

10 things you should know about Tile



WATERWORKS



CAPCO



ARTISTIC TILE FROM DECORATIVE MATERIALS



DECORATIVE MATERIALS



ANN SACKS

1 Tile endures. “Tile lasts as long as the building does,” says Rod Salyer, COO and executive vice president of CAPCO Tile & Stone. It has essentially no maintenance costs, offers endless design options and is easy to keep clean.

Even in tile, wood is in. A big trend this year at Cersaie (the tile industry’s largest annual trade show, held in Bologna, Italy): tiles that look like wood. “We are seeing tile products inspired by the look of wood, but styled unlike anything you’d see in nature,” Salyer says. And although installation costs about the same as hardwood, the durability and long life of tile (no refinishing needed) makes it more cost effective.

Go big. Another trend: large-format porcelain tiles. “Europe is leading the way with this trend,” says Margot Hampleman, owner and founder of Decorative Materials. “‘Big’ used to mean 16-by-32 inches; now we see tiles as large as 24 by 48. American consumers haven’t quite embraced that; 12-by-24 inches is still the most popular here.”

2 Play up the texture. “Tile is no longer just square and flat,” Hampleman says. “Tiles with relief and texture have been a trend for a while and will continue to be.” The tile maven says that small artisan manufacturers continue to push the creative boundaries.

Get steamy. Ramey Caulkins, interior decorator and former manager of hospitality at Ann Sacks, suggests doing your research when making selections for a steam shower. Steer clear of glass tile; moisture can become trapped behind the glass, eventually popping the tiles off the wall. “In my opinion,” she says, “ceramic or porcelain is best.”

Update a classic. For your backsplash, put an unexpected spin on a timeless arrangement. Caulkins recommends choosing pale gray instead of bright white, which can feel a bit sterile. “Often, three-by-six-inch subway tile is installed in a ‘running bond’ pattern with every row shifted by half a tile. Instead, try installing the tile in a third running bond pattern. It is still a classic installation, but updated.”

3 Do the job right. After the time and expense of finding the perfect tile, don’t skimp on installation. “One of the most important decisions you’ll make when considering tile is who’s going to install it,” Hampleman says. “If you don’t use a top-notch installer, you could end up having to tear it out and start over.”

Measure, measure measure. “Meticulous planning is essential if you don’t want unsightly cuts,” says Barbara Sallick, co-founder and senior vice president of design for Waterworks.

Mind your grout. “Choosing the right color grout can make or break an installation,” Sallick says. She suggests installing a square foot of tile on plywood to test the color and size of the grout joints. Caulkins is of another mind: “I am a stickler for tight grout joints,” she says. “Grout should not be part of the design.”

Follow your taste. “I sometimes hate using the word ‘trend,’” says Hampleman. “Tile lasts a long time, so choose what you love.” Overwhelmed by all the options? Hampleman suggests hiring a designer who can help you narrow down choices. □