

# HOME

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REAL ESTATE & MOUNTAIN LIFESTYLES

MARCH 2023

## INSIDE

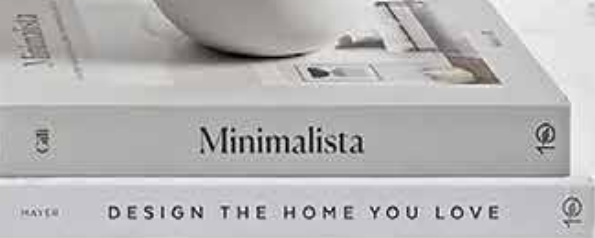
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# ARTFUL DÉCOR

The latest tile trends go far beyond function and embrace fashion



# TILE TRENDS

*Color, custom and botanical patterns are in style*

by KIMBERLY NICOLETTI



*Rosa is carved from Volakas, a Greek dolomite.*

**A**FTER SPENDING MONTHS AT HOME DURING THE PANDEMIC WHEN GRAY TONES were all the rage, homeowners came out of 2020 with an interest in incorporating more color, and that trend continues to grow, even in tile applications. “We’re really seeing a movement toward playfulness in the home. People are experimenting with color,” says Kirsten Schmit, president of Decorative Materials. Custom glass and stone mosaics have become one of the standout showpieces in luxury homes these days. Colorful green marble with white veining that creates gorgeous “movement” stands out in places like backsplashes and showers.

Tumbled light pink tiles paired with complementary colors like blues and greens are also popular, she says.

Mountain homeowners always have been drawn to organic elements within their homes, whether it's exterior stone or granite countertops, and that penchant continues; when it comes to tile, people are leaning into mosaics that highlight botanicals. Even classic chinoiserie — the evocation of 18th century Chinese motifs in Western art, like cherry blossoms or a bird sitting on a flowering tree — is making a comeback, often through glass tiles.

“Chinoiseries incorporate a beautiful color palette and organic elements,” she says.

Symmetrical flower patterns or encaustic patterns, often featuring pinks and whites, further the botanical theme.

“The undulated finish and undulated edge make for an organic, handmade look,” Schmit says. “It really softens the tiles and brings that element of nature out because somebody made these by hand, somebody painted these by hand.”

The custom tiles differ from manufactured, ceramic tiles in their handmade qualities. Some, like Zellige tile, are 100% handcrafted clay tiles, which originate in Morocco.



*Chinoiserie is the evocation of 18th century Chinese motifs in Western art.*



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*Artistic Tile's Moon Cosmati is composed of bisected circles of rich veined stones in a complex pattern.*

Dried in the sun and hand-glazed, they are known for their variations in tone, shine and depth. And, they come in just about every color under the sun, from warm yellows and oranges to cool blues and grays.

“They’re ridiculously popular,” she says. “It has all these little nuances in the textures. You might order green and get five shades of green — like nature, no two tiles are alike. Consumers gravitate towards, and embrace, this theme that no two tiles are alike, that they all have this unique nature to them.”

Since the pandemic, homeowners have placed a premium on handcrafted items; it’s almost as if, during shutdowns, people longed

to “feel” handcrafted items in their homes as a means of connecting to other human beings. Once they began to learn more about, and appreciate, the one-of-a-kind products, they sought them out even more.

“Clients are willing to take a risk in color and invest in higher-end tile,” she says. “Tile is becoming the statement of the room.”

Backsplashes and even flooring are popular choices for decorative tile, such as encaustic flower mosaics.

“It’s the finishing touch, the focal point, like jewelry or art,” she says.

Some homeowners bring mosaics into powder rooms or even completely wrap their shower in hand-painted, decorative tile. Others use it



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as a feature piece on an entry wall or in a living room — areas not normally associated with tile. For instance, one client installed 12”x12” white marble carved into a rose pattern in the living room.

“People are really wanting natural stone, and they’re willing to make the investment,” she says, contrasting high-end tiles with porcelain, which “could be trendy but don’t have the depth or richness or movement. That may be good for commercial applications because it’s durable, but when it’s your home, you want to have finishes that are timeless and luxurious, and natural stone has so much more earth to it — literally — it has a depth and warmth, and it’s going to stand the test of

time. You just cannot replicate natural stone in porcelain. It’s like the difference between a cubic zirconia and a diamond.”

Schmit cherishes the natural stone on her kitchen countertops for the memories and stories that have developed over the years, such as sharing margaritas with friends (with a little spill here and there) and other “mishaps” that have added character to the stone.

“It’s taken on this beautiful patina and story,” she says.

Through color, mosaics and other custom tiles, homeowners are pushing the envelope more and more.

“It’s not just a backdrop for something,” she says. “It really has become a feature of the home. The applications are endless.” **VVH**



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