

CIB PUBLIC RELATIONS

Project: Feature for Tile
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THE ABC OF SPANISH TILES

The market for tiles in the UK is booming. With 2002 figures estimating the market's value at 3,595million euros or 651 million m² and sales rising steadily, the future looks bright. Here Javier Soriano, Head of Foreign Trade Promotion at ASCER, The Association of Spanish Ceramic Tile Manufacturers, gives his guide to the ABC of Spanish tiles.

A is for...Adaptability. No other material is so entirely practical as the ceramic tile. Suitable for wall and floorcoverings, every possible room in a building, available in every colour of the rainbow – this really is the most adaptable of design tools in the world.

In the UK approximately 73% of all ceramic tiles sold are used as wallcovering, but in Europe there is a long history of tiled floors in areas way beyond the kitchen and bathroom. This made a burst into Britain with the Victorians' tiled hallways, but now with the growth in popularity of underfloor heating systems, it is beginning to develop on a much bigger scale, with conservatories, thoroughfares and even living, dining and sleeping areas beginning to embrace the tiled look.

As well as being suitable for use on both walls and floors, Spanish tiles are suitable for both interiors and exteriors. Porcelain tiles have an extremely low water content which means that they are resistant to frost – hardy enough for outdoor use even in Britain's icy winters. This means that tiles can be used to create a completely seamless finish through

from indoors, through conservatory, to outdoors – covering a large surface area that can be a boon to the installer and the tile outlet, as well as creating a stylish look for the owner.

The frost-resistance of porcelain tiles is just one example of ceramic tiles' technical excellence. Spain's ceramic tile industry makes use of ITC; an independent technical research facility dedicated to maximising the performance benefits of the product. This means that Spanish ceramic tiles can be hardwearing, anti-slip, frost resistant, resistant to blows – as well as featuring the design for which they are world-renowned.

B, therefore, is for Brilliance. One of the predicted trends for the 2004 tile market is the return of the gloss finish. On a ceramic tile this is achieved with a glaze, which will also give the tile its colour. A porcelain tile, however, is through-coloured. This means that its colour of pattern runs through the body of the tile – meaning that chips or scratches will not be visible. Porcelain tiles can then be polished – giving a high-gloss finish.

Brilliant glosses are not the only finish available from Spanish ceramic tiles. Relief patterns, natural textures and matt finishes are all available giving a choice of touch-sensations that will lend an extra dimension to any installation.

Apart from gloss finishes, further trends have been predicted by ALICER: The Innovation and Technology Centre for Industrial Ceramic Design in Castellón, Spain. C, then, is for Colour.

Predicted colour trends for 2004 include bold, graphic designs and bright colours, as well as the continued popularity of existing classic designs and neutral shades. Increases in the numbers of luxury 'spa' facilities such as wet rooms in the home are also expected to precipitate an increased interest in tiles: an area in which more striking designs come into their own.

Spanish ceramic tiles are also available in ranges that mimic natural products. Stone, wood, metal, leather and even fabric can all be faithfully represented – with none of the maintenance concerns inherent to these products, and all of the benefits of ceramic tiles.

The ongoing fashion for hard flooring– with its easy maintenance and minimal appearance – has opened a window of opportunity for the tile market now the consumer public is beginning to tire of laminate and wood. The unbeatable variety of style, colour, sensation and design available from ceramic tiles is appealing to more and more consumer and commercial purchasers.

Spanish ceramic tiles– in all their guises – present an exciting and flexible product that is able to fulfil all of the maintenance and design requirements of every consumer and commercial installation. Adaptability, beauty and colour begin an alphabet of characteristics that make Spanish ceramic tiles one of the most popular materials around.

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