

Decorative Materials International owner Margot Hampleman, pictured left with store manager Steve Berger, offers a stunning array of exotic tiles for every room in the home.



## Surface Style

Decorative Materials offers a dazzling gallery of high-end tile and surface materials to the Roaring Fork Valley.

by Linda Hayes

*"Clients may want a contemporary feeling for their home, but they also want it to reflect the environment here."*

It's an art gallery with a twist. Instead of painted canvases, the artists represented at Decorative Materials International Ltd. specialize in tile, stone, metal, glass, and other media. The works they create are not intended simply to adorn a wall but to become the wall (or floor or countertop or chandelier as the case may be).

That such a place resides in downtown Basalt, which has become a design hub of sorts, drawing top architects and interior designers from Aspen, can be attributed to owner Margot Hampleman. Eighteen years ago, while building a house in Denver with her architect husband, Hampleman became enamored of high-end decorative ceramic tiles and decided to represent craftsmen who made them. "I simply had a love of the product," she recalls. "I loaded my Honda station wagon and headed where the money was—Aspen." Designers bought. Business boomed. The Honda was retired in favor of a ten-by-ten-foot Denver showroom.

Today, the 3,000-square-foot Basalt showroom is one of a trio of Decorative Materials locations (a larger version of the original is in the Denver Design District and a smaller one in Minturn near Vail). Every surface is finished with examples of more than 65 product lines representing tiles from around the world in various formats and textures. Intricately patterned floors of limestone, travertine, brushed slate, and marble are offset by

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Several vignettes throughout the showroom display new and innovative use of the materials.

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“real-life” tile and stone vignettes. “Luxury plumbing”—including hand-forged-steel faucet sets by Sonoma Forge, sinks such as multicolor onyx vessels by Stone Forest, and Italian Murano glass chandeliers—complete the picture. “It’s like a design center, with one-stop shopping,” says Hampleman.

If it seems a bit much at first, that’s the point. “We try to overwhelm people, then reel them in,” laughs longtime manager Steve Berger, who designs all the displays. “Even if someone doesn’t know what they want, they’ll eventually be drawn to what they like.”

That said, Berger notes that currently clients tend to be educated in interior design and are often interested in doing much of the concept work themselves. “People have done their home in Houston or their apartment in New York,” he explains. “They come here and want to pull things together on their own.” A dedicated workstation, complete with overflowing sample bins and a limestone tabletop for displaying materials, simplifies the decision process.

Around the Valley, what Berger refers to as the “new mountain look” is emerging. Expansive rough stone walls might be juxtaposed with a wall of delicate glass mosaics. Large-format glass, metal, and exotic-hardwood tile work is edging out busy detailing, liners, and borders (not to mention bear and elk motifs). Living finishes such as oiled bronze, which change over time, are outshining polished chrome. “Clients may want a contemporary feeling for their home, but they also want it to reflect the environment here,” Berger says. “Natural materials are being used in more modern ways.”

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Manuel Canovas, and, for the truly indulgent, Nancy Koltes, Christian Fischbacher, and SDH. “I love going to market to see what is new and fresh,” says Casanova. She is also looking to add the likes of Missoni, Armani Casa, and Alexandre Turpault to the collection because she feels that Aspenites are ready for a more contemporary look in their homes. However, a more modern aesthetic certainly doesn’t mean sacrificing comfort. The newest lines, some even made of organic cotton or eco-friendly bamboo, are among the most beautiful available in years. 685 E. Cooper Ave., 970-925-7161.

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To get the most out of his oven, he went to pizza’s promised land, the Isle of Capri, where he spent time working in the kitchens of a variety of pizza restaurants, learning techniques and gathering recipes. “In Europe, it’s an honor when someone asks for your recipes,” he says.

Berger originally thought about installing the oven in his kitchen, but the logistical issues were complicated, so he enlisted the help of Aspen’s Design Workshop, which previously worked with him to convert a backyard tennis court into an exquisite multilevel garden.

“Outdoor kitchens are a growing component to outdoor gardens,” notes Ashley Allis, who assisted Richard Shaw, the landscape architect at Design Workshop responsible for the project. “Making the transition between the inside and the outside as seamless as possible was the challenge.”

Shaw originally did sketches of what Berger envisioned months before the project started. The original design included an Italian-style brick oven, a large granite prep top, and an integrated grill top, along with storage below. “We had a very narrow space to work with due to a snowmelt installation along an adjacent walkway,” Allis recalls, “but with three feet and a slight cantilever over the walkway, we created a workspace that Bruce would be happy with year-round.”

That’s an understatement, Berger says. “In the past, guests would convene in the living room while I cooked alone in the kitchen. Now everyone comes outside into the garden as I prep the pizzas, fish, whatever. I have turned on my indoor cooking range maybe three times this entire summer.”

Welcome to the age of the outdoor designer kitchen. 