

2011 Spring Trend Preview

(New York, NY – Spring 2011) Coverings, the international exhibition of tile and stone, opens its doors a full month earlier this year, giving the A&D community a jump on the spring 2011 trends. Like fashion week, the four-day fair held from March 14-17 in Las Vegas, NV is a time for design ideas, inspiration and innovation. With over 50 leading manufacturers present, the Italian Pavilion will be a source for spring style as new tile collections are in full bloom. The trend forecast calls for organic influences, floral patterns, nautical stripes, fresh colors and of course, green design. And this time, what happens in Vegas will be shared with the global design community.

Mother Nature as Muse

The natural environment continues to excite artists, designers and manufacturers alike. With the aid of technology and increasing perfection of inkjet printing, Italian companies are reinventing natural materials as old as the world. Tile collections reflecting the aesthetic charm of limestone, travertine, onyx, slate and luxurious marble will rock the aisles of the Italian Pavilion. And what about those porcelain planks? The wood look remains an industry favorite. The fabulous faux now comes in a myriad of colors, sizes and surfaces. Its warm aesthetic and durable qualities make it an ideal choice for kitchens, baths, dining rooms, living rooms, hallways as well as exterior applications.

With springtime comes the rebirth of flowers, plants and animals. These natural influences will also come to life in the Italian Pavilion. Floral motifs are sure to dominate the scene. The 2011 introductions range from oversized, embossed cherry blossoms to abstract rose motifs. Animal prints and patterns will be presented in both subtle and strong ways. Be on the lookout for butterflies and floral decors laser cut from slim porcelain slabs.

Colorful Comeback

Thanks to its uplifting and stimulating qualities, Pantone named Honeysuckle as the *2011 Color of the Year*. While soft beige, warm brown, cool grey, winter white and classic black are a mainstay in the North American market, color is making a comeback. From accent walls to backsplashes, it's an easy way to transform a space and add a little pizzazz. In line with the season, Italian tile manufacturers will be showing off new vibrant shades of pink, lilac, coral, sky blue and navy. Whether solid or striped, the color invasion is a welcomed one and sure to be an attention getter at the show.

Multiple Shades of Green

From 100% recyclable packaging to tiles made with recycled content, the Italian tile industry is making a wholehearted commitment to the environment. First, consider tile's inherently sustainable attributes like its durability, lifespan and resistance to extreme weather conditions, fire, water and moisture. Then think about it in terms of indoor air quality, maintenance and hygiene. It scores quite high as a clean, durable, hypoallergenic and low-maintenance covering

solution. Tile also allows for easy, nontoxic cleaning, which is why hotels, wellness centers, hospitals and schools are areas experiencing continued growth.

Besides tile's innate eco-friendly characteristics, Italian companies are taking sustainability a step further and rethinking the entire production process. Many manufacturers use a closed-loop system that recycles 100% of raw material and water wastes back into the production cycle. And shipping? Tiles made in Italy are generally sent to the U.S. by sea, which, according to a recent study analyzing transportation methods including container ships, trucks and planes, results in less greenhouse emissions. Plus the packaging is recyclable.

In terms of product design, an increasing majority of Italian tile manufacturers carry collections that contain a percentage of pre-consumer or post-consumer recycled material, which contributes to LEED points for architects and designers. Another revolutionary and rapidly expanding area is solar energy. Some companies are producing ceramic roof tiles with fitted photovoltaic modules that collect sunlight and use it to generate electricity. Others are working with photovoltaic panel producers and making solar panel "slabs" for roofs as well as building façades. Perfect for renovations and retrofits, slim tiles are another sustainable solution. The ceramic tile's slim size means less environmental impact due to the reduction in energy consumption, raw materials and transport costs.

These are just a few of the trends visitors can expect to see on the market this season. New products and innovation is sure to be plentiful. To access a complete inventory of new products, including high-resolution images and descriptions, click on Ceramic Tiles of Italy's new link dedicated to products and trends: <http://products.italiatiles.com>.

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