

ORNAMENTATION TAKES A HOME FROM THE SIMPLE TO THE SUBLIME, ESPECIALLY

WHEN IT COMES IN THE FORM OF BEAUTIFUL TILE AND STONE THAT ADD TEXTURE, COLOR, DEPTH, AND VIBRANCY.

Margot Hampleman discovered the joys of tile when she and her husband built a house in Aspen 16 years ago.

"I just fell in love with it!" she declares. Her passion for the material grew until she decided to open a business, selling tile exclusively. She already had a background in sales, so she loaded her car with samples and drove around Aspen visiting contractors, convincing them to use her striking products in their million-dollar projects.

Business was good, so 10 years ago she moved into the Denver Design Center on South Broadway and opened Decorative Materials International Limited, specializing in tile and stone for bathrooms and kitchens. She later added fine lines of faucets, bathroom accessories, sinks, vanities, and lighting.

From elegant to casual or purely funky, the right materials for any style of home are available at Decorative Materials, and the staff has traveled the world searching for products of distinction and beauty that are perfect for today's high-end homes. But, Hampleman is quick to add, not all of her lines are expensive, and she can provide materials for the entire house—from a gracious master bath or elegant kitchen to the secondary

baths, laundry room, and everything in between. Stone work and tiles from Decorative Materials also appear around fireplaces and entryways in some of Colorado's most stylish homes, and Hampleman believes that she offers the best selection for unusual decorating items to be found anywhere at any price.

"I'm not artistic, but I represent



the craftsman who are," says Hampleman. Currently, she represents 30 companies and craftsmen on a regular basis, selling their products to the trade—designers, decorators, architects, builders, and contractors.

The Denver Design Center showroom boasts 3,500 square feet of tile and stone samples—more than the average person would imagine could possibly be available! Hampleman also has a 2,500-square-foot showroom in Basalt, right down the road from Aspen. Both showrooms are wonderlands of color and texture, dazzling the

eye and sparking the imagination. The Basalt showroom also carries tin ceilings—harking back to its mining days—and shows a variety of other products suitable for the vintage look found in many of Aspen's gracious homes.

Both locations display beautifully designed vignettes, showcasing tile and stone surfaces, lighting, and state-of-the-art plumbing. In Denver, Hampleman employs four salespeople who assist clients with design. Often a designer will select the elements and Hampleman's staff helps put them together. Hampleman emphasizes customer service, and says her mission is to help the designers to do their job.

"We always go that extra mile to help a client pull a project together," she notes.

One of Decorative Materials' suppliers is now offering a hot new product—tile manufactured to capture the warmth and beauty of hand-carved stone. The supplier is Sonoma Tilemakers, whose slogan is "Handcrafted in America—by really nice people." According to its website, the company shares Hampleman's "passion" for tile, creating a product that "rivals the earth's most beautiful stone but with the durability of tile at one-third the price of stone."

Sonoma's Reserve line takes its inspiration from nature and architecture and is suitable for interior or exterior use. The process starts by hand-sculpting designs, then creating dies that last for just 200 to 500 pressings, depending on the nature of the design. Pigments create a rainbow of colors, followed





by glazes. Tiles are then fired in 2,100-degree kilns, offering lasting strength. A spectacular entryway, mantel, and fireplace surround using this product is on display in the Decorative Materials' Denver showroom.

Hampleman also represents a Pennsylvania craftsman, who has done work at the White House, who has perfected a process that consists of a stone, plaster, and concrete aggregate placed in a mold to create beautiful tiles for stove hoods or fireplace mantels for half the cost of real stone.

If real stone is what your job demands, Decorative Materials can supply marble and granite for slab vanities and kitchen countertops. Although some comes from the United States, the past few years Hampleman has found 80 percent of her stone in Italy, Spain, and Turkey.

Decorative Materials is the

exclusive Colorado distributor for Epstone, importers of stone from around the world, which recently named Decorative Materials as the most beautiful showroom of all its dealers.

Mosaic art is another design element that lends distinction and beauty to a home. New Ravenna is a quality name in custom mosaics that are available through Decorative Materials. Artisans at New Ravenna handcraft mosaic tiles. The timeless craft that put Venice's San Marco on the map now comes in modern colors and designs for 21st-Century homes. Mosaics can add focus, color, beauty, and elegance while making a personalized design statement, notes Hampleman. On the floor or on the wall, borders featuring foliage and flowers can flow seamlessly into fields of stone, creating dimension and depth. Accents and

borders can define a space or give it a sophisticated finish.

Glass mosaics from Italy's Bisazza Tile create airy, dream-like areas. A shower stall in blue-and-white undulating tile gives the bather a feeling of swimming in warm, sunlit water. Another supplier, Innovative Glass Elements, produces a variety of glass mosaic

PUBLIC ACCESS TO THE DESIGN CENTER

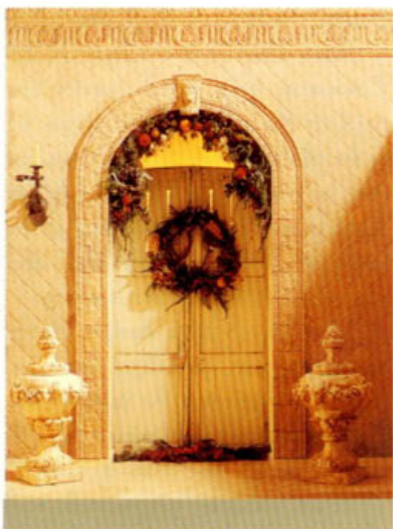
The Denver Design Center, considered by many to be the Rocky Mountain region's premier resource for fine home and office furnishings, sells wholesale to the trade—designers, decorators, architects, builders, and contractors. However, the public can access the center's 35 showrooms through its Denver Connection program. The program offers a free one-hour consultation with a designer from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday. Customers may tour the center, discuss specific needs, ask about how to work with a designer, and preview a designer's portfolio. For information or an appointment, call 303-733-2455.

products with metallic or glazed finishes for interior and exterior installation.


One of the hottest new looks is combining glass tile with metal tile, Hampleman says. Copper and bronze add warmth and sheen to backsplashes, countertops, shower walls, tabletops, and floors. Paired with nickel, pewter, and stainless sinks and faucets, metal tiles make a bold statement.

Hampleman gets many of her distinctive light fixtures from Urban Archaeology, a New York company that got its start two decades ago saving and restoring historic architectural elements

from old buildings scheduled for demolition. Unable to meet the growing demand for the restored masterpieces, Urban Archaeology developed lines of lighting, bath accessories, washstands, and medicine cabinets with the same



attention to detail that is used in its restoration projects. Products from Urban Archaeology can be seen at the Plaza and St. Regis hotels and the Yale Club in New York City. Urban Archaeology's American designs emphasize the influence of industrial design of the 19th Century to the modernism of the mid-20th Century.

Decorative Materials continues to add lines and will look for resources for custom or unusual products for clients. And thanks to Hampleman's many years of experience in the business, if she doesn't have a particular product, she usually knows where to find it. To visit the Denver showroom, call 303-722-1333; in Basalt, 970-927-0700. 

SANDRA ELLIOTT IS A FREELANCE PUBLIC-RELATIONS WRITER SPECIALIZING IN HOME DESIGN, DECORATING, LANDSCAPING, AND GARDENING WHO HAS BEEN PUBLISHED IN A VARIETY OF PUBLICATIONS AND ON HOME-RELATED WEBSITES.