

Mosaics Add a Personal Touch

by Michelle Stinnard

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The variety of mosaic shapes, colors and sizes on today's market allows designers and architects to create a space unique to a client's personality

Mosaics continue to remain a popular material because of the variety of design possibilities that they offer. Consumers like the idea of being able to personalize their own space and really make something unique to reflect their personalities and hobbies, and the decorative mosaic collections that are now available provide this opportunity.

Architects and designers are using mosaics for a range of applications — from floor to wall installations to cost-effective inserts and borders. The possibilities are innumerable. And, the variety of shapes, sizes and colors available in today's market enable architects and designers to truly create something unique to their individual clients.

Over the past few years, Robert Reid, ASID, with Brooks-Reid Studio, has been noticing that smaller scale tile is being used a lot more throughout homes. "We are using mosaics on walls, floors and even ceilings of bathrooms; on backsplashes and walls in kitchens; as small details and as the dominant surface," he said. "The vast array of mosaic tile allows for limitless possibilities."

Reid truly enjoys working with mosaics because of the diverse styles they can achieve. "Working with mosaic tile is terrific, as we can create one-of-a-kind custom color blends; mix glazed and glass tiles, and apply it to a variety of surfaces," said the designer. "Chances are you will find mosaic tile on almost every one of our projects in a typical or non-typical application."

Reflecting the Coastline



For the bathroom of a California-based private residence, 1- x 1-inch tumbled Rio Grande mosaics were selected for the bathroom floor, as well as for the shower floor. The shower walls and wainscoting feature 2- x 6-inch and 6- x 6-inch Amber Crackle field tiles, as well as 1/2- x 6-inch tiles of Celery Crackle and 1/2- x 1/2-inch tiles of Rust Matte



To complement the glass mosaics, a custom mosaic medallion — comprised of the main blue field tile, as well as white glass tile — was installed in the middle of the floor.

When designing a private weekend residence in the exclusive Harborwalk development in West Galveston Bay, TX, Reid lined the walls and floor of the main powder room with mosaic tiles. The owners requested a house with classic detailing, while still remaining a home of the 21st Century. And, since the house is situated on the coast, blue-colored mosaics were selected to reflect the water surrounding the residence.

"The idea was to make the powder room a 'little jewel box' in the home — an unexpected surprise for guests," explained Reid. "Mosaic tile lines the walls — from floor to ceiling — and covers the floor, with a custom medallion comprised of the main blue field tile, as well as white glass tile, inset into the middle of the floor."

For the design, Reid selected a standard blue-colored glass tile from Trend's Brillante Series, which was supplied through InterCeramic of Houston, TX.

"The room is all about being enveloped by the tile," said the designer. "Since it is such a small room, a single color tile was specified, as there is enough variation and detail inherent in the glass mosaic tile to avoid having to create intricate patterns. It is incredible how dramatic simplicity can be. The tile and the hand-blown glass pedestal sink become artwork in this small room.

"Mosaic tile has become a signature finish material on many of our projects, due to the incredible range of products available and

matte. Additionally, the anterior wall features 3- x 6-inch tiles of Reed-textured tiles and 6-inch and 3-inch Reed in Merlot porcelain tiles, while the sink wainscoting is comprised of 4- x 4-inch tiles of Celery Crackle.

Designer: Artisan Tile & Marble of San Luis Obispo, CA; **Stone/Tile Suppliers:** Artisan Tile & Marble, San Luis Obispo, CA; Tres Feltman Tile, San Luis Obispo, CA (porcelain tile)

endless opportunities for use,” Reid went on to say. “On this project, we always knew that due to the scale of the room, we would be using a small-scale glass mosaic.”

Modernizing a Space

Mosaics were also added to a 3,500-square-foot California-based private residence to update the space that the homeowners had been living in for 20 years. Taking the couple’s lifestyle into consideration, the design process reflected their love for sailing and Asian art.

According to W. Michael Harris of Artisan Tile & Marble of San Luis Obispo, CA, the couple loved the ease, durability and beauty of their existing ceramic tile floor, but wanted to update the materials, which they felt had become outdated. “I wanted to provide them with tile and stone finishes that evoked a warm intimate feel like the wooden interior of

a sailboat, as well as surfaces that felt ‘liquid’ like the ocean they had spent so much time on,” Harris explained. “Every time a material selection was narrowed down to a few choices, I encouraged them to select the material that had that ‘quiet appeal’ with focus on quality and substance.”

Ultimately, 50 square feet of 1- x 1-inch tumbled Rio Grande mosaics — from Artisan Tile & Marble — were selected for the bathroom floor, as well as for the shower floor. The shower walls and wainscoting feature 2- x 6-inch and 6- x 6-inch field tiles with Amber Crackle large block molding and quarter-round, as well as 1/2- x 6-inch tiles of Celery Crackle and 1/2- x 1/2-inch tiles of Rust Matte. Additionally, the anterior wall features 3- x 6-inch Reed-textured tiles and large block molding with 6-inch and 3-inch Reed quarter-round in Merlot porcelain tiles, while the sink wainscoting is comprised of 4- x 4-inch tiles of Celery Crackle. Tres Feltman Tile supplied all of the porcelain materials.

Harris describes “Reed” as a style that is “fluted” with lines that travel the full length of the tile. “It was used on this project as a 3- x 6-inch field, and has a matching fluted quarter-round trim to ensure that the direction and texture of the ‘Reed’ is a continuous part of the installation,” he explained.



Glass mosaics were incorporated into the master bathroom of a private residence in Fairfield County, CT, to create an oasis for a busy mother of two. According to designer Tyra Dellacroce of Connecticut Stone of Milford, CT, the client desired a “tranquil, spa-like bathroom that was clean, soft and feminine.”

Designer/Tile Supplier:

According to Harris, the primary challenge of the bathroom was its long, narrow “box” shape. “Our design succeeded in defining two distinct spaces: the sink area and the more private commode/shower area,” explained the designer. “We accomplished this by adding columns to an existing ceiling beam that ran midway through the space, creating a private nook for the commode and shower. We covered this partition with 3- x 6-inch tiles in a rich Merlot color. The Reed pattern in the tile adds texture and contributes to the organic feel of the room.”

Mosaics were also carried into the kitchen design where Moroccan Desert Blend 1- x 1-inch Tessera™ recycled glass mosaics — from Oceanside Glasstile — were selected for the kitchen backsplash. According to Harris, the blue glass tiles used for the backsplash are “reminiscent of the ocean on a cloudy day.”

“Mike Burke of Burke Tile Designs and Gary Schmidt of Atascadero were well-qualified design professionals who only needed the rough sketches and details I provided to execute the installation,” said Harris. “That’s the benefit of working with an owner like Rodger Marlin, a ‘craftsman’ in his own right, who though conscious of the budget, was willing to pay the extra



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Tile Manufacturer: Oceanside Glasstile, Carlsbad, CA

Connecticut Stone,
Milford, CT; **Tile
Manufacturer:**
Trend USA, Ltd.,
Miami, FL

cost to have the materials installed by highly skilled contractors."

According to Harris, the design process began around the summer of 2005. Actual construction started in the winter, and the project was completed by the Spring of 2006.

"The clients have been most pleased," Harris added.

Creating an Oasis

Glass mosaics were also incorporated into the master bathroom of a private residence in Fairfield County, CT, to help create an oasis for a busy mother of two. According to designer Tyra Dellacroce of Connecticut Stone of Milford, CT— which supplied the material for the project — the client desired a "tranquil, spa-like bathroom that was clean, soft and feminine."

To achieve this aesthetic, 440 square feet of glass mosaics from Trend's Shining Collection, were selected in 5/8- x 5/8-inch pieces on the walls, shower and tub backsplash. Dellacroce describes the color of the material as "an iridescent pale green that changes colors as you move through the bathroom."

"We used Trend mosaics specifically because of the way in which they reflect light," the designer explained. "The client loved the color and liked the way the mosaics shimmered."

To complement the glass mosaics, 140 square feet of honed Seagrass limestone was chosen for the floor, countertop and tub surround. "The honed finish and Sage Green-color definitely act as a proper backdrop for the mosaics," said Dellacroce, adding that the material contains white fossils/shells.

"In the bathroom, we really wanted to achieve a soft, tranquil look with a little bit of glamour," said the designer. "The client has a sweet, soft feminine personality, and she wanted something that would feel feminine in a home with her husband and two sons. This was to be 'her space.'"

According to Dellacroce, the homeowner was very involved with the design and selection of the tile and stone. "She knew what feeling she wanted to feel when she walked in the bathroom," she said. "She looked for guidance in material, color and design selection from me and her interior designer, Patricia Felton."

The designer said that multiple stone and tile options were considered. "We looked extensively through limestone, glass and ceramic options before deciding on this combination," she said.



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Interpreting the Nearby Mountains



Designed by Neil Seth Levine, the curved exterior facade of Wing Lung Bank Ltd.'s new California branch features the largest glass mural tile in North America. The mural comprises

And while mosaics are popular in residential design, they are also frequently used in commercial applications. The curved exterior facade of Wing Lung Bank Ltd.'s new California branch, located in Alhambra, features the largest glass tile mural in North America, which measures 34.5 tall x 129.5 feet wide. Designed by Neil Seth Levine of San Francisco, CA, the mural comprises approximately 1 million pieces of glass tile set in an abstract interpretation designed to reflect the nearby San Gabriel Mountains.

The goal was "to create a dynamic image that would create a sense of movement and depth," according to the designer. Due to the large-scaled curved surface, Levine felt it was necessary to have a series of shapes that led the eye up from the street

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Designer: Neil Seth Levine, San Francisco, CA;

Architect: Tsang Architecture, San Francisco, CA;

Mosaic Installer: Glenn Harris, World Class Pools, Honolulu, HI;

Tile Fabricator:

Becoming Tile, Evergreen, CO;

Glass Tile

Suppliers: Mosaic Tile Supplies, Cold Spring, TX (Kaleidoscope tiles); Bisazza USA (Le Gemme tiles); **Tile Installation**

Materials: Custom Building Products, Seal Beach, CA

and across the expanse of the building.

According to Keith Dewald of Becoming Tile of Evergreen, CO — which fabricated the tile — Mosaic Tile Supplies of Cold Spring, TX, supplied 178 different colors of 3/4-inch glass tiles from its Kaleidoscope series for the mural, and 20 colors of Le Gemme metalized glass tile from Bisazza USA were also implemented into the design.

Architects from Tsang Architecture of San Francisco, CA, selected glass tile because it was a minutely scaled material that could easily wrap around the ellipse-shaped facade. It was also cheaper, richer looking and more unique than using metal panels, which were originally considered.

According to Vivek Anand, project designer with Tsang Architecture, "Neil introduced incredible colors, branching foliage and swirling shapes to make the mural into a work of art wrapped around the entrance to the bank and the rear of the elliptical entrance hall which is visible from the banking hall."

Levine said that the design wraps all the way around the outside of an oval. "Part of the oval is interior and part is exterior," he explained. "The left part of the flat design is the prominent inside portion of the mural."

Mural specialist Glenn Harris selected MegaLite™ Crack Prevention Mortar from Custom Building Products® to install the mural, as he needed a mortar that would bond glass tile on a vertical surface.



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