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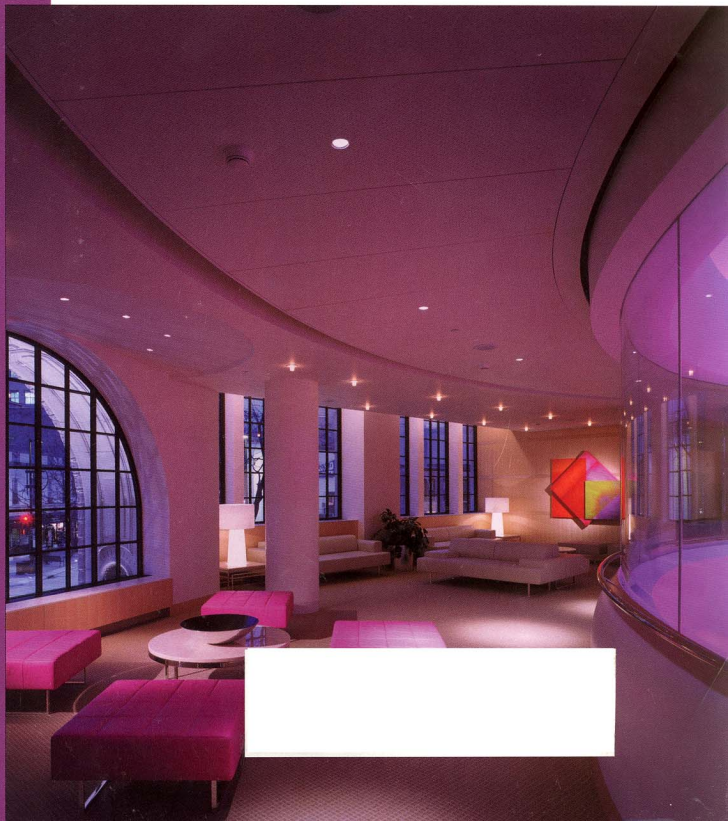
FOCUS

June 2005

COMMERCIAL MARKET 2005

THE BEST OF STARNET

RETAIL WEATHER REPORT



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A&D market this year with its dramatic Corten, a glazed porcelain tile with a matte finish and a rusted metallic look. An applied metallic element makes the light reflect off its surface much like a hologram. While the firm has its eye on the design market, the one year old product is made for both residential and commercial applications.

Tau also showed Yukon, a glazed porcelain tile with a stone look in five colors made specifically for the U.S. market.

Spanish manufacturer **Gres de Valls** introduced Tuscany, a porcelain tile with the look of natural stone in blends of white, beige and red/brown. Cotto Seco Camano, a porcelain finished with a dry glaze that creates a unique, grainy texture, is one of the few Spanish tiles made with a dry glaze.

The firm also introduced several interesting wood looks in porcelain which have a low gloss that creates the feel and visual of real wood. Toledo Wenge, a dark wood design, comes in 6 1/2"x26" plank formats; Toledo Blanco, a white wood, is available in both 6 1/2"x26" and 13"x26"; and Toledo Roble has a light brown wood look.

American Marazzi, owned by Italy's Marazzi Group, introduced Jade, a glazed porcelain collection of unique, random color patterns that replicate the variations in natural stone. Jade is created by a unique process, where nine base colors are applied simultaneously during production for unexpected mixtures of color. While no two tiles are alike, they all coordinate with each other. Jade is available in four distinct colorways—Taupe, Ochre, Sage and Chestnut—and in two sizes, 13"x13" and 20"x20".

Also new: Imperial Slate, a glazed tile that comes in two dramatic dark tones, Black Mix and Tan-Rust Mix. Both have a 0.6 wet coefficient of friction.

United States Ceramic Tile, headquartered in North Canton, Ohio, is owned by Spanish tile giant Roca. The company, which is shifting its focus to the commercial market, introduced several new products targeted to that audience. Color Collection, a glazed porcelain with a smooth, speckled surface, comes in a variety of colors including beige, mocha, blue and green. Luxor, a double loaded rectified porcelain which is made in China, comes both polished and unpolished in four colors: Ivory, Sand, Cocoa and Cinder. Genesis, a double pressed porcelain, has the look of natural stone and includes the Magma Series, a striking red stone design.

Laufen, the second U.S. subsidiary of Spanish manufacturer Roca, introduced three porcelain products: Equinox, a cross-cut travertine look, in three earthy tones; and Verona and Palace, a sleek, thru-body, double loaded porcelain, in three neutral colors in both unpolished and polished finishes, respectively. The company also showed Aspen, a thru-body porcelain in six colors now in the testing phase that was very well received at the show.

Last year's best selling Stone Evolution is now available in larger formats of 24"x48" and 24"x24".

American Florim, the Clarksville, Tennessee subsidiary of Italy's Florim, introduced several new products at Coverings this year after skipping the show in 2004. Tundra, a thru-body

porcelain with a slate look, comes in four colors including a subtle, interesting offwhite called Terrain. Truvian Stone is a glazed porcelain with a Turkish limestone look.

Esquire, another Florim brand, unveiled Chateau Lyon, a heavily chiseled look in three colors. Okoume is a fusion design featuring a combination sandstone and wood look in five colors. Both Okume and Chateau Lyon are being manufactured in Italy now, but are scheduled to shift to the U.S. in the first quarter of 2006.

SI Flooring Systems stirred up a lot of interest at its Coverings booth, where it displayed GatorMat, its polypropylene crack-inhibiting underlayment. Unlike scribe paper, which is broken down by water, GatorMat's polypropylene fabric resists water damage and continues to prevent cracking and crack migration for tile installed on concrete slabs. Introduced last year, this cost effective replacement for liquid underlay products was in the prototype and testing stage for two years.

Grout and adhesive producer **Laticrete International**, based in Bethany, Connecticut, showed several new time-saving products for installers. New epoxy product Spectralock Pro Grout works like cement, but performs like epoxy. It provides improved stain and chemical resistance and won't discolor or crack. Dazzle, which is part of the Spectralock series, should attract a lot of attention from the A&D community: It has several interesting looks, including metallics and glow-in-the-dark. The new Latapoxy 310 Cordless Mixer is ideal for spot bonding of interior and exterior stone. Powered by a patented motor and gear design, the gun automatically dispenses the proper mix of adhesives, saving time and labor costs.

Brazilian manufacturer **Eliane** had a new urban, modern look at Coverings. The Neo Collection of contemporary glazed porcelain includes three series: Neo Provence, Neo Marmara and Neo California. Neo Provence features warm colors with slight veining; Neo Marmara emulates marble's intricate stone veining in cool colors; and Neo California is a series of trendy shades that offer a spread of design options. All three were created specifically for the North American market.

TRENDS

Here are some hot trends that Ceramic Tiles of Italy sees influencing the ceramic landscape in 2005:

- Experiments in texture that combine matte and glossy looks.
- Mixing ceramic tiles with other building materials like glass, aluminum and wood.
- Patterns inspired by nature—woods, twigs, sand and flowers.
- The 1970s are back. Elongated neon green tiles, rainbow colored listellos with retro shapes are all in.
- Brilliant displays of color in a range of formats, from tiny mosaics to larger tiles. Reds and oranges are returning.
- Hand painted tiles, tiles that shimmer with color and light.
- Environmental awareness will be more important this year, especially with designers, who want to know that manufacturers are using energy efficient methods and are committed to sustainability.