple workers.

Strength

The durability and strength of a large thin porcelain panel is superior to most natural stone. The characteristic of increased strength for less

material has advantages for the environment as well as the applications for which it is used. Many natural stones do not tolerate higher temperatures and natural veins in the stone can crack when subject to excessive stress. Porcelain does not have these limitations and can be used in an increasing number of applications.

Installations such as fireplaces where stone is commonly used is another area where more extensive use of porcelain finishes is possible. Heat impact and irregular shape of the cut panels on a fireplace is less of a concern, because of the high heat tolerance and the strength of panels once they are installed.

Other issues

Natural stone can have other health implications which can become problematic in the current, regulated environment. The reinforcing mesh found on the back of some stone slabs can be toxic when

Triller Tile Vibrator

The Triller Tile Vibrator from RUBI and available from Top Notch Tools is an electric thumping system. It is suitable for both interior and exterior work for removing possible air voids that may have been created when laying tiles of size L, XL, XXL and SLAB, in thicknesses from 3 to 100mm, as they settle on the adhesive. Its main function is to replace the mallet or float in the tamping process. It reduces the breakage rate during the tiling process and the removal of air voids prevents possible breakage during later handling such as perforation or tamping, and loosening of the tiles in the future.

The vibrating must always be carried out from the centre of the tile to the outside, and always in the adhesive combing direction. For large SLAB type tiles, this vibration must always be carried out with delayed-tack adhesives.

Before vibrating, try to ensure that the adhesive is fully distributed over the entire surface area of the slab with no clumps, especially in the case of thin slabs or ones that have complicated cuts.

Application of materials for tile substrate, insulating materials and membranes or for spacing and materials for underfloor heating. These must be placed on the adhesive, pressed and then vibrated in the direction of the adhesive combing. The open processing time of the adhesive must be complied with.

Dry laying of concrete paving stones and slabs with polymeric sand, as the joint must be filled completely from the bottom to the surface. The vibrator easily vibrates the polymeric sand right down to the bottom, thus preventing air pockets in these joints. Furthermore, it also ensures that



the polymer particles are well distributed throughout the depth of the joint.

Laying of concrete, paving and natural stone tiles on wet cement. The vibrating provides good levelling even when the gaps are several millimetres.

Main features:

- Compact and ergonomic. Easy to handle.
- Uniform vibrations (This gives it an advantage compared with the mallet and/or float).
- Soft-grip handle and easy grip.
- Solid chassis, great durability. No weak or easy to bend areas.
- Replaceable rigid PVC base. Avoids damaging or scratching the slabs. If damaged it is easily replaceable. Spare parts are available.

Top Notch Tools is the major distributor for RUBI Tool products in Australia.

Visit <http://topnotchtools.com.au/contact/> for more information.

Click on the image to view the video of the RUBI Triller Tile Vibrator.

cut and dust is created. Some types of stone contain asbestos which is a heavily scrutinised substance in the health and safety regulated workplace.

Most stone material with asbestos present might only contain trace amounts, but regulations do not necessarily recognise this which leads to compliance issues.

Wet cutting

The solution for dust mitigation is the implementation of wet cutting. The use of correct water cutting eliminates the dust emitted during the manufacturing and cutting process. While traditional stone benchtops can be manufactured through the use of wet cutting, onsite work and general physical handling restrictions will limit the use of wet cutting of stone onsite.

Building and renovations projects often require adjustments and cuts to be made on site, which exposes the environment and other workers to potential dust contaminants. Cutting a 6mm thick porcelain panel is much easier than a large stone slab which may weigh up to one tonne. Manoeuvrability and access of tools into awkward areas is further hampered if water is required to be used. The use of thin porcelain panels can reduce these installation issues significantly.

Onsite installation

Thin porcelain panels are advantageous in situations where retrospective work or entirely onsite configuration is required. Some high-rise unit complexes require large objects to be craned into the dwelling at the time of window installation. Last-minute installation of large panels is not possible because of a lack of access into the building. Some slabs will not fit into lifts or cannot be passed through stairwells.

It is possible to manufacture and install a thin porcelain panel benchtop entirely onsite while maintaining dust restriction requirements. These panels can be cut without any power tools in specific situations. Straight cuts on site can be carried out with the use of rail cutters. These consist of a long track which has a runner that scribes the panel where it is to be cut. The break is done with a pair of special pliers which are a precision tool and will effectively snap long cuts off with limited precise pressure needed. This process does not generate any dust.

Taps and power-point penetrations can be undertaken on site with water cutting tools, which allows easier measuring to be done with close proximity to each individual installation location. Even a simple hole drilled with a drill bit can be done safely with the use of a spray bottle of water to eliminate any dust.

For the installation contractor, onsite cutting eliminates the requirement of a third-party manufacturer and additional transport of materials to and from different premises. This also makes it an environmentally friendly practice.

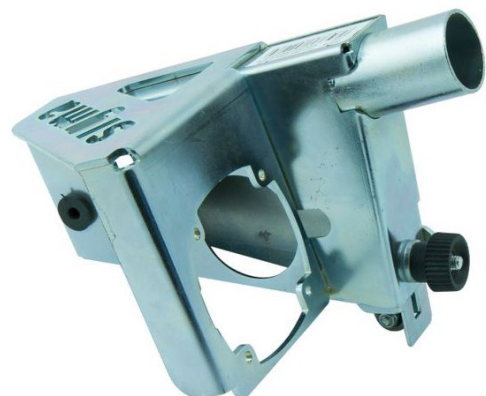
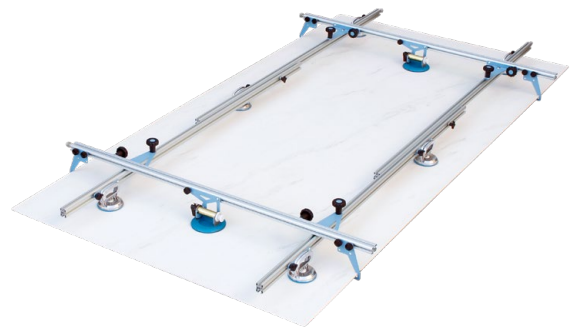
Manage large formats with Sigma tool range

Sigma Kera Lift ART1A4 is used for handling and laying of large format tiles. It comes with stain free suction cups for ease of lifting, handling and laying of large tiles. Kera Lift can be freely modifiable without the use of tools, is composed with easy to slide guides to adapt to any shape of the tile. The suction cups can slide along the profile to adapt to any handling need.

Sigma Kera Cut ART8AE2 332cm extension version is specifically designed for cutting large format tiles. The divisible aluminium guide, is fixed on the tile by stain-free suction cups, allowing the carriage with scoring wheel to easily slide along for precision cutting.

When combined with Sigma Grinder Attachment ART38F3 Kera Flex and an angle grinder, Sigma Kera Cut ART8AE2 can easily turn from a manual to an electric cutter.

Sigma Kera Lift ART1A4, Sigma Kera Cut ART8AE2 and Sigma Grinder Attachment ART38F3 are made in Italy and distributed Australia wide by Amark Group: www.amarkgroup.com.au.



Options

Selecting thin porcelain panels can increase flexibility of possible options for the construction process. Onsite manufacturing can be eliminated by utilising off site manufacturing to shape the panels. An installation contractor could choose to use a third party to provide bulk or difficult manufacturing requirements such as mitres for external edges. This means the contractor does not require a large-scale factory to undertake larger installation works.

There are multiple manufacturing facilities that contract out cutting of large thin porcelain panels. Water jet cutting has also opened the way for difficult and previously impossible cuts to be made. Intricate shapes and penetrations in tiles are now possible by using water jet cutting technology. This system also satisfies the requirement of being dust free.

The tiling contractor has the option of completing work that was only offered by other types of contractors in the past. For example, a reduced workforce for manual handling gives smaller contractors the ability to conduct a wider range of installation work. Using a third party to cut large quantities of panels or provide cutting services for “difficult” cuts provides even more work opportunities to tiling contractors.

But the biggest benefit to our communities is the health of the workforce. As a first world country, Australia is obligated to implement changes that will protect the health and safety of the people who work directly with installing and selling porcelain panel and stone products. ■



Image courtesy of Queensland-based SEQ Tilers and Cladding (Heazlewood Tilers)

About the author: Tim Christopher 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). Tim is Tile Today’s technical specialist.

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

TIPS FOR ONSITE INSTALLATION

SOME TIPS FOR MAKING ONSITE INSTALLATION SMOOTH, SUCCESSFUL AND LONG LASTING INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

- All substrates for a large panel installation should be considered in the planning stage before installation commences. The tolerance in any substrate should be 3mm +/- over a 2000mm distance.
- The type of notched trowel used on large tiles is important. “Slant” or “European” notched trowels which are those with a comb profile designed to allow the collapse the adhesive ribs should be used to install large panels.
- Using a Slant trowel will facilitate achieving an area of adhesive coverage of over 90%. This should be used as a guideline to the minimum adhesive coverage.
- Both the back of the panel and the substrate should be spread with adhesive. The adhesive should be combed evenly without lumps, thick sections, or voids in the adhesive.
- The adhesive should be spread with ribs all going the same direction on the (panel and substrate), preferably from across the short distance of the panel to enable air to be expressed out from under the tile leaving maximum adhesive coverage with voids of air.
- The type of adhesive should be considered carefully. Adhesive manufacturers have recommendations on which of their adhesives should be used to install large porcelain panels. The environment in which the installation is conducted will be affected if a rapid set adhesive should be used. For example, if the installation is to take place on the second level of a building with the workspace being on the ground floor, there will be a significant time between spreading the adhesive on both the panel and the substrate and getting the panel installed.
- Air trapped underneath the panel should be expelled during the installation process. A vibration tool should be used from the centre outwards to expel an air trapped under the panel. These tools are made specifically for this purpose and can be obtained from good panel tool suppliers. An orbital sander on top of a non-scratch cloth or beating block of timber can be used as a less effective alternative.

A BENCHTOP IN EARTH TONES

A Light Earth benchtop by SapienStone was used recently by Spanish interior design studio Clysa for the renovation of a townhouse in Barcelona, Spain.

Interior designers Raquel García and Rogelio Martinazzo designed a peninsula-style kitchen that combined a Fine kitchen model by Santos with a Light Earth benchtop by SapienStone. It is a lightly textured surface featuring four different shades of stone.

"SapienStone's products caught our eye for their finishes, which have outstanding natural-looking textures," said García and Martinazzo, in a statement. "We have been working with this material for some time now and the results have always been excellent."

"We chose the Light Earth texture. Besides being modern, it gives the kitchen countertop the feel of natural stone, which is elegant and timeless at the same time. By combining it with wood and white lacquered doors, we were able to create a cozy, modern and well-lit kitchen where natural materials and the sense of spaciousness are enhanced."

Credits

Distributor: Cupa Stone Barcelona?

Worktop: Light Earth by SapienStone

Kitchen: Fine by Santos

Project: Clysa Diseño Contemporáneo

Photography: Kris Moya Studio



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PORCELAIN PANEL BENCHTOPS



**THE PROS OF
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STARTING IN EUROPE, BUT SPREADING WORLDWIDE, DEMAND FOR PORCELAIN BENCHTOPS HAS GROWN STEADILY IN RECENT YEARS. IT IS A TREND THAT IS EXPECTED TO CONTINUE FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE, ACCORDING TO INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENT JOE SIMPSON.

PORCELAIN PANEL BENCHTOPS

Led by the major tile producers in Italy, porcelain worktops are now being made widely in Spain, China, India, the USA, UAE and Brazil.

The drivers are two-fold: concerns over the silicosis risks associated with machining composite quartz surfaces, and the successful partnering of incredible aesthetics with proven technical excellence.

There are also limiting factors. These include the difficulty of accident-free transportation and storage; the relatively high level of skill and training needed to handle and install the materials correctly on site, and the installed cost when compared with certain competitive materials.

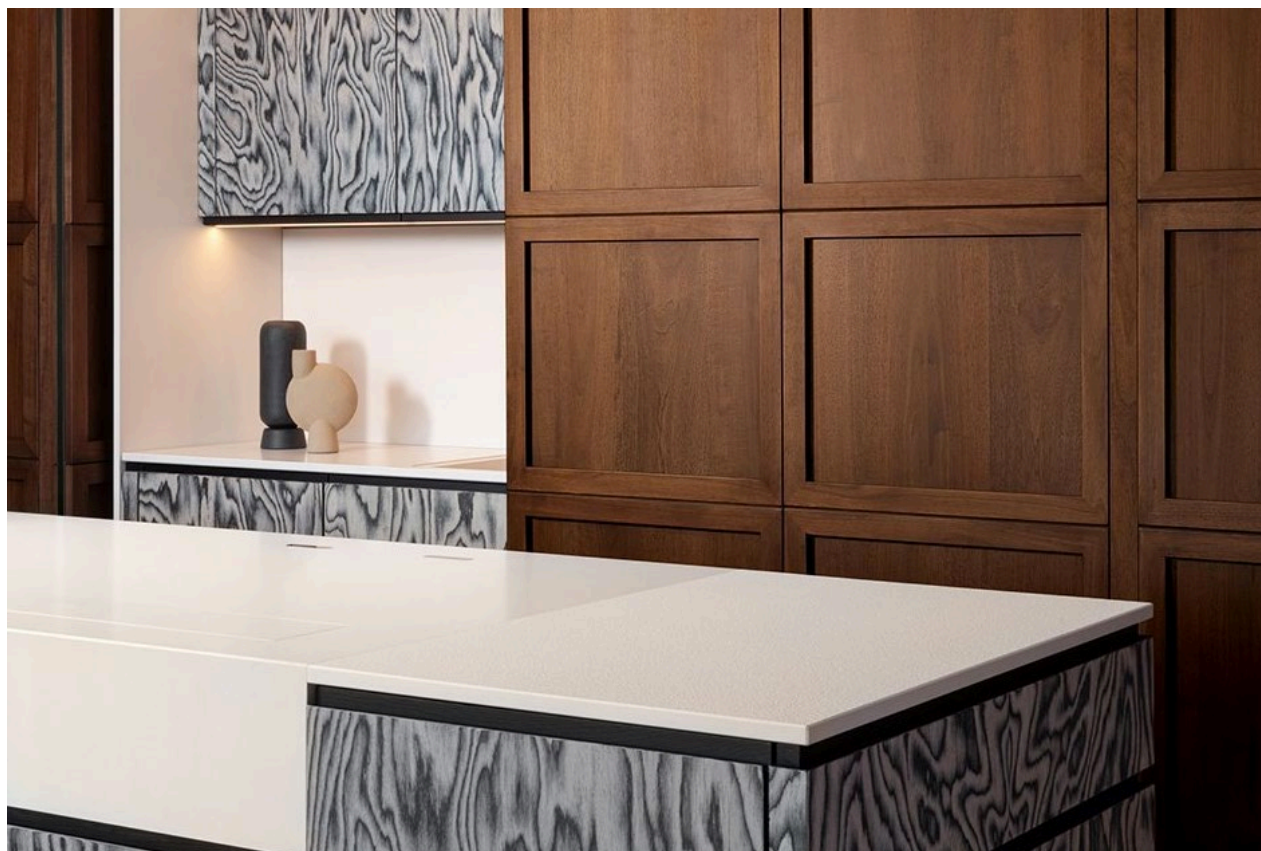
However, the benefits far outweigh the drawbacks. Porcelain is now available in a vast array of superb designs, many inspired by natural materials like marble, granite, and wood. But there are also elegant copies of man-made



Coverlam Top Irati Abeto from Grespania Ceramica

materials, such as polished concrete or corten steel. Most exciting of all, some designs explore the limitless possibilities of digital inkjet decoration and digital powder deposition. Blue sky creations, if you will.

These may be single colour, multi-coloured, plain, patterned, figurative or abstract. There are no creative limits. And new surface finishes are emerging alongside gloss and matte, notably leather and



L'Ottocento is a manufacturer specialising in the creation of handcrafted kitchens and used natural materials such as walnut and Lapitec in its 2020 lines

silky, that add another layer of sophistication and customer appeal.

These porcelain benchtops are manufactured from clay rich in kaolin in a body mix that also contains minerals such as feldspar, silica, and mineral oxides for added strength and colour. Glazing pigments can be added during the fabrication of the slabs to produce an appearance similar to natural stone with veining that can found in marble and, to a lesser extent, in granite and slate. Slabs can have a consistent colour throughout, allowing seamless edge finishing, accurate and invisible mitring.

Perhaps the main reason for the surge in popularity of porcelain worktops is this aesthetic appeal. With a vast colour and design choice, these benchtops, first and foremost, look great. Discoloration or colour change is not a concern as it is with some other materials so exterior use in

outdoor kitchens, for instance, is an option.

The availability of really large slabs is another benefit. You simply cannot achieve this with natural stone, the real competition in the high-end worktop stakes. This allows designers and installers to cover large kitchen islands with a single piece and deliver seamless worktops. Characteristics that are both high up the desirability list for contemporary kitchens.

Porcelain is also around 30% stronger than granite. The surface strength achieved in the firing process renders porcelain worktops highly resistant to chipping, scratching, cracking, and general wear and tear. This, in turn, means a long, trouble-free, service life.

So, while the porcelain worktop is usually more expensive than wood, laminate, or ceramic tile alternatives — although less expensive than granite and other natural stones worktop is usually more

expensive than wood, laminate, or ceramic tile alternatives — this investment is balanced by longevity.

Many benchtop manufacturers can also offer matching small format tiles, or super thin 3mm laminam-style sheets for use as back splashes. You can also source the same design in different colours, increasing the design options.

The other main benefit is that porcelain worktops do not have to be sealed. They are quick and easy to clean, can be provided with factory-applied anti-bacterial protection, and are less likely to be affected by acids and harsh cleaners, the nemesis of many polished marble worktops.

Porcelain is also heat resistant. The countertops are fired at more than 1,200 degrees Celsius, and the finished product can take hot pots and pans. They will not burn, smoke or emit harmful substances when subjected to heat.

→ 40



The Marmoker collection replicates marble's veining, shine and colour effects

DISADVANTAGES

Porcelain worktops can chip and crack, but this takes more force and weight than with natural stone alternatives.

Installation can pose problems, as cutting slabs requires knowledge and the right machinery. It is fair to say that mistakes have been made in the past which were largely down to poor technique and lack of detailed product knowledge. This is situation is steadily improving, but the popularity of specialist courses hosted by experts such as Roberto Colonetti from WA-based European Ceramics bears testimony to the market's ongoing desire for this type of knowledge.

As is true with every type of benchtop, only when porcelain worktops are properly installed will their potential for beauty, functionality, and durability be maximised.

OTHER SURFACES

One aspect of the emerging porcelain benchtop sector is a select band of companies that are heavily promoting the concept of "sintered stone". Is this porcelain, or is it something truly different?

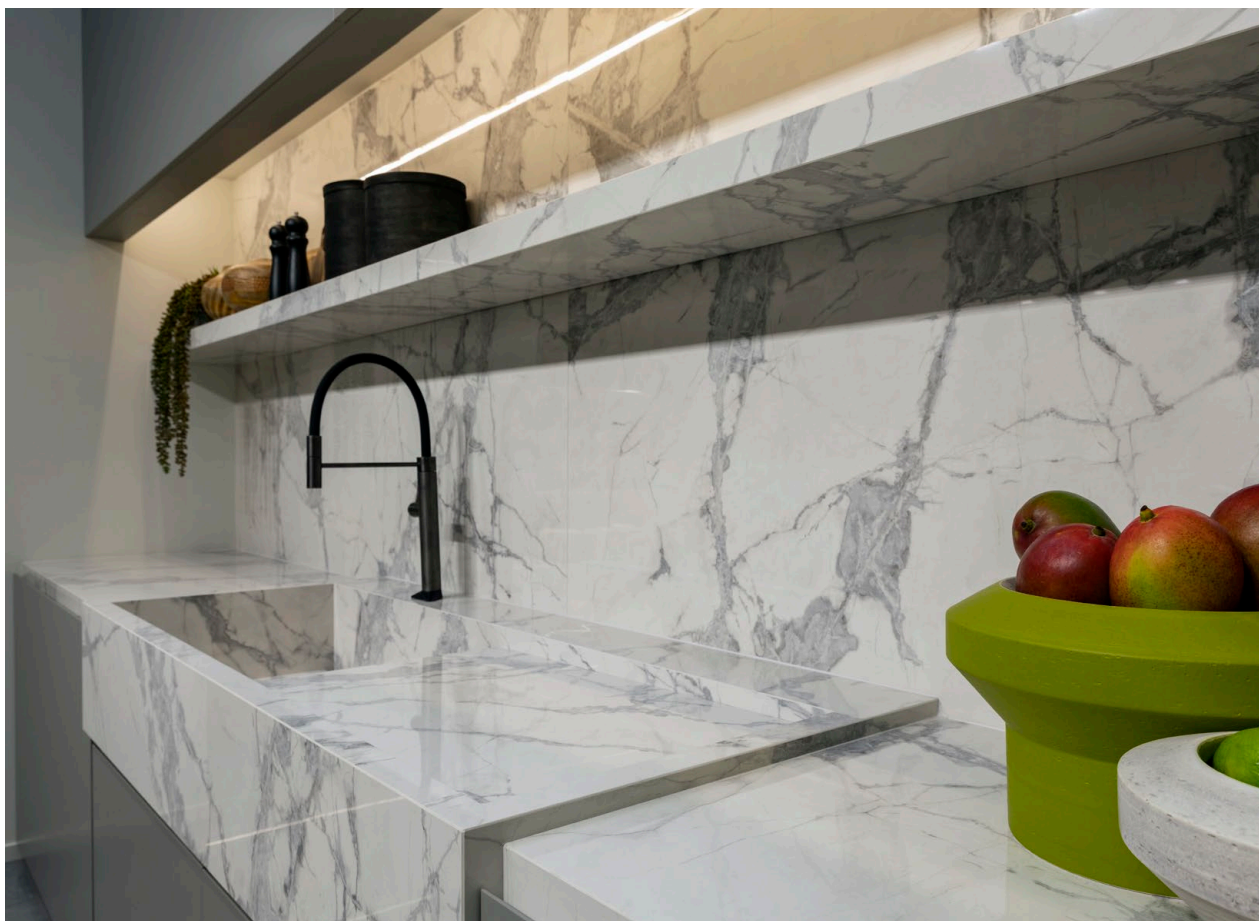
The answer you will get to that question will depend on who you ask but if you speak to one of the main sintered stone advocates — notably Lapitec, Dekton (Cosentino) or Neolith (TheSize) — they will attest there are fundamental differences between standard porcelain and sintered stone.

These differences mainly lie in the chemical composition of the body, the force used during compaction, and the firing cycle itself. Additional points of difference relate to the selection and application of the decoration.

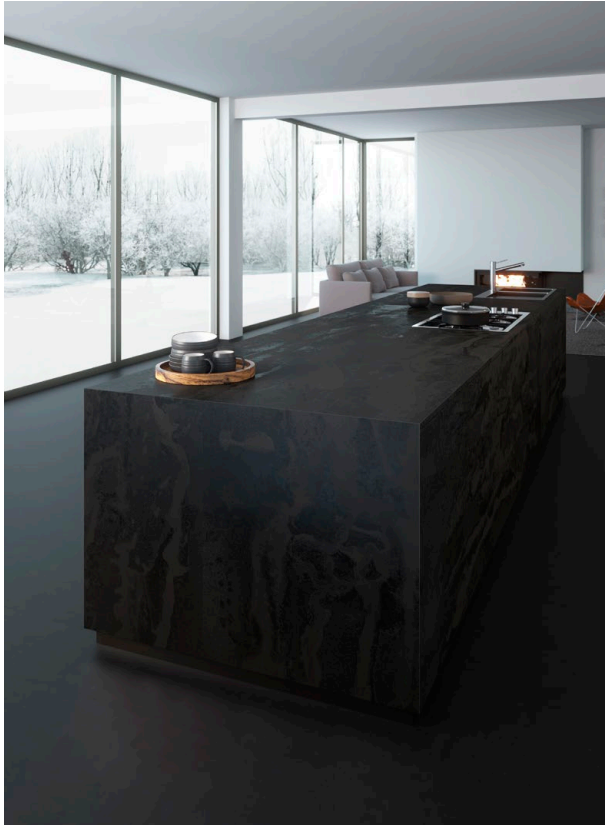
These technical issues are also probably best left to R&D

departments, test laboratories or, possibly, courtrooms. In a competitive marketplace, most designers, architects, homeowners, or retailers will base their buying decisions on brand trust, visual evidence, and technical specifications. In my opinion, esoteric scientific categorisation adds little of true value to the debate. While I understand the commercial argument, the real competition is surely laminate/MFC, solid wood, bamboo, glass, in-situ concrete, natural stone, stainless steel, solid surfacing such as Corian, and conglomerates.

Whatever side of the sintered stone debate you fall, it is difficult to dispute the technical performance, surface quality, and sheer beauty of these slabs. A highly polished dark Neolith slab, for example, offers a near



Marquinia, Statuary, Calacatta and Calacatta Gold marble are some of the available FLORIM stone marble choices



Nilium and Radium from Dekton are based on the look of aged, rusted metals with irregular, organic pattern

perfect, mirror-like reflection. Something only possible with an incredible planarity and a near perfect surface.

It is also true that both sintered stone and porcelain worktops are extremely durable. The key selling points are that they will not stain, are resistant to cracking, heat-proof, and particularly with the newest ranges, are available in through-coloured designs allowing decorative edge finishing and facilitating seamless repairs.

Unlike quartz, they can be installed as outdoor benchtops, even in freezing climates. They are also UV resistant, and will not fade with constant exposure to the sun.

Altrock is a solid surface that combines the waste products of marble manufacturing — marble dust, chips and shards — with pigmented resin. Slabs are



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The recycled glass gives IceStone a terrazzo-like appearance

PORCELAIN PANEL BENCHTOPS

cast and then sealed with a wax oil that dries to a matt finish. The wax finish highlights the marble inclusions, resulting in a quite dramatic large-scale terrazzo effect. Altrocc can be used for flooring applications as well as kitchen bench tops.

While slabs can be customised to match specific palette, the overall range of choices is quite limited compared with porcelain. There are also maintenance issues. Put simply, Altrocc should be cared for like marble. Acidic spills must be wiped up quickly even though the sealant used for it is stain resistant. The resin terrazzo surface is billed as non-porous, making it more stain-resistant than a cement-based terrazzo.

Durat is a solid surface that contains up to 30% recycled plastic. This is granulated, providing a distinct speckled

appearance. It is resistant to wear, heat, humidity, and various household chemicals while scratches and other marks can be removed by polishing.

Sheets of Durat can be used to create very long seamless surfaces because the seams, when sanded, virtually invisible. Durat can also be used to fabricate custom sinks, bathtubs, shower bases, backsplashes, shelves, tables and benches.

It is available in more than 200 vibrant colours including a large variety of RAL Classic colours. Custom colours can be tinted to order, and Durat can be used to create seamless surfaces of any custom project.

The Durat Circular concept is a new step towards a comprehensive circular economy and closed material cycle. It repurchases, refurbishes and sells used

Durat products. The goal is to ensure the longest possible life cycle for Durat material and re-use 100% of the materials that is produced. It comes in a broad range of 300 standard background colours in a range of textures and with different colourer speckles.

Easy maintenance and hard-wearing properties make it an ideal material for various kinds of interiors, such as bathrooms, kitchens and public places.

Portland cement, recycled glass, and non-toxic pigments are the three main components of IceStone. The recycled glass gives IceStone a terrazzo-like appearance.

IceStone is not as durable as sintered stone or porcelain, and the surface may be etched by acids and strong alkaline cleaning products will etch it. This material is porous and should be periodically sealed.



From the Coverlam Top Calacata range by Grespania Ceramica

Richlite is made from 65% FSC-certified recycled paper, and 35% resin. Rolls of paper are saturated with resin, stacked, and then compressed under even heat and pressure. This results in a solid, stable material that is available in sheets up to 5ft by 12ft.

It is fire resistant and durable in high-traffic areas. However,

red wine, high-alkaline fruits, and high alkaline soaps can cause staining if left on the surface. Richlite will show scratches and patina over time. However, scratches can be sanded, and the material can be resealed to restore its smooth finish.

Richlite comes in milled, leathered, and honed finishes.

Its smooth, minimalist appearance makes it well-suited for modern kitchens.

MANUFACTURERS

Atlas Plan has the Atlas Concorde brand that specialises in the creation of large-size ceramic slabs.

The technical performance

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Malm Black by SapienStone



SapienStone's Fior di Bosco 3,200 by 1,500mm porcelain slabs are 12mm thick.

PORCELAIN PANEL BENCHTOPS

of porcelain tiles is merged with sophisticated styling capable of adding a distinctive touch to every surface. Hard-wearing, versatile and authentic, these are the features of the material which Atlas Plan creates. The wealth of colours, vein patterns and light effects of marble, natural stone and innovative materials, combine to create "exclusive" surroundings to decorate all indoor and outdoor settings.

SapienStone dresses up the kitchen in a variety of colours. It is a full-bodied porcelain imbued with veining that give its surface a more realistic look. The colour palette includes the most popular colours for use in today's kitchen: whites, beiges, greys and blacks.

SapienStone porcelain slabs were specifically developed to respond to the

strictest requirements of the kitchen countertop, with an innate resistance to high temperatures, stains, chemical products, and scratching. It can also be used outdoors, as sunlight will not alter any of its properties. All of these features work together to ensure that homea will look refreshingly polished for years to come.

An ecological product, SapienStone is made using natural clays and mineral colours which are pressed and fired to make a high-performing surface. The product can be recycled after use, which only confirms its low environmental impact.

Central to Tau Ceramica's targeting of the growing porcelain benchtop market, Ascale sintered slabs come in 6, 12 and 20mm thicknesses, and in what is becoming the

de facto industry standard size: 3,200 by 1,600mm.

Ascale offers the some of the most iconic stone-effect finishes with the performance of a state-of-the-art sintered slab. A real breakthrough event occurred around three years ago when Tau Ceramica hosted a live cooking event in Vila-Real, Spain, at which more than 200 people enjoyed culinary delights prepared by Iñaki De Mingo and Alfredo Granell from Gastro Tasca La Guindilla, as well as Asier Manzanos from El Vasco. They are two prestigious local restaurants.

The food served on these two nights was cooked directly on Ascale worktops. This followed a collaboration with TPB Tech that resulted in an exclusive collection of worktops that enable cooking directly on



The surface and edges of the SOLID colour collection from FLORIM can be processed same as natural stone

the ceramic surface itself.

Grespania is one of the main Spanish porcelain worktop producers with Coverlam Top. This highly resistant material is available in 1,620 by 3,240mm and 1,000 by 3,000mm formats, in 12mm and 10.5mm thicknesses.

The brand launched with eight collections, drawing inspiration from a selection of natural materials. The initial portfolio spanned six different decorative families — stone, cement, wood, metal, monochromatic, and marble — all strikingly lifelike and rich in detail.

Suitable for everyday use, Coverlam Top can also meet the most demanding needs of the home in terms of resistance to heat, chemicals, and stains. With minimal porosity, Coverlam Top is also hygienic which makes it ideal for food preparation.

Dekton by Cosentino is an ultra-compact surface and made of a sophisticated blend of inorganic materials. It is manufactured using TSP (Technology of Sinterized Particles), an innovative ultra-compaction process very closely aligned to modern continuous pressed porcelain.

It is manufactured in large format (up to 3,200 by 1,440mm, and thicknesses of 8, 12, and 20mm, and has great technical characteristics including resistance to UV rays, scratches, stains, and thermal shock, with very low water absorption.

Recent designs over the past two or three years have moved away from slavish imitations of natural materials into more futuristic, impressionistic, and innovative finishes. Typical is a collection comprising three new shades — Nilium, Radium, and Orix — alongside the award-winning Dekton Trilium, that was launched commercially in 2016. Nilium, Radium and



Onici marble-like tiles from Casalgrande Padana are made of high-performance porcelain stoneware

PORCELAIN PANEL BENCHTOPS

Trilium, based on the look of aged, rusted metals with irregular, organic pattern, offer the hybrid appearance of weather-worn materials. Orix represents the degradation of cement and the biological transformation of stone.

The collection features a matt-gloss finish, with its

surface colours fluctuating in different angles of light, resulting in rich, varied designs. Also standing out from the plethora of new designs from Dekton are two striking colours for its existing Natural and XGloss Natural collections.

Opera, now part of the



Durat is a solid surface that contains up to 30% recycled plastic



Inalco's Senda features grey brushstrokes of colour on a gentle stone-like relief texture

Dekton Natural collection, takes inspiration from elegant Italian Carrara marble and boasts the soft touch finish that the company has named Velvet Texture. Simple, light grey veining adds depth and interest to the creamy white surface for a classic understated finish.

Meanwhile Dekton XGloss Natura replicates the quintessential style of marble with soft grey veining, accentuating the classic white surface, brought out by a lustrous polished finish. The striking colour's reflective nature is due to the nano-technological treatment and mechanical polishing.

Florim Stone in another porcelain worktop brand to mix the beauty of nature with technological innovation. Its slabs are available in one large size (greater than 1600 by 3,200mm) and three different thicknesses: 6, and 12 mm, both mat-mounted with fibreglass, and 20mm.

The wide array of designs and textures supply the interior designer with a versatile and creative product, both in terms of technical performance and aesthetic appeal.

Florim Stone sintered surfaces are made out of high-quality clays and mineral colours. They have the benefits of porcelain stoneware (a hard wearing, stain, scratch, high temperature, UV radiation, moisture, stress resistant and easy to clean product) and the accurate look of natural stone, concrete, or oxidized metal.

Inalco took advantage of the last live staging of Cevisama to host an event — for the fifth year running — that saw the launch of the company's latest iTopker worktops with an elegant matt-polished velvet finish. The first designs played to the classic Black & White aesthetic, a current trend for

LAPITEC AT MODERNISM WEEK 2021

Sintered stone was chosen for a modernist home located in Palm Springs, California, as part of this year's Modernism Week.

Modernism Week was held in April 2021, hosting a series of events dedicated to architecture and interior design. It has been organised every year in Palm Springs, California (USA) since

2006. Guided tours are at the heart of the program, giving visitors the opportunity to discover residential projects that express the typical Californian lifestyle, with large outdoor spaces and careful attention paid to the sustainability of materials.

For the restyling of Seventies Sackley, a villa in the Indian Canyons

neighbourhood that is part of the tour, Lapitec sintered stone was chosen for its green qualities and extensive customisation possibilities.

This villa dates back to 1975 and its interiors were recently renovated. It boasts an open-plan kitchen and dining area, defined by the combination of wooden cabinets and the light-coloured sintered stone used for the benchtops and other furnishings.

The interiors of this Palm Springs villa were designed by Michael Ostrow and Roger Stoker from Grace Home Furnishings, and they feature a distinctive, multi-coloured architectural style.

Lapitec's large, made in Italy slabs are distributed in the West Coast of America and Canada by Willis, a major sponsor of Modernism Week, and are featured here in a Bianco Vittoria shade with a Satin finish. The designers have made the most of the slabs' large format to avoid any joints, thereby ensuring maximum elegance for the entire island, including the splashback.

Bianco Vittoria, part of the Musa collection, is one of Lapitec's new products, the world's first to feature 100% silica-free veining all the way through the slab. Thanks to its 100% natural mineral composition and its intrinsic technical performance in terms of resistance, covered by 25 international patents, Lapitec is the idea material for the kitchen.

It is non-absorbent, stain-resistant, and scratch-resistant as well as being able to withstand knocks and bumps and temperature fluctuations. It is also easy to clean as is not altered by chemical agents and is hygienic because its surfaces are non-porous, preventing mould and bacteria from building up.

Lapitec also offers anti-bacterial properties that prevent the proliferation of such agents in areas covered by this patented material. ■



Lapitec Bianco Vittoria, satin finish in 20mm thickness used on kitchen countertops including waterfall, full height backsplash, buffet countertop with a drop-down desk and an outdoor bar countertop.

Photo credit: Courtesy of Modernism Week and Willis.



The modernist home in Palm Springs, California (USA) has large outdoor spaces.

Photo credit: Courtesy of Modernism Week and Willis.

PORCELAIN PANEL BENCHTOPS

→ the interior design sector. This was represented by the Storm Negro and Larsen Super Blanco-Gris collections.

Other tiles in the iTopker portfolio include designs with an innovative matt polished finish, which besides being incredibly soft, provide an exquisite beauty and exceptional whiteness. These include Lithea, with gentle grey lines melting into a white background and Syros, a surface inspired by a snow-white marble impossible to find in nature.

Further choice is provided by Senda, a design featuring grey brush tones; Vint, a new 20mm product; Boreal, a worn-effect cement collection; and Oxide, a classic corten steel design.

SapienStone's Fior di Bosco kitchen worktop was inspired by a very popular Italian marble. Simple yet elegant, Fior di Bosco features a grey background lightened by subtle white veining and a cloudy effect which softens the transition from one gradation to another.

SapienStone's aesthetic and technological research, supported by Iris Ceramica Group, has created a benchtop suitable for any type of kitchen due to its understated look, but which also gives the space a sophisticated ambiance.

The collection's two finishes are designed for different styles of kitchen. Silky, with its velvety finish accentuates the subtlety of the worktop, while glossy, reflective Polished gives the colour greater depth.

The company's benchtops have a range of technical properties: hygienic, non-absorbent, resistant to high temperatures, impact, scratches, abrasion, acids and corrosives, easy to install and easy to maintain. SapienStone's Fior di Bosco 3,200 by 1,500mm porcelain slabs are 12mm thick. ■



Coverlam Top Blue Stone Negro by Grespania Ceramica



Dekton's Orix represents the degradation of cement and the biological transformation of stone

MAXIMUM IMPACT PORCELAIN PANELS

There are now more design opportunities using Maximum Porcelain by Fiandre with five new tiles, exclusively available at Artedomus showrooms Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Perth.

Verde Alpi has an intense green background and light and dark areas illuminated by white veins. The bright finish adds depth to the colour and enhances its texture. The recreation of specific marble details make the surfaces a distinctive way to go for kitchen splashbacks, benchtops and cabinetry, receptions, lobbies and foyers, as well as cladding and flooring. (Available in 6mm and 12mm thickness.)

Bleu Di Savoie is inspired by the Romans, has a grey

background with almost blue-like shading, and white and pale grey veining. It is available with semi-polished or polished finish. (Available in 6mm thickness.)

Apuano has a white background interspersed with the lightest grey veins that fade into shaded areas. The marble whiteness catches the eye and brings light and airiness to spaces. (Available in 6mm thickness.)

Royal Platinum has a grey background with green and silver tones, and delicate dark and light veining that enriches its colour and texture. This gives the classic shade depth and movement. (Available in 6mm and 12mm thickness.)

Urban White is a timeless colour with a light grey background and

bright white areas illuminated with soft veining. (Available in 6mm and 12mm thickness.)

These large format panels come in an unparalleled size (up to 3000-by-1500 millimetres), and the fine profile (6, 9 and 12 millimetres) is thinner than most benchtops. They also resist staining and etching and are completely UV stable


MAXIMUM Porcelain Panels are available with Active 2.0, a photocatalytic coating that offers a permanent solution that won't wear out or wear off and is suitable for internal, external, floor and wall usage. Active 2.0 is antibacterial, anti-odour and antiviral, including against the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus (responsible for COVID-19).

A study by the Department of Biomedical, Surgical and Dental Sciences and the Department of Biomedical Sciences for Health of the University of Milan verified that Active 2.0 can eliminate 94% of SARS-CoV-2 after only four hours of exposure to low intensity UV light.

*Active 2.0 also reduces indoor nitrogen oxide and VOC levels, and its self-cleaning properties ensure ease of maintenance. ■







BRAZIL'S EXPO **REVESTIR** IN 2021 IS 100% DIGITAL

THIS YEAR, ORGANISERS INNOVATED BY TAKING THE FAIR — LITERALLY — INTO THE HOMES OF VISITORS, WITH MORE THAN 700 PRODUCTS MODELLED IN 3D FOR AN AUGMENTED REALITY EXPERIENCE. TILE TODAY'S INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENT, JOE SIMPSON REPORTS.

As a result of the Coronavirus pandemic, Expo Revestir in 2021 was a digital event spanning ten days from 22nd to 31st March. Throughout this period, the 19th edition of what is billed as the largest surfaces event in Latin America, received 59,973 visits and saw more than 4 million interactions on the event platform. If this translates into orders for the participating companies, it will be a significant endorsement of the online program.

→ In total, Revestir 2021 hosted 68 events and 215 individual speakers online. While unashamedly aimed at a Brazilian audience, the Portuguese language program also provided targeted, varied and relevant content for an international audience.

Brazilian tile trade association, ANFACER (National Association of Ceramic Manufacturers for Coatings, Sanitary Ware) is the organising body of Revestir. "Held in a 100% digital format, Expo Revestir shows that it is possible to cross borders, through technological innovation, and reaffirms our commitment to continue connecting and delighting our audience with the launches and trends," said Manfredo Gouvêa Jr, president of ANFACER.



Above and topt: Bamboo Light porcelain by Decortiles is installed in a kitchen and gives continuity to the wood installed in the room



Gouache is part of the Portobello 2021 Unlimited collection

INDIVIDUAL DAYS

The week began with Retailer Day. Economist Pedro Malan addressed the Forum of Retail Leaders and Construction Material Industry with the topic, “Macroeconomic Scenario and Outlook”. The program continued with a panel discussion on “Economic Scenario and Perspectives for the Brazilian Retail and Construction Segment”.

The second day at Expo Revestir was Interior Designer Day and all about trend setters. Brazilian designer Walter Rodrigues and journalist Jackson Araujo were first to present and were followed by an interview with Italian architect and interior designer Paola Navone. The day concluded with furniture designer Humberto Campana telling the story of Campana Studio.

→ 54



SuperFormato in Concrete Greige from Roca Ceramica, part of the Roca Brasil Ceramica group

→ Architect Day came next and began with the US-based firm Safdie Architects with an overview of their futuristic and functional projects. Then it was the turn of global design practice Perkins & Will who presented on the modus operandi of their creations. Finally, Pritzker Architecture Prize winner Frenchman Christian de Portzamparc was the centre of attention as he walked through his works across both hemispheres.

Other highlights included a Ceramic Tile Laying workshop conducted by Amanda Neme, coordinator of ANFACER's Sustainability Initiative, Dr. Fábio Melchhiades, technical director of the CRC (a ceramics laboratory), Flávio Maranhão from the University of São Paulo, engineer Maurício Resende and Ana Paula Margarido from the Ceramic Centre of Brazil (CCB).

PRODUCT INNOVATION

Revestir has always been, primarily, a showcase for Brazilian and overseas tile manufacturers. In its digital format, Expo Revestir still came up with the goods in this regard.

One of the top names in Brazilian tile, Portobello, presented a thought-provoking collection by Italian designer Paola Navone. But the main focus was a preview of the Portobello 2021 Unlimited collection. One highlight was Gouache, a design based on the brush strokes that reveals surprising nuances and layers of colours in its 13 carefully selected tones.

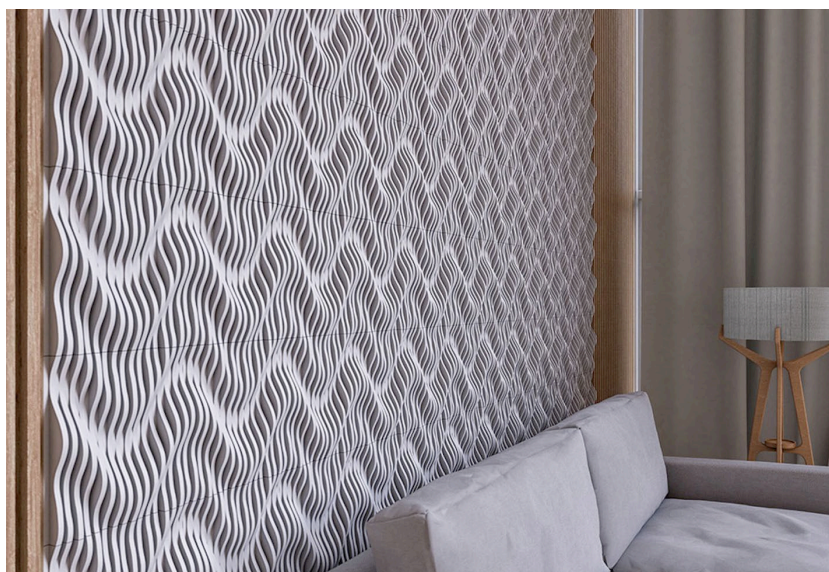
The Bonbon line by Paola Navone featured irregular shapes in pastel colours — which refer to the appearance of small sweets — to create an exclusive mosaic. Portobello also focused on the Via Durini range that is characterised by delicate surfaces in four shades, in 900 by 900mm, plus an exclusive 900 by 2,700mm XXL wall tile format.



The Fior di Bosco porcelain from Ceramica Elizabeth is inspired by the characteristics of Tuscan architecture



Elemental's Clay is made of made of clay and creates handmade walls



Fiji Waves by Mosarte represents "agitated waves in nature"



The Paris Colors line from Castelatto aims to show a delicate aesthetic and the soft touch of polished rock through a representation of the most popular marbles



The Antique line by Castelatto recreates architectural concrete that exposes the striking characteristics of wood planks



Nest Continuo is part of the Portobello 2021 Unlimited collection and be applied in the lower and upper base of niches, giving a sophisticated and functional wall-to-wall finish

The new launches were complemented by the tactile Segments range as well as Nest Continuo and delicate marble effects like Calacatta in 300 by 900mm with a super matte finish.

Another of the Brazilian giants, Eliane Revestimentos, was all about 3D effects, minimalism, and versatility. The Stelar collection, for example, was created for façades, floors, walls, worktops, and furniture facing. Nine-millimetre thick, and in 800 by 1,600mm format, the range features Stelar Black and Stelar White.

The Matéria range can also be used on floors and worktops as it is resistant to heat, stains, acids, and liquids. It has a strong minimalist character, with colours that span white and grey, through to earth tones such as Calcário, Areia, Terra, Titânio, Grafite, Carbono, and Petróleo. There are two formats available: 800 by 800mm and 600 by 600mm.

→ 56



Portinari's Mozart collection is inspired by the Austrian composer with soft grey shades enhanced with delicate golden veins



Elemental's Stone line offers pieces with different sizes and textures

In 2021 Incepa, a Roca brand, unveiled XXL format designs in 1,200 by 1,200mm and 1,000 by 2,000mm which is just 7mm thick. Highlights include the City collection in Cement and Nude which takes a fresh look at cement surfaces. Galileu is a neutral and timeless tile with a marbled surface that reproduces soft, uniform veins in satin and Micro Crystal versions.

Incepa also offers the Venatino line that is inspired by the classic Italian Carrara Venatino with soft and longitudinal veins.

Finally, Incepa's Pro collection has gained a new finish on 600 by 600mm tiles called GripPlus. This is ideal for internal stairs, terraces, pavements, and external areas in residential or commercial schemes.

Another of Brazil's big three tile producers, Portinari, shone the spotlight on Mozart, a collection with a wealth of nuances and delicate veins. With the name inspired by the influential Austrian composer, the pieces project charm and sophistication. The soft grey shades are enhanced with delicate golden veins.

The pieces are available in 800 by 1,600mm, and 1,200 by 1,200mm formats, with polished and natural finishes. In its natural version, the tile can be used on covered balconies and inside showers.

Atlas is always one of the must-see stands at Revestir. This year, inspired by the colours and textures of nature, the brand's collections offered refined aesthetics and easy maintenance. Typical is the Confete range (made to order), which recalls the look of the façades of buildings built in the 1950s and 1960s.

Meanwhile Morea revealed nuances of blue, with all the details of rocks while Java takes inspiration from the pure green of the Indonesian sea.



Mosarte launched two new raw materials and a series of mosaics designs at Revestir 2021



Incepa's Venatino line is inspired by the classic Italian Carrara Venatino with soft and longitudinal veins



The Bonbon line from Portobello is designed by the Italian architect and designer, Paola Navone. It brings irregular shapes in pastel tones, creating a unique mosaic.

With a theme, "Rescue, Rethink and Reassign", the Castelatatto brand presented ranges inspired by vernacular architecture (a built environment based on the local availability of materials indigenous to its particular region), nature and classic rocks. Castelatatto's 2021 launches include Pau a Pique (1,200 by 500mm) in Terracotta and Sertão colours. This collection recreates the technique known as taipa de mão (made with mud).

Pedra Puglia (1,000 by 500mm) is inspired by the charms of Puglia and Moledo in Marfim, Cinza Chumbo and Marron colourways and in several different formats. The brand also featured patterns such as Ceppo di Grés, Travertino Gold, and Antique Patina.

Cerâmica Elizabeth's Reconecte-se series highlighted two new formats, 625 by 1,250mm, and 70 by 260mm. Here maximalism and exotic marbles, sit alongside classic and contemporary interpretations of materials such as cement and wood. For instance, Nobile Gris is a 625 by 1,250mm porcelain tile that interprets Italian Armani marble with a polished finish. It has soft white veins but with bronze, and several soft colour options.

Italy also provided the inspiration for Fior di Bosco,

→ a 1,010 by 1,010mm porcelain tile that references Tuscan architecture in polished, satin, or rustic finishes.

Nina Martinelli delivered a celebration of nature, lively design, and beauty. This is a carefully curated set of design featuring diverse colours, textures, shapes, and dimensions such as ceramic bricks. The key designs were Colezione Brick, Cerâmica Natural, Formare, Colore, Ampliato, Essenza Bianca, and Essenza Natura.

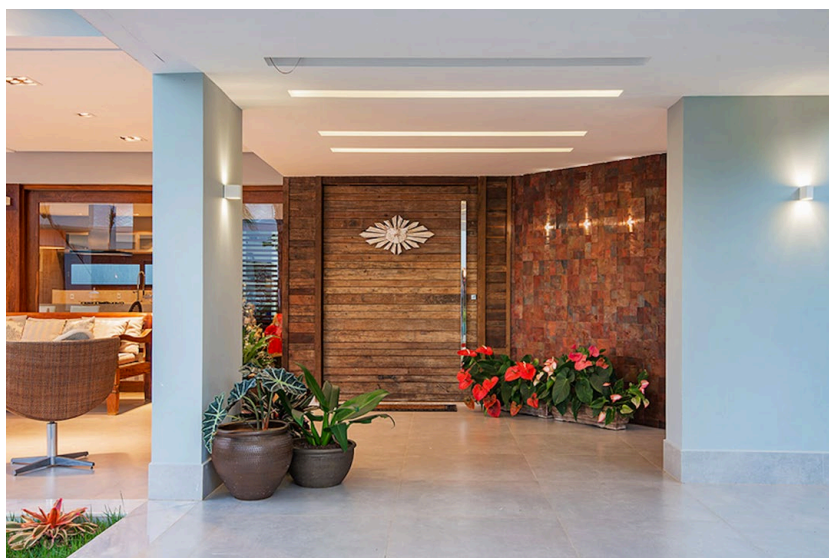
Elemental Revestimentos Especiais caught the eye with its Stone line. It offered pieces with different sizes and textures, pre-assembled in tiles measuring 620 by 420mm, among other collections.

Elemental also showed Oxi Mosaic which reproduces the details of oxidized rocks. Clay looks like hand-made walls and Travertino reinterprets this iconic marble in shades of cream, white, blue, green, brown, and grey.

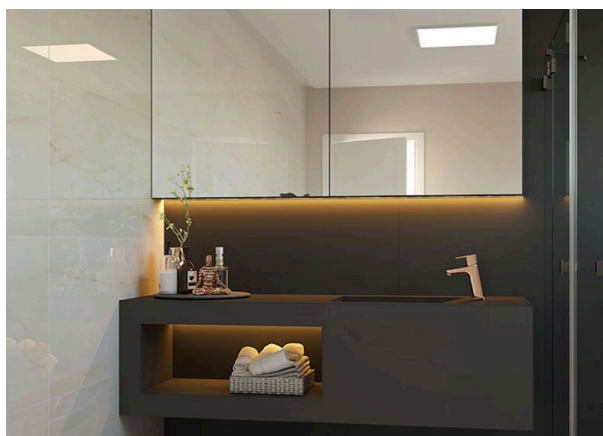
Mosarte told the story of the creation and personality of its five most iconic products: Versalhes, Niterói Legno, Pétlas, Fiji, and Clarity. With help from astrologer Hugo Leonardo da Silva, the brand assembled a detailed astrological chart for each collection and based on these studies, special reinterpretations were created to commemorate the firm's 25th anniversary.



Ceusa's Noturno collection combines the naturalness of dark stones with the resistance and beauty of porcelain tiles



Elemental's Oxi Mosaic reproduces the details of the oxidized rocks



Eliane Revestimentos has the Stellar collection for application on facades, floors, walls, benches and furniture. It comes in a 9mm thickness and in a 80x160 cm format.

→ Roca Cerámica delivered new design solutions that reflect the main global trends. The highlights were Cross Cut (1,200 by 1,200mm, and 1,200 by 2,500mm), a stone-effect based on transverse-cut quartz with a Micro Crystal and satin finish. Concrete Greige and Off White (same formats) reinterprets structural concrete.

Koronis (already available in 600 by 1,200, 1,200 by 1,200, 1,000 by 2,000 and 1,200 by 2,500mm) now comes in a super-format, 1,200 by 2,500mm. Available in a Micro Crystal and satin finish, this design reflects Roca's investment in cutting-edge technology. Finally, Calacata Light (1,200 by 1,200mm, and 1,200 by 2,500mm) reproduces classic marble in impressive detail using HD printing technology.

Biancogres' launches prioritised the timeless, the essential and the emotional. The company's revised portfolio delivers marble-, stone-, wood-, and cement-effect tiles that can all work together in a co-ordinated way.

Ceusa, now part of the Duratex Group, had the Noturno range, dark stone-effect tiles with all the resistance and beauty of porcelain. These dark tiles with off-white nuances come in a 1,200 by 1,200mm format in both natural and non-slip finishes.

Decortiles majored in maxi formats and minimum thicknesses. Florence from the Arts Mob collection is an impressive 1,620 by 3,240mm. With natural patterns faithful to even the smallest detail, these high-definition porcelain tiles offer extra options as they are available in 12mm and 15mm thicknesses. Decortiles also revealed the Ágata collection, an agate-inspired porcelain tile design available in the popular 900 by 900mm format.

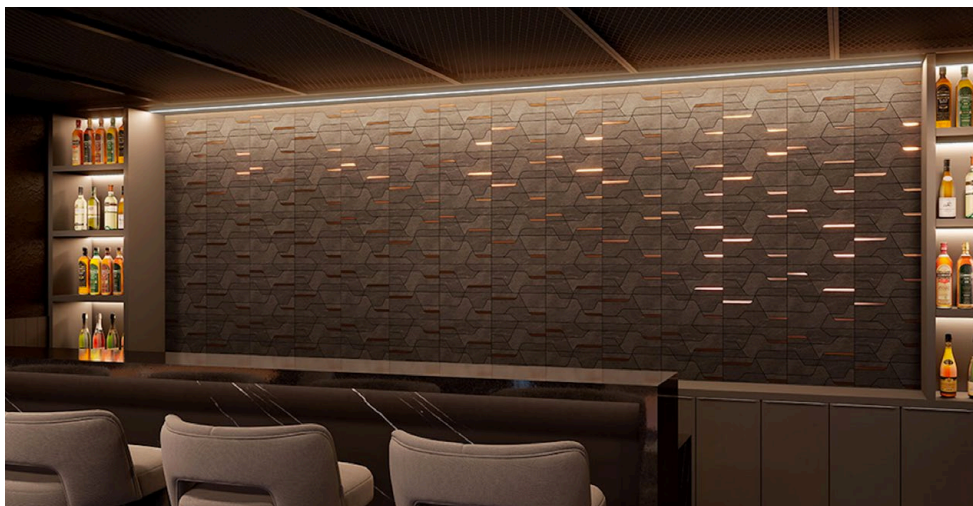
A full list of Revestir's digital exhibitors can be found at: <https://en.exporevestir.com.br/sobre/lista-expositores-digitais>



Castelatto's collections at Revestir 2021 are inspired by vernacular architecture



The "Reconnect yourself" collection from Cerâmica Elizabeth expresses maximalism and exotic marbles



Mosarte reinterpreted some of its most well-known products, Versalhes, Niterói Legno, Pétlas, Fiji and Clarity, to commemorate its 25th anniversary

Beaumonts joins Bunnings, consolidates the industry further

Always a class act, Bob Beaumont has staged the ideal exit from Beaumont Tiles, handing on a great company to the capable care of Bunnings

In late April 2021 Wesfarmers announced that the company had acquired Beaumont Tiles, which would form part of Australia's leading hardware retailer, Bunnings. Details of the acquisition remain largely undisclosed, but more should emerge during June 2021, as Wesfarmers undertakes its annual Strategy Day briefings.

Everyone in the tile industry is familiar with Beaumont's long-time executive chairman Bob Beaumont. Working in the company for the past 53 years, Bob has come to epitomise what we think of as the ideal manager/owner in the industry. He has been at once driven and determined to make the most of a tile business, while also being a responsible and caring force. He has taken Beaumonts to the heights of an unprecedented success in tile, but has remained down-to-earth, friendly, and always more focussed on what possibilities tomorrow may hold, rather than the (long) litany of his past successes.

With the tile industry looking up, Bob is quite sure that the

company has found its way to good hands. Bunnings will look after Beaumonts, and help it further grow and expand in the years to come, continuing his legacy. As he said in the press release about the acquisition:

"After 53 years dedicated to a business that my dad started in South Australia, it's time to retire. I knew that it would never be an easy thing to do, and it's been a tough decision, but the board and I recognised the need for us to make way for a younger team.

"What made the decision easier, was knowing the brand and business we worked so hard to build from scratch would be placed in the best possible position for on-going success and growth and I'm really thrilled at the outcome for Beaumonts. Our family signed a contract to sell the business to Bunnings, as they understand our brand and culture, and will look after our extended Beaumont family including our franchisees and our teams."

That said, it is never easy for an industry to lose someone like

Bob Beaumont. His contribution was not just helping to found and successfully continue a highly successful business. In many ways Bob, and Beaumont Tiles itself, has actually helped to define not only what a tile retailer is, how it should relate to the market, its customers and its suppliers, but really set a broader standard across the building supplies and hardware retail industry as well.

Bob has brought a breadth of vision, an excitement about tile and its possibilities, to working in tile at many levels. Bunnings will be a great caretaker for that vision, but everyone is going to miss Bob's direct influence, his inventiveness, and a lifelong dedication to make choosing tiles more of a pleasure than a chore.

In every meaningful sense of the word, Bob has truly been a legend in the industry. And it is simply never easy for an industry to lose someone like that, even when they manage, as their last act, to stage such a magnificent exit.

History

Bob became managing director of Beaumont Tiles in 1978. It wasn't until the early 1990s, however, that Bob began to pursue what would become his decades-long vision to consolidate smaller tile retailers. He explained his reasons for this to the Australian Financial Review (AFR):

"Buying tiles at the nearest hardware or small tile shop is most often the way it happens in Australia. But for customers, whether they are tilers, builders or home handymen, it does not allow for choice, large showrooms of ideas, or exclusive ranges at competitive prices. At any time we stock more than \$5 million in tiles, slate and marble



The Beaumont Tiles studio store in Norwood (SA) is unlike any other traditional tile store

from around the world, which our franchise members, and therefore their customers, can have next-day access to."

By 1993, the company had sales of around \$36 million (\$69 million in 2021 dollars), and operated 15 stores in South Australia, controlling about half the state's market. The company employed 150 staff, and relied on trade sales for 75% of its business. Its innovations included having tile makers produce custom tiles to which it had exclusive rights — partly in a bid to boost Australian-made tile sales — and setting up their own testing to give tiles a slip rating, to ensure customers could choose the best tile fit for purpose.

One of the company's riskiest moves came in that year, when Beaumont Tiles moved into the Victorian market in a two stage push. That began with Beaumont Tiles establishing its first franchise operation, of some 20 owner-operated retailers. Added to that, the company took over the longest established tile retailer in the state, Crosby Tiles, which had five outlets.

Describing that development on the company's website, Bob stated at the time:

"It was very risky because it was losing a lot of money. However, we gradually built on it until finally, we became the biggest in Victoria. That then enabled us to leap frog into Queensland and other parts of the country."

Never one to shy away from a challenge, Bob then declared the company would have sales of \$100 million in the year 2000. In FY2013/14, the company was estimated to have revenue of \$200 million, with 100 outlets and 50,000sqm of total retail space, and opened warehouses in NSW and QLD with over 10,000sqm each.

That success continued. The company claimed growth of 12% in retail sales during FY2016/17 to \$275 million (implying sales in FY2015/16 were \$246 million), with the company having a total of over 110 retail outlets.

However, in 2018 Beaumont Tiles began to speak of a possible decline in the Australian market,

though he also stated that the market could support a total of 180 stores, 65 more than it had at the time. Perhaps the best insight into what the company was going through during 2018 is provided by a quote from an interview with Tile Today:

"For Beaumonts to achieve greatness, we will become a very different business in some ways over the next couple of years, but we will also stay, in many ways, exactly the same, building on our tremendous strengths."

The next Beaumonts

Which brings us, of course, to the final act of Beaumonts history as a family-owned company. You could say that Bob's crowning achievement is to sell the company into a market which has, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, begun to trend strongly upwards. Put simply, he has chosen the time and manner of his exit — and there is no greater testimony to a lifetime of business acumen and thoughtful risk-taking than to have so neat a conclusion.

Bob hasn't handed Beaumont Tiles off to "just anybody", either. Bunnings at the moment is being managed by Mike Schneider, who is highly regarded in the industry as a thoughtful business leader with a strong emphasis on building a values-driven organisation. He welcomed the acquisition in a press release, stating:

"Beaumont Tiles is a well-run business with a proud family history that will remain separate and distinct to Bunnings, as is the case with Adelaide Tools which was acquired by Bunnings in April 2020."

It's a great opportunity to see how the industry will respond to increased investment and attention, in a market that seems set to continue growth over the next two years. ■



Bob Beaumont is surrounded by members of his family during the opening of the Beaumont Tiles' flagship Norwood studio store in South Australia in late 2018

Holmesglen TAFE apprentice awards

COVID-19 restrictions did not stop Holmesglen TAFE Wall and Floor Tiling apprentice awards being held albeit with smaller numbers in attendance but still a lot of enthusiasm. This year's winner, Ebonny Beyer won the top prize mainly because of her "great work ethic", said teacher Frank Vanzella.

"Even though she doesn't have her licence yet, she would travel to work at 5.30am to catch public transport. She never ever complains about doing it hard. She

always does her best. Ebonny has a high level of quality and care when she works. Besides these attributes, she has a great sense of humour and a bubbly personality.

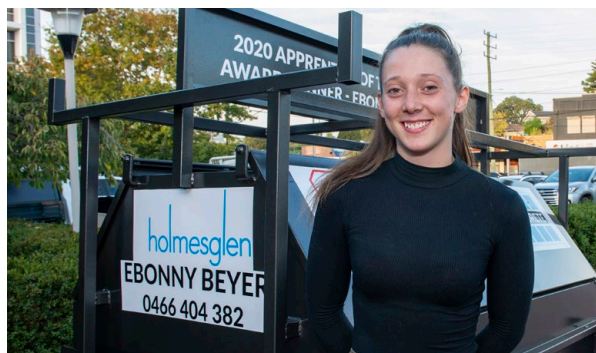
The restrictions meant that only apprentices were able to attend this year's awards. During the term, class sizes were reduced, masks worn and social distancing was in place. Holmesglen staff maintained consistent contact with apprentices and their employers, helping to ensure that any apprentice who lost their job

would have support, explains Vanzella. "Lucky the building industry was not duly affected and nearly all employers were extremely busy," he said.

The pandemic did not affect student numbers for the course, according to Vanzella. "The state government has been proactive in maintaining growth in the industry. Many employers are actively expressing interests in hire new apprentices. There are about 55 students to date with seven female apprentices," he said. ■



Apprentice of the Year, Ebonny Beyer with representatives from Sika (Jeff Kirkley), Holmesglen (Frank Vanzella), Laticrete (Chris Stenhouse), Davco and DTA



Ebonny Beyer won the Best Third Year Apprentice and overall Wall and Floor Tiling Apprentice awards



(l-r) Marco Parisella (Holmesglen), Hery Cristanto (Best First Year Wall and Floor Tiling Apprentice) and Frank Vanzella (Holmesglen)



(l&r) Apprentice Worlasi Tsagli with his employer, Frank Rocca from Rocca Tiling



(l-r) Marco Parisella (Holmesglen), Worlasi Tsagli (Best 2nd Year Wall and Floor Tiling Apprentice) and Frank Vanzella (Holmesglen)



(l-r) Frank Vanzella (Holmesglen), Pasquale Labbate (Best International Wall and Floor Tiling Apprentice) and Marco Parisella (Holmesglen)

A taste of summer from FAP ceramiche

Merging traditional, artisanal craftsmanship with versatile, modern materials, FAP Ceramiche has a new nature-inspired porcelain-stoneware tile collection that is evocative of an archetypal Italian summer.

It evokes the charm of an Italian summer with smooth terracotta wall tiles, vibrant 3D slot vento, and the round mosaic motif, also in terracotta.

The light in Italy has a way of amplifying colours, catching textural details and enhancing hues. Through in-depth research into raw materials, FAP Ceramiche has achieved this unique effect by combining glossy 3D effects on matte backgrounds.

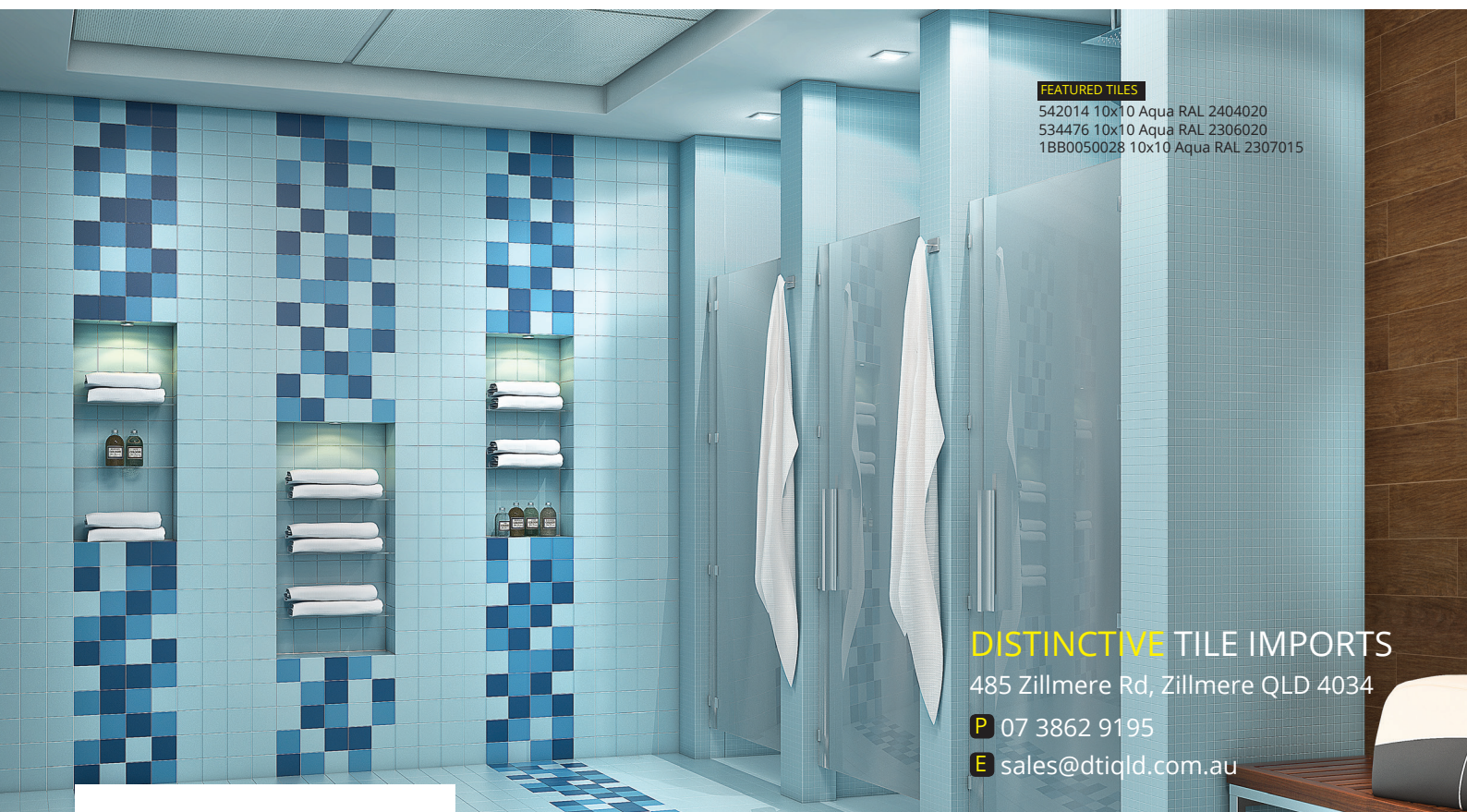
Conducive to warmth and character, the tiles capture the charm of Italian homes. Decorative yet functional, they can cover large spaces or protect interior



elements such as shelves or steps. The brand's tiles span a range of sizes from a 30.5 x 91.5cm wall tile to the largest floor tile of 120 x 120cm.

FAP Ceramiche's tiles represent both the past and future of Italian

decor by combining artisanal techniques with modern technical design. While acknowledging the history of Italian craftsmanship, the tiles have the versatile, resistant and hygienic properties of a high-quality modern material. ■



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Large format mould, recreated

The Vast White range is the first of its kind, according to Beaumont Tiles, and has been added to its collection of large and slab size tiles. The 300 x 700mm size is a “market first” because it commissioned a custom-built tile mould which was specially developed for this size.

Simple yet sleek, its uncomplicated style and unprecedented size can provide more design possibilities no matter where it is installed, allowing users to modernise and reimagine even the largest walls in your home.

A crisp white finish and elegant elongated appearance allows the Vast White range to evoke a sense of minimalism that can update bathroom walls or kitchen splashback instantly. Available in two shade variants, White and White Gloss, the Vast White tile is an ideal blank canvas to start a renovation.

The latest Vast White range is suitable for DIYers and builders as its 700mm length fits modular under kitchen cabinets and accommodates a 2100mm height in a shower. This means fewer cuts, no waste, less labour time and overall, lower costs. It is available in Gloss

or Satin finishes, exclusively at Beaumont Tiles.

“The Vast White range is the ultimate key to creating a style-flexible space that grows with you as your style evolves and can remain in vogue throughout any interior design trends,” says Christie Wood, Beaumont Tiles design specialist.

“Vast White’s 300 x 700mm modular fit size works in harmony

with its clean and effortless design and [requires] little grout line, giving it a streamlined, contemporary look...

“For a simple to achieve Modern look, add a wall hung vanity with matching champagne metallic finished tapware — for eg. Round Sink Mixer Gooseneck 26 — then for cohesive styling add a splash of greenery through leafy plants in simple ceramic pots.” ■



RAK Ceramics' Q1 reaches a five-year high

As one of the world's biggest ceramics manufacturers, RAK Ceramics' first quarter net profit more than doubled its revenue and surpassed pre-pandemic levels to touch achieve a five-year high.

Net profit to shareholders increased to Dh60.7 million in the three months to March 31, up from Dh25.7 million in the same period last year. Revenue for the reporting period grew 22% to Dh722.8 million, which was its highest level for the quarter since 2016, driven by "growth in all core markets".

"The company has returned to a state of steady growth" stated a directors' report filed to the Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange, where its shares are traded.

Total gross profit margin for the first quarter of the year achieved an all-time high of 35% driven by an increase in revenue, an improvement in efficiencies and the



optimisation of production lines. Abdallah Massaad, group chief executive of RAK Ceramics, told The National newspaper: "During the pandemic, we had to optimise our production ... [but] the moment demand came back, we were ready. We did not stop and we invested in technology ... where it paid us. From

an efficiency perspective, it also helped us a lot.

"Covid-19 is not yet gone so we are cautiously optimistic. We see growth and we have grown vis-à-vis first quarter [of 2020] which was not really impacted by Covid. From a macro [economic] perspective we will see how things improve." ■

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Tile of Spain Awards

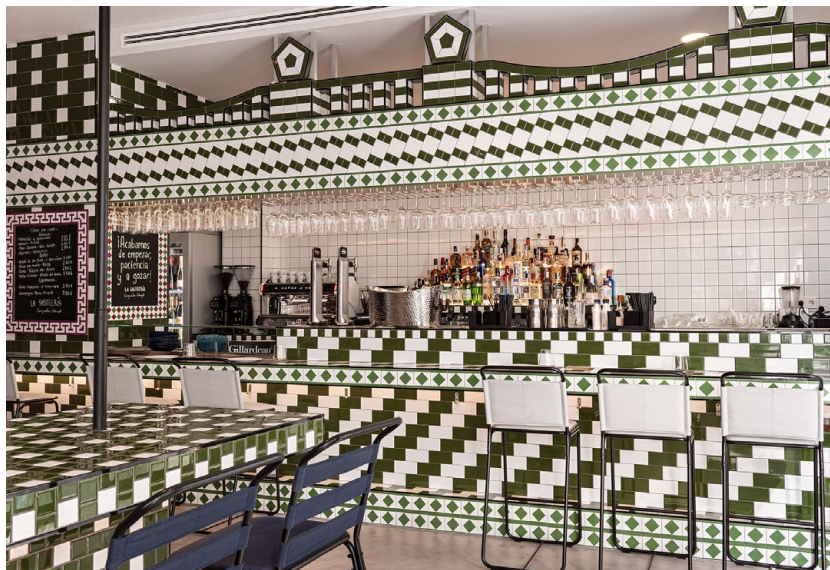
The ceremony for the annual Tile of Spain was held for the first time at the Spanish Ceramic Tile Manufacturers' Association's (ASCER) headquarters.

The Tile of Spain Awards seek to recognise the best architecture and interior design projects using ceramics in Spain and around the world. Winners are chosen from three main categories: Architecture, Interior Design and Final Degree Project, with a total cash award of EUR39,000.

This year's Architecture winner is "Casa Ter" by Mesura Architects' Studio. The jury highlighted the versatile use given to a single material in a detached home in the La Bisbal area of Catalonia, Spain. The use of natural clay offers a touch of tradition combined with a highly modern layout to create a unique space that merges beautifully with the environment.

First prize winner in the Interior Design category was awarded to the Atlantis Gastrobar in Barcelona by Arantxa Manrique Arquitectes. This small space is transformed into a stacked tile haven, embracing variety in shape, size, and colour to produce a strikingly simple interior that makes full use of its ceramic elements.

The award for the Final Degree Project, a category for architecture students, goes to Andrea Puebla Yubero from CEU San Pablo University in Madrid. Designing a centre for unaccompanied under-age immigrants, Yubero →



"La Sastrería" restaurant by Spanish creative studio, Masquespacio was a finalist in the Interior Design category. Photography by Masquespacio.



The Palma Hideaway House by Mariana de Delás was a finalist in the Interior Design category. Photographer José Hevia.



Atlantis Gastrobar in Barcelona by Arantxa Manrique Arquitectes. Photographer Adrià Goula.





"Casa Ter" by Mesura. Photography by Mesura and Salva López. Mesura uses local earthenware tiles for the house and swimming pool.

→ incorporates ceramics in both ornate and functional ways. When it comes to function, the creation of an "impluvium building" goes beyond the traditional method of

constructing a Mediterranean style patio to carry off excess rain water.

The Tile of Spain Awards are sponsored by ICEX, Endesa and Valencia Port Authority and have

gained international recognition with architects and designers because of their long history and credibility of its award winners and jury. ■

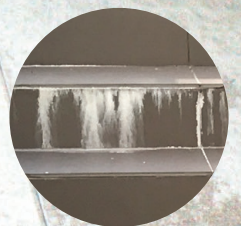
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Italian style in Amsterdam

In the heart of Amsterdam's business district, Ceramiche Refin tiles have been chosen to clad the outdoor spaces of the Nhow Amsterdam RAI Hotel, designed by architectural firm OMA (Office for Metropolitan Architecture).

All the hotel's terraces were paved with Refin OUT2.0 2cm thick tiles in the Blue Emotion Flammé 90 x 90cm size and applied using a raised installation method on supports. The installation of the material, which posed a challenge because of its considerable height, was handled by the Refin retailer Kerastone in a collaboration with Van Beek Tegeloprojecten.

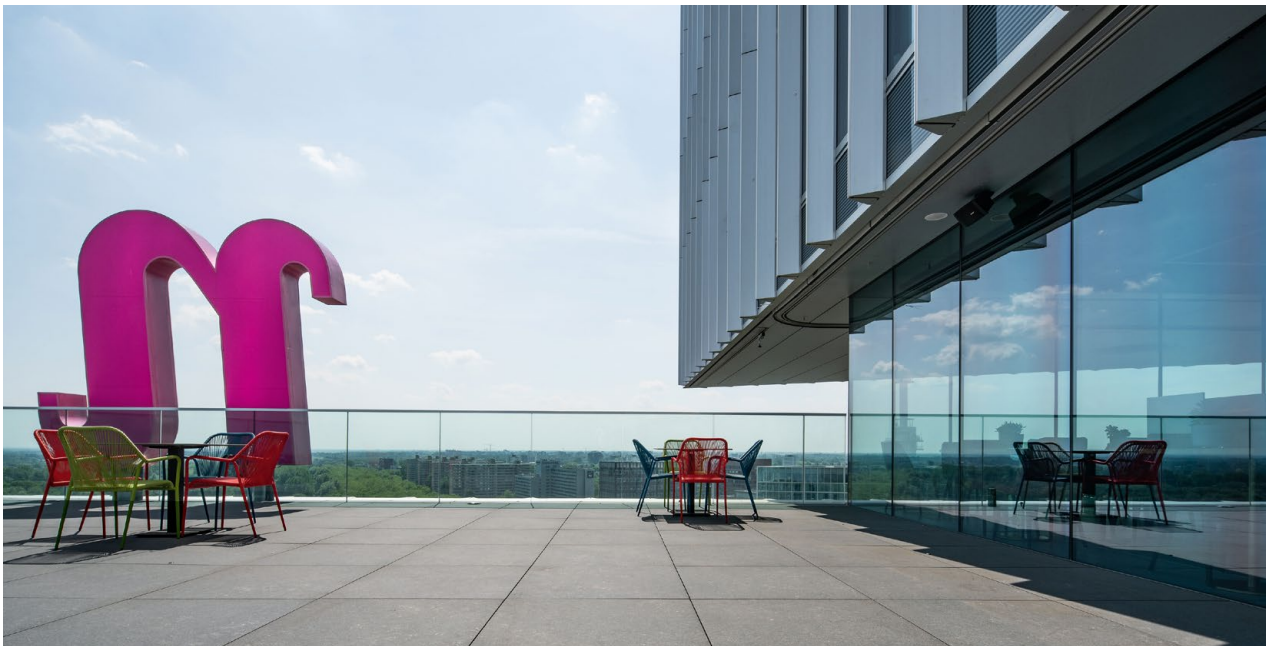
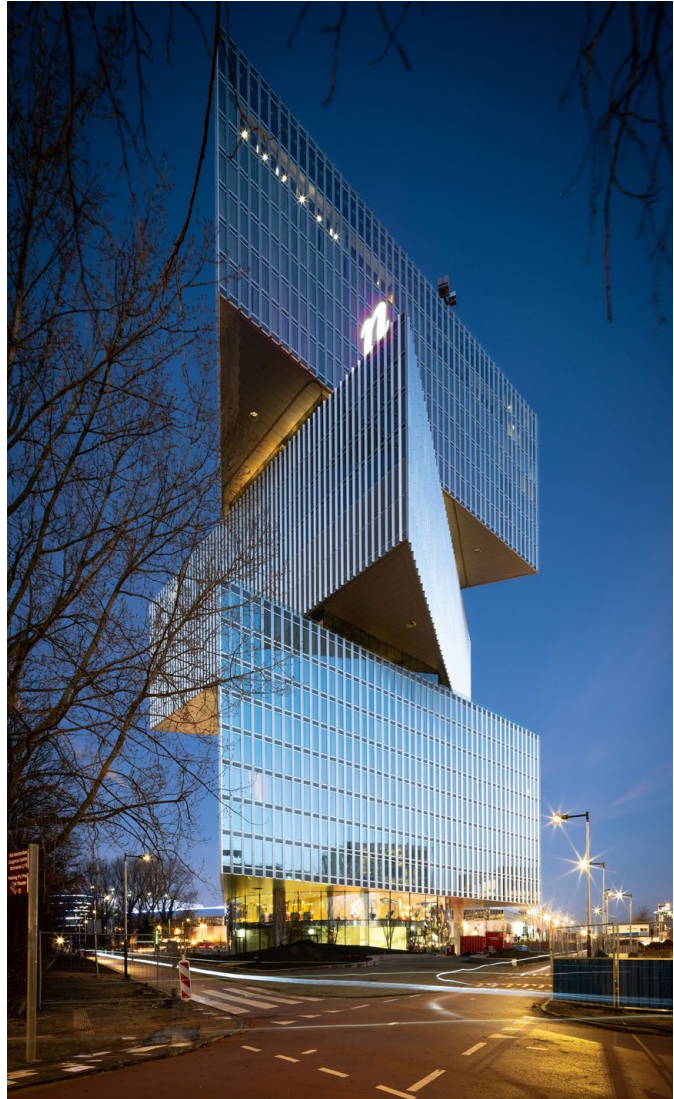
The Blue Emotion line, inspired by the dark tones of the Belgian Pierre Bleue, conveys a sensation of quality, cleanliness and durability.

Ceramiche Refin's stoneware is able to withstand sudden temperature changes and wear, is resistant to mould and moss, and is ideal in outdoor environments. OUT2.0 guarantees maximum resistance to stress and tensile strength.

OMA built the 24-storey Nhow Amsterdam RAI Hotel which is made from three triangular volumes stacked on top of each other. It has 650 rooms and is the largest hotel in Benelux — the grouping of Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg.

The distinctive-shaped building is intended to be both interesting and fun, as well as allowing guests and locals to enjoy the virtues of modern architecture.

Ceramiche Refin was founded in 1962 and became part of Gruppo Concorde in 1998. Its mission is to offer technologically advanced, top-quality furnishing solutions with unique design and aesthetic value, but also manage the company in a sustainable way with ethical values for the protection of the environment. ■



Deep blues and neutrals for winter: Dulux

Warm, grounded colours that speak of security and comfort are set to dominate winter decorating trends, according to Dulux trend forecasters. “The cooler months call for richer hues and cosy textures, and never more so than in a year when most people’s worlds have been turned upside down,” said Andrea Lucena-Orr, Dulux colour and communications manager.

“There’s a collective yearning for reassurance and a return to simpler times. We want our homes to provide comfort, a sense of safety and to remind us of better days ahead. And this will be reflected in more than just colour in 2021 — expect to see a rise in plush, comfy seating, handcrafted furniture with an artisanal feel and a greater focus on ‘purposeful decorating’ rather than just decorating to make an aesthetic statement,” she said.

The Retreat palette — one

of three trend colour palettes identified in the 2021 Dulux Colour Forecast — captures the mood of this coming winter. “These earthy tones and muted colours are all drawn from nature — think oceanic blues, nourishing greens, soft greys and touches of mustard. They bring the outside in — ideal for a time when most of us are stuck indoors for long stretches — and plug into the growing movement for wellness in design.”

In the accompanying images, Dulux worked with stylist Bree Leech to re-energise a child’s bedroom using colours from the Retreat palette.

Leech kept the big-ticket items in the room — the bed, bedhead and solid-timber bedside table, and focused on updating the room with bold colour. She chose shades that worked with the neutral tones in the foundation

pieces and added in plenty of textures to dial up the cosiness.

She started by adding deep blue, Dulux Wash&Wear in Winter Sea, to the walls and a gentle neutral, Dulux Vintage Linen to the ceiling and window detailing. “We opted for pale greige rather than a classic white for the ceiling and windows to soften the contrast with the blue. A sharp colour contrast can be very effective in a space, but in a room that’s all about relaxation, you want it to be a little less pronounced.

“Inky blue works well here — it’s cosy and timeless and sits beautifully alongside the natural materials in the room, such as the timber and woven-rattan. It also draws attention to and complements the artwork above the bed. I specified a matte paint finish to magnify the intensity of the blue.” ■



Image Credit: Dulux Winter Forecast 2021. Colours: Dulux Winter Sea, Vintage Linen And Five Fingers Peninsula. Stylist: Bree Leech. Photographer: Lisa Cohen. Artwork: ‘Long Doggie Print’ By Rachel Castle.

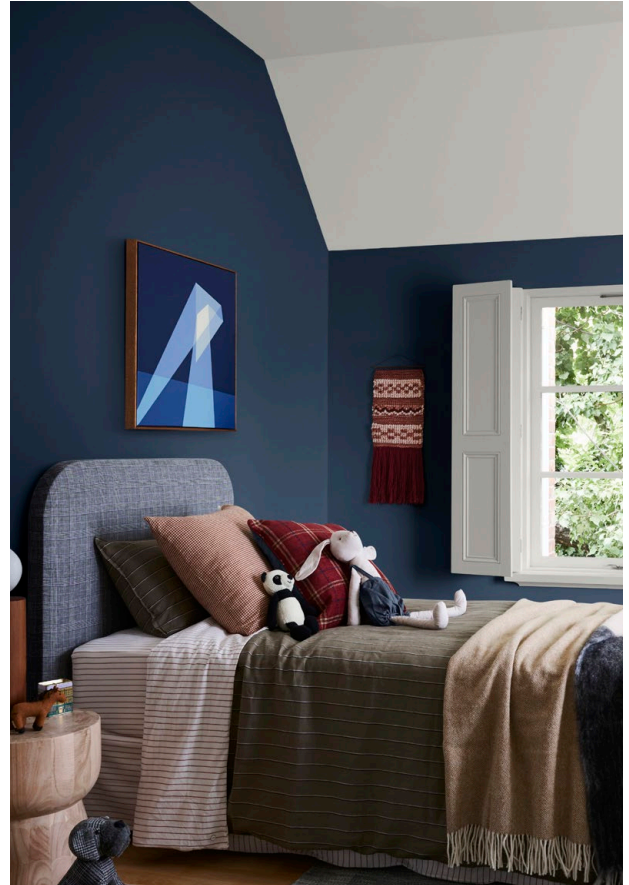


Image Credit: Dulux Winter Forecast 2021. Colours: Dulux Winter Sea, Vintage Linen And Five Fingers Peninsula. Stylist: Bree Leech. Photographer: Lisa Cohen. Artwork: ‘Fast Forward’ By Liam Snootle.

Decorative range delivers on acoustics

CSR Martini's new dECO high performance decorative acoustic range offers innovative solutions for noise control. These latest acoustic solutions allow architects and designers to create interior spaces where design and performance combine to achieve high levels of auditory enjoyment and style.

Manufactured in Australia with an active focus on sustainability, Martini's dECO collections have been engineered to not only reduce sound reverberation but transform spaces through the design of each product.

The products are 100% recyclable and made with up to 80% recycled content across the entire Martini product range. The dECO Collections are available in two fabric finishes, Flat Felt and Velcro® receptive Velour, and has an array of 22 colours.

Its colour palette provides numerous options including neutrals to vibrant accents of colour pops to moody monochromatic and charcoal hues. For architects and designers, the dECO collections provide versatility whilst enhancing

auditory enjoyment in the most frequented spaces. CSR Martini also offers the ability for customisation on larger scale projects across some of its dECO collections.

dECO 3D Tiles are simple and lightweight, and can control background distractions, reduce reverberated noise and maintain acoustic balance.

dECO Blades feature a series of modular blades in a variety of shapes that have been engineered to interact with the Installation system, VERTO™. Together, they provide the benefits of simple installation and structural flexibility to create unique design effects through a patented snap on technology. The dECO Blades collection can aesthetically enhance any space and reduce unwanted background noise.

dECO Quiet is engineered for premium sound absorption, and available as a board or a decorative panel with a fabric finish. Quiet Board is the highest performing acoustic board available from CSR Martini. These panels are available with a dECO Velour finish as well as



the Velcro® receptive surface for everyday use.

"The dECO range contains industry leading acoustic performance to satisfy the needs of every space, as well as innovative ways to speed up installation and ensure a designer's vision is never compromised and easily brought to life on the project. Our environmental accreditation can give architects and building owners confidence they are using sustainable materials that will allow spaces to look and perform their best. This new range from CSR Martini builds on the passion and capability of our founding partners to bring the next generation of design choices to high performing, sustainable acoustic products," said Luke Dutton, general manager, CSR Commercial Fit Out.

As a decorative acoustic solution, dECO it is suitable for internal use in some of the most challenging acoustic applications including recording studios, concert halls, auditoriums and theatres, schools, restaurants and hotels, retail and shopping centres, leisure spaces and commercial office buildings.

The Martini dECO collection is available through Himmel Interior Systems. ■



Houzz helps pros assess online presence

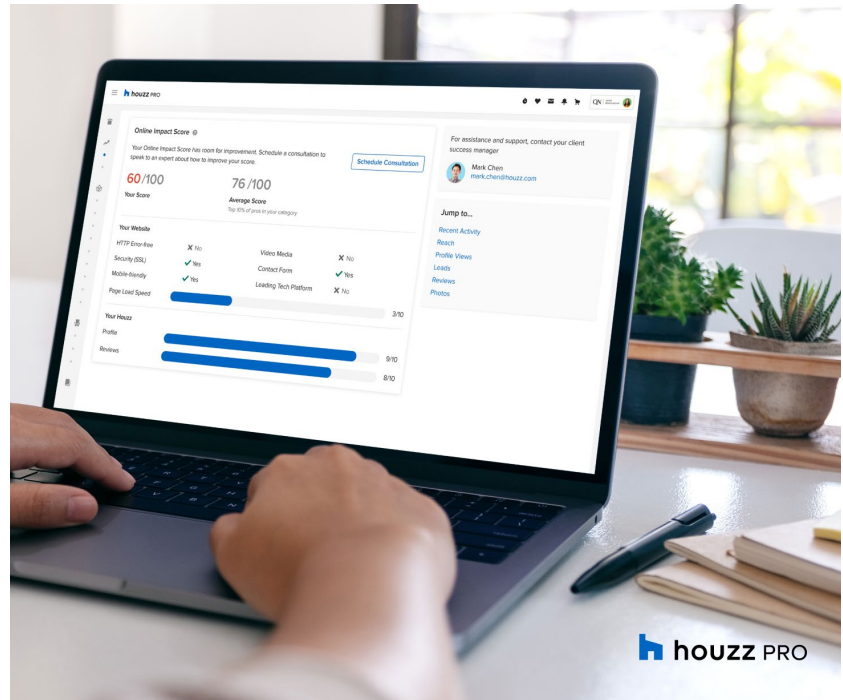
A new homeowner survey from Houzz finds online credibility a major consideration when hiring home professionals.

As the leading platform for home renovation and design, Houzz has launched its Pro Online Impact Score, to give industry professionals insight into their level of business credibility online. Based on an analysis of nearly one million professionals worldwide, including designers, builders and contractors, the score reflects the strength of a pro's website and Houzz profile. Houzz provides the total score and a breakdown of its components, as well as a benchmark against the top 10% of pros in each category.

The Houzz Pro Online Impact Score came out of the results of a March 2021 survey of more than 500 homeowners on Houzz who are planning, in the middle of or who completed a renovation within the past two years.* The survey found that online credibility is a significant factor in homeowners' hiring decisions, with two-thirds of homeowners reporting that a pro's online presence, along with the ability to offer remote collaboration tools, are major determinants (66%).

Even among homeowners who rely on word-of-mouth referrals to find pros, more than two in five report that they conduct additional research, including reviewing their business website and profile, reviews and project portfolio, before deciding to make contact (47%).

"The home renovation industry is booming, but our research shows that a majority of pros could attract and close more of the work they really want. Even pros who rely on word-of-mouth referrals may miss out on significant new business opportunities, since those prospects conduct



additional research to confirm the recommendation before reaching out. With a more credible online presence, they'll build a stronger pipeline for the long-term," said Tony Been, ANZ managing director at Houzz.

"Houzz is the industry leader when it comes to helping pros build their brands online and making quality connections with homeowners. The Online Impact Score, together with Houzz Pro marketing and business management tools, are a simple and powerful way to help our pro community build stronger businesses now and for the future."

For pros looking to improve their online presence, Houzz Pro Website Services provide a full-service solution for builders, designers and other pros who want a professional-looking and credible website built and managed for them. Websites created and hosted by Houzz are optimised for mobile devices, include a custom domain, and support unlimited content, such as video.

The Houzz survey also

uncovered the key factors impacting homeowners' decisions to hire a pro for their project. Top priorities included pricing within a budget, communication and organisation skills and availability (66, 62 and 55%, respectively). Houzz Pro offers tools for pros to facilitate communication, streamline and simplify the estimation process.

Pros can learn how to find out their Houzz Pro Online Impact Score here. Learn more about Houzz Pro and sign up at houzz.com.au/pro.

The Houzz community includes more than 65 million homeowners and home design enthusiasts and over 2.7 million home renovation and design professionals around the world in more than 100 categories, including architects, interior designers, contractors and landscape professionals.

*Data was sourced from an online survey fielded to Australian Houzz users between March 9 and March 16, 2021. N=541

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ATC evolves and engages its membership

The first half of 2021 has seen a continuation of the evolution and increased membership engagement for the Australian Tile Council (ATC), according to Bryan Vadas, administrator for the ATC. "By embracing technology and social media better than ever before, and through an unwavering focus on improving communication and increasing the value proposition to its members, the ATC has maintained its upward trajectory", said Bryan.

This year, the ATC started out with a number of changes that keeps it aligned with the needs of its members.

In March, the Annual General Meeting was held as a day-long, virtual event so members could participate without the need to travel. At the AGM, Peter Carter who served as president for the past eight years stepped down, and Aaron Genesin has taken over in the role. Peter remains as national vice president to ensure a smooth transition, and to maintain invaluable knowledge. Aaron has been a long-time member so he has an understanding of the culture and purpose of the ATC and can bring a fresh perspective and approach.

The AGM drew upon the experience of the delegates and member feedback to decide to add new services. Following the establishment of its Technical Committee in late 2020, the ATC will now form an Advocacy Committee as a way of centralising and prioritising the needs of members; ie. what they believe should be changed and improved at an operational and policy level beyond the scope of the ATC. The Advocacy Committee page on the ATC website gives members a direct line of communication to this committee and a place they

can register their suggestions and ideas.

The ATC is also excited to announce plans for a Membership Benefits portal on the website. It plans to leverage the size of the organisation to gain discounts and offers for members, similar to the way other membership organisations such as HCF and NRMA have done for their members. It is expected that the cost of membership will be outweighed by the tangible discounts offered by third party suppliers to members.

Throughout its history, the ATC has recognised members who have made a significant contribution and companies that have had a strategic alliance with the council through a Life Membership or Honorary Membership.

The ATC has now a clearly defined outline of what both of these tiers of membership mean, as well as providing members with nomination forms for them. All Life and Honorary members are now recognised on the ATC website.

The ATC will also introduce a new category of membership, International Associate. It reflects the growing number of social media followers who are located overseas and the sizeable amount of website traffic that comes from other countries.

The International Associate membership will give the ATC stronger connections with foreign manufacturers and international industry bodies, and opportunities to share knowledge about the industry.

To become a member of the ATC, simply click here:

<https://www.austriantilecouncil.com.au/memberships/why-join-the-atc>



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