

# Hot Tile Trends from Cersaie

BY JAMIE GOLD, CKD, CAPS

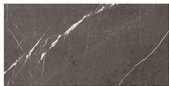
Thin tile in increasingly large size slabs, metallic and brick looks, shades of blue, wallpaper and fabric inspirations, dark looks and industrial flair were all on trend at the recent Cersaie in Bologna, Italy.

Have you ever been to Coverings, the tile expo held in a large American convention center every year? If so, you know what it's like to walk through booth after booth of tile styles and trends. Now imagine those two or three exhibit halls times about 10 and you have an idea of what Cersaie, the tile expo in Bologna, Italy, is like. There are very few places where you can see what's coming next to our shores sooner or better than you can at this event.

Fortunately, Confindustria Ceramica, Italy's tile industry group known here as Ceramics of Italy, brings a group of North American designers, architects and journalists to the show and



■ Wood-look tiles trended dark and rustic, offering tremendous realism.



■ Thin porcelain tile slabs keep getting larger.



■ Tile with wallpaper looks was a popular trend at the show.

tour them through the brands that export to our nations. These observations are from that trip and, mostly, those brands. You're probably familiar with many of them already from your favorite European tile supplier.

## SIZE MATTERS

When thin porcelain tile first debuted, it was hard to find a slab wider than 48" – not quite large enough to cover a double-width island, designers protested. Since then, production technology has improved considerably and sizes as large as ABK's

64"x128" inches were on display. There is definitely a race to produce the largest slab possible, not specifically for islands, but for building facades, shower walls and other installations.

Two of the most interesting tile sizing trends had to do with thickness. Thin tile seems to be getting thinner, with Vallerunga's 3-mm. installation looking very much like wallpaper from the side. For outdoor installations, tile is getting thicker. Tagina is even testing a 3-cm. thickness for driveways, which it hopes to release in the next year or two.



■ This pattern showed up across the show floor.

■ Bricks were a popular pattern at Cersaie, both rustic and contemporary.

The most popular wall tile size in the U.S. now, according to a Del Conca spokesman, is 16"x32". Floor tiles are a complementary 32" square, he noted. Without taking a measuring tape across the tour, this definitely looked to be true.

## WALLPAPER INSPIRATION

Many of the tile looks that were on display at Cersaie seem to have gotten their inspiration from wallpaper designs. The retro patterns and murals on display were reminiscent of bygone years, with historic florals and jungle beasts

abounding. They would definitely make for a fun accent wall, but be sure to check specs if you want to use any of them near heat or water. Not all of them, including 4Zero42's beautiful Paper 41 series, are rated for those stresses just yet.

#### DARK AND INDUSTRIAL LEANINGS

The flowers and birds were a nice lift from many of the dark looks on display. Concrete and charcoal stone looks dominated the show floor. Even the large marble-look slabs, like Casalgrande Padana's Marmoker 180, got a dose

of dark this year, rather than just the standard white classics.

There was a definite industrial/Steampunk flair to many of the looks on display this year. Oxidized finishes continued to show up, as did gray metallics with intriguing machine-inspired patterns.

Darks also showed up heavily in this year's wood-look tiles. The effect was antique rustic. European printing technology is getting so sophisticated that it's often hard to tell the difference between tree and tile.

#### ALL THAT GLITTERS

Fortunately, metallics were another strong trend at the show, adding brightness to the scene. Metallic tiles glittered as mesh-mounted mosaics and mosaic looks, but most commonly as accent inserts for dark tiles. These could be square inserts, like Cerdemus' offerings, or strips, as with Casalgrande Padana's Ferrari-inspired Earth by Pininfarina series. There were also industrial-inspired metallics, like Fap's Grid Metal Inserto Mix, and beautiful antiques like Villeroy & Boch's Stateroom. You could pretty much take the trend whichever direction you want – traditional, contemporary or anywhere in between. Gold, copper and silver all made strong appearances.

#### FABRIC INSPIRATIONS

Another look that showed up with strength and versatility was the textile trend. Fabrics lent their patterns, from plaid to animal print, as well as more subtle textured looks. These were on display throughout the expo, and adapted in unique ways. You could get tile that looked like tartan with an almost fabric-like feel from Sant'Agostino's Tailor Art, or cabinetry with linen-look details from Scavolini. You could even get car-inspired leather inserts from the Earth by Pininfarina series. Fabric looks were one of the strongest trends at the show.

#### BLUE MOODS

Blue was another dominant Cersaie trend. It showed up in quite a few accent tiles, but also in field tile and even fixtures. Villeroy & Boch introduced its Artis line of blue sinks, with tubs



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■ Darker tones were a strong trend at this year's show.



■ Metallics trended traditional, as seen here, and contemporary.



■ Blue was a strong color at Cersaie, showing up in tiles and fixtures.

possibly to come later (one was on handsome display at the booth, but doesn't have a North American release date yet). The blue tiles seen everywhere were largely influenced by sky and water, and perfect for your coastal projects.

#### SHAPELY INSPIRATIONS

If you're not big on blues, darks or metallics, there were still trends worth considering. Chevron and brick shapes were strong – but also classic. Some of the bricks, like Mirage's Reve series, took on a more rustic look. Others were mod with gloss and dimensionality.

One look that showed up widely was called "Gems" by Fioranese, but didn't have a singular name throughout the show. It's essentially a grid of small colored squares, mostly intended as an accent tile. It doesn't read especially modern or traditional, but works as a neutral space filler if you want to add pattern without making a big statement.

#### LAST WORDS

If offered the chance to tour a European tile or kitchen show, you'll notice several things. First, they tend to be significantly larger than their American counterparts. Second, you're going to see styles and technologies that haven't yet made it to our continent (many will, though, in three to six months). Third, these booths are set up not just to promote the new series and create leads, but to actually sell tile to international buyers. Last, but not least, if you're going to Cersaie (or EuroCucina), you're going to want to wear your most comfortable – but still stylish – footwear. It is Italy, after all! ■



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Press), and a blogger, design journalist, seminar developer and industry consultant.



■ Chevrons were also popular this year.

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