

# TILE STYLE

*Top Trend Takeaways  
from the 2017  
Coverings Show*

by **Karen LeBlanc**

**G**oodbye wood looks; fabric is the new muse in tile style with the latest porcelain and ceramic tiles rendered in leather, jute, linen, plaids, tweeds and other textiles. At Coverings 2017, the largest stone and tile show in North America, textile inspired and terrazzo were the dominant looks in tile as cladding, flooring and architectural features.

The annual exhibition brings together European and American design trends in surface style from leading Italian, Spanish and North American brands. Advances in HD printing and tile manufacturing technologies make ceramic and porcelain tiles the perfect doppelgängers for almost any surface material imaginable. Today, tile is the doyenne of design after more than half a century eclipsed by other decade-defining surface trends – 1950s linoleum, 1960s laminate, 1970s wood paneling and wall-to-wall carpeting, 1980s floral wallpaper and 1990s travertine. Fast-forward to the 21st century where imaginative installation techniques combine with novel tile designs to create striking surfaces in modern-day homes. Here are the latest surface design concepts to customize or update your living space.



## TERRAZZO RENAISSANCE

Terrazzo has been around for centuries, first originating as mosaics of marble pieces in 16th century Venice. Today, this ancient surface material is enjoying an artistic reincarnation as ceramic tiles in pastel color palettes or mixed-in patterns. Spanish tile company Vives launched The Dolce Vita Collection with a selection of pastel-hued terrazzo tile in small and large formats in single colors and patterns. Another popular iteration of the terrazzo look is a fragmented tile design characterized by the random assortment of pieces in different shapes and sizes. These designed patterns come together in a kaleidoscope layout.





## LEATHER AND LACE

Tile rendered as tanned animal hides, replicated as woven, knitted, knotted textures of macramé, linen, madras, tweed and tartan, or as patterns of lace are fresh alternatives to the ubiquitous stone and wood tile looks. At the show, many tile debuts drew inspiration from fabric and textiles. “We’ve seen a lot of fabric looks in linen, plaid and jute patterns on a porcelain but I’m beginning to see a lot of leather looks,” notes Alena Capra, Coverings Show ambassador. Italian tile manufacturer Atlas Concorde launched the Chester Collection, cladding an entire bar vignette in its Saddle brown tile evoking worn leather, with color options available in Biscuit, Dove and Cigar. Leather-inspired tile brings a luxurious gravitas to spaces such as a home office or library, billiards room, man cave or winery. For a more feminine sensibility, collections such as Arte Pura by Ceramiche Refin feature imprints of lace, fragmented embroidery and layers of torn linen with frenetic doodles. Another option, the Desire Collection by the Fiandre Group featured ceramic and porcelain tile inspired by traditional fabric textures, lacy embellishments and highly graphical visual effects.



Unicom Starker Tile

## TILE AS ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENTS

Tile is also taking form as architectural elements that work as space dividers, visual transitions and other building blocks in home interiors. The Tile of Spain Pavilion showcased a wall crafted of ceramic baguettes by Natucer that functions as a space divider. “Ceramics is not only a cladding material but a functional building material that separates areas while keeping an open feel,” says Ryan Fasan, technical consultant for Tile of Spain, referring to the Life Arq collection by Natucer, ceramic bricks in tubular forms. “These innovative, functional pieces can be used inside or outside as facades to shade, improve energy efficiency or enhance privacy.”

As a visual transition, clever tile installation techniques on the walls and floors stylishly join spaces by mixing and merging different tile designs in a random and gradually diminishing pattern. Nikki Vega, owner of bluetreehomes, designed a tiny home for the Coverings Show Installation Design Showcase that featured octagon tile by Crossville Inc. spilling over from the kitchen into the living area in an installation that randomly integrates the octagons with light, wood-look, plank tile to visually transition between the two spaces.



Red Clay Tile by Fiandre Group



Fabric inspired tile



PoPJob by Mirage Tile

## SYNERGISTIC COLOR PALETTES

Today's creative tile installations call on several coordinating colors rather than a single color to style a space. Rooms are no longer rendered in one color but a palette of related hues. "It's not really about a single color or a trending color anymore; it's more of a complete color scheme or palette that is a grouping of synergistic colors for an entire space," Ryan notes.

Many of these synergistic color palettes "think pink," combining pastels with pink taking the lead. Italian tile company Mirage launched a showstopper tile collection called PoPJob designed by StudioJob in pink that abstracts wood grain patterning into a pop art interpretation. The high gloss, intensely saturated tile has a thick layer of crystalline glass for a chromatic saturation effect and comes in the additional colors of blue, green, black, beige, gray and white.

Interior designer Kim Lewis infused pinks inspired by the Palm Springs sunset in her tiny home design for the Coverings Show. "The most popular thing people have loved about this tiny house is the pink tile in the shower because it has a nostalgic appeal," explains Kim, referring to the Magnifique pink tiles by Atlas Concorde on the bathroom and shower walls.



Atlas Concorde  
Manifique Tile



Atlas Concorde 3 D Tile



Absolut Keramika

## DIMENSIONAL TILE

Dimensional tile continues to gain traction in home interiors with new sculptural designs in large formats and subway tile. Kim clad the walls of her tiny home design with Atlas Concorde 3D tile to add texture to the Palm Springs-inspired, Modernism-styled interiors. "I love putting texture in small spaces and I think dimensional tile offers fresh alternatives to reclaimed wood looks," says Kim, who used two different types of dimensional tile in the 175-square-foot home.



Subway Tile Denim Look

Subway tile in textures such as denim, vintage wood, or painted and worn wood strips and brick also comprise this trending look, adding a tactile quality to walls and backsplashes.



Tonalite Tile

Three-dimensional tile styles in metallics of bronze, platinum and gold add sculptural bling to surfaces. “We are seeing the reemergence of metallics in pewter, silver and platinum — all sorts of really cool metallic hues. I think gold, as we’ve seen in design, is starting to come back in furnishings and accent pieces, and I think we need tile to pull it all together,” Alena says.



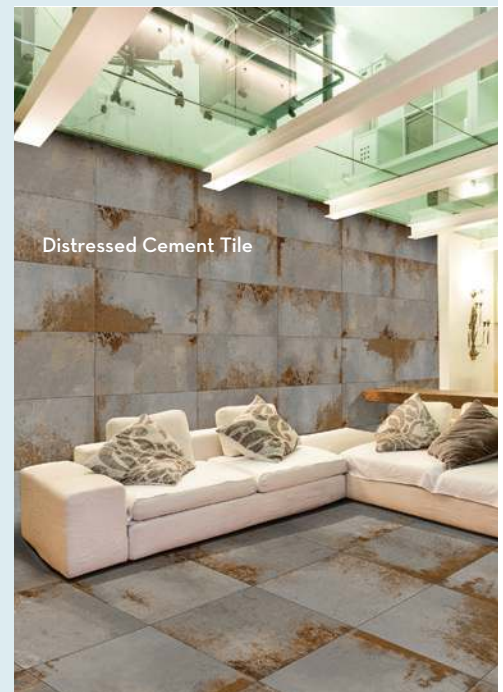
Relonda 3D Tile

## VINTAGE LOOK TILES

A mashup between modern and rustic is creating a new genre of tile style that draws from industrial and vintage influences. Tile manufacturers debuted several new designs that mix cement, distressed woods and stone with worn markings for an aged patina that plays to both the past and present in home style. Apavisa’s Nanofusion line exemplifies this vintage-industrial look mixing wood grain and stone within a thin layer of cement.

Distressed cement replaces polished and uniform cement looks of the past as an updated interpretation. “It’s the look of cement with that warehouse industrial feel, so the tile takes on looks of oxidized metals with worn markings,” Alena notes.

As a design tool, tile resides at the intersection of art and architecture offering the creative freedom to play with pattern, grout color and designs for signature surfaces. These latest tile design concepts express trends and technological innovations in ceramic and porcelain surfaces for the home. For more on tile trends from the Coverings Show, check out a new episode airing on [thedesigntourist.com](http://thedesigntourist.com).



Distressed Cement Tile

Nanofusion by Apavisa



Karen LeBlanc is host of The Design Tourist series. She travels the globe attending some of the world’s premiere design events in search of the latest trends, tastemakers and unique finds. Learn more at [thedesigntourist.com](http://thedesigntourist.com).

