MODERN IN DENVER

COLORADO'S DESIGN MAGAZINE

INSPIRED TILE

Cheerful colors and geometric shapes comprise Italian designer Elisa Passino's debut ceramic tile collection, which has officially landed stateside through Colorado's Decorative Materials.

Words: *Elizabeth Liberatore*

For designer Elisa Passino, inspiration comes from anywhere and everywhere. "I try to look at everything that surrounds me as a possible inspiration, every little thing can be decontextualized to become something else," says the young Italian designer. And her inaugural collection of tiles is a case in point. Geometrie Componibili, now available in America through Colorado's Decorative Materials, is a graphic collection of handmade, screen-printed terra-cotta tiles inspired by everything from art to architecture to photography.
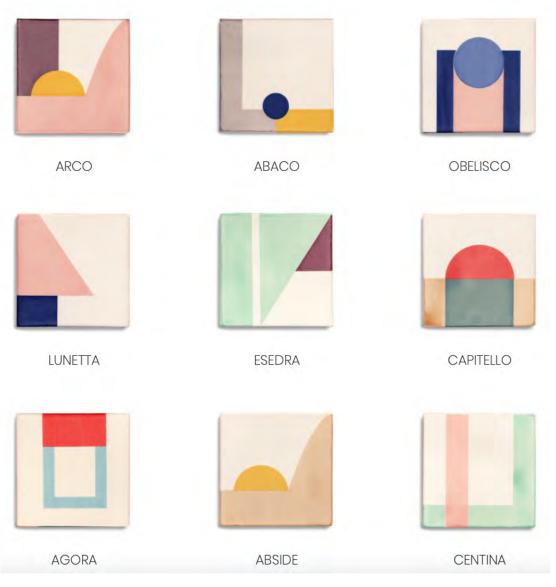
Although Passino grew up in the artistic powerhouse of Venice, Italy, the impetus for her collection came to her while living in Portugal. Walking around the cities, Passino quickly fell in love with azulejos, elaborately painted ceramics that adorn the facades of buildings, and felt the need to do something new with the age-old Portuguese tradition.

Inspiration for Elisa Passino's debut line came from a variety of places, including the azulejo ceramic tradition of Portugal; the architecture of Luis Barragán and Ricardo Bofill; and the photography of Matthieu Venot, Jeanette Hägglund, and Serge Najjar.

Despite being unfamiliar with the realm of ceramic tile, Passino dove in and started developing a contemporary collection that brought together inspiration from many different areas of art and culture. The mixture of color and architecture represented in the azulejos prompted Passino to dig deeper into the "Architects of Colors," including Le Corbusier, Ricardo Bofill, and Luis Barragán. In her research, she also stumbled upon the work of photographers like Matthieu Venot, Jeanette Hägglund, and Serge Najjar, and mused on the composition, angles, and colors of their images.

The result is nine tiles that combine geometric shapes and color to "transpose the traditional azulejo into something contemporary and eclectic," says Passino. Paying homage to her roots and inspiration, each tile is named after an Italian architecture term including Arco (meaning "arch") and Obelisco (meaning "obelisk"). Each design is available in a selection of colorways that can be swapped with any mix of the studio's 18 hues like Iris Deco, Flamenco Red, and Green Salt. On top of that, a variety of orientations and combinations makes for a stunningly diverse array of possible installations.

ARCO   ABACO   OBELISCO

LUNETTA   ESEDRA   CAPITELLO

AGORA   ABSIDE   CENTINA

The nine tiles of Geometrie Componibili are each named for an Italian architecture term, paying homage to Passino's roots and inspiration. "We envision the Geometrie Componibili collection utilized on any type of feature wall from backsplashes to powder room statement walls," says Kirsten Schmit of Decorative Materials.

The collection's playful use of color and shapes were practically made for Instagram, which is where it caught the attention of Marketing Coordinator Kaitlyn Nannen and President Kirsten Schmit of Decorative Materials, Colorado's hub for tile, stone, and bath products. Once the pair connected with Passino and saw the samples in person, they knew they wanted to bring Passino's one-of-a-kind tiles to Colorado. The Geometrie Componibili collection even made the cover of Decorative Materials' 2021 Tile Trends Forecast Look Book.

"We decided that the ceramic pattern tiles were the perfect cover feature [for the look book], and the feedback we received from clients was incredible," Nannen says.

Decorative Materials is the only U.S. showroom representing Passino and her work, which Nannen says is an incredible honor. Of the showroom's partnership with Passino, Schmit adds, "We admire Elisa's innovation and unique aesthetic on a global scale. Her work is so refreshing, crisp, and clean, and her use of color is incredibly well-executed."

Shop the collection.