

Tile styleⁱⁿ

Design trends offer easy updates with an array of sizes, shapes, materials

BY LINDA LAUDATO

SPECIAL TO THE TIMES UNION

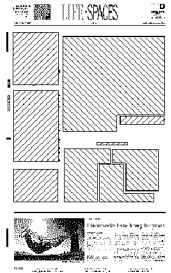
E arthy elements such as stone and wood, and fire-licked materials such as metal and glass are the hot trends in tile design. Between them, they offer unlimited possibilities for creating intriguing spaces.

The most dramatic effect is achieved by contrasting two or more types of tile such as metal and glass. Using different materials in a single color, such as sea blue, can also create a striking effect.

Another technique is to use tile used as “jewelry” for walls. Tiny tiles called “dots” in the industry are versatile design elements. The 1-by-1-inch or 2-by-2-inch glass, ceramic and metal tiles can be used to create whimsical waves on a shower wall or sparkles on the backsplash of a bar.

Still another popular architectural effect is achieved by installing small rectangular tiles of one color, such as different shades of gray, on a full wall and grouting in a contrasting color such as black or white to complete the effect of a multi-hued grid. Many designers use this technique on the walls of a room, and use larger pieces of the same style on the floor. Directional lighting adds drama to a space with this type of tile treatment.

According to Mary Simon, design consultant at Best Tile in Schenectady, many homeowners looking to achieve the serenity of a spa in the master bath are turning to glass tiles. Since it is



impervious to water, glass is ideal for everyday use. The tiles can be translucent, opaque or iridescent and create a sunny effect by reflecting light. Glass tiles are made from recycled glass and silica sand, making them an environmentally friendly choice.

“Sea glass in particular will never go out of style,” Simon says. “People are also using pebbles on shower floors to re-create the feel of the outdoors,” she adds. Whether you’re using glass or pebbles, the gaps are filled in with grout, preventing the surface from being slippery, she explains.

Natural stone is a popular choice for many applications because of its timeless beauty. Newer tile selections have hand-cut edges for an aged look. Porcelain tile, crafted to look like stone, is a common substitute and often a less expensive choice.

Metal tiles such as bronze, copper and aluminum are used to create a sleek contemporary look or a retro Art Deco style. Using metal tile as accents with other materials such as stone or glass can give a room an updated look. Simon

Please see **TILE D3** ▶

points out that many people choose metal to match their appliances, faucets or door pulls.

Wood tiles have the warm quality of hardwood flooring. Among the newer wood offerings is the Mesquite Knot tile by Ann Sacks. These tiles, crafted from renewable Texan mesquite hardwood, are suitable for wall or floor applications.

If you’re concerned about the upkeep of a tile wall, don’t be.

According to Simon, the use of epoxy grout greatly decreases maintenance on tiled spaces. And you can have porous tiles pre-sealed which provides permanent protection from mildew.

“If you use epoxy grout and sealed tiles, you do the job once and you’re done. It’s awesome. Years from now, it will look like the day you installed it,” Simon says.

For any tile project, designers recommend measuring your space and browsing the Internet and home magazine to find some ideas. Then, head out to your nearest tile store to see and feel the real thing.

▶ *Linda Laudato has 15 years of experience in interior design and previously owned her own firm. She is a freelance writer from Altamont. She can be reached by e-mail at llaudato@gmail.com.*

New look online

The following Web sites offer photo galleries of tiles and tile projects:

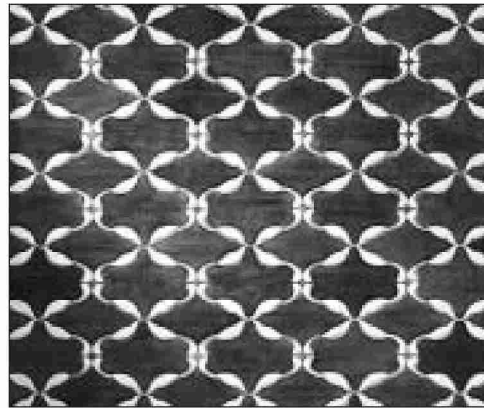
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NEW DESIGNS in tile include these from Ann Sacks, from left, contemporary circular tiles in luminescent colors; a complicated mosaic that forms a soft cabbage rose pattern and a modern raised ceramic motif.