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Texas Tile Services Leads
in Home Accent Design

INSIDE SHOWCASE



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By Penny Jones

Gorgeous stone and tile play vaulted roles in Houston's residential architecture. The ever-expanding array of choices can be bewildering, a condition that Edward Garay of Texas Tile Services knows all too well. "We import stone and tile from everywhere in the world," he says. "We bring in product from Brazil and China to Italy and India and places in-between. It's our business to know the differences, the pros and cons of each stone and tile, and to guide home builders through what can be an overwhelming number of selections."

Gus Carrera, TTS' owner and CEO, founded the company 16 years ago. "Our projects range from starter homes to million-dollar homes," said Carrera. "Regardless of price, we provide the same high level of workmanship in all our installations. Most of our customers use more than one of our services, such as flooring and countertops. When we started the company, we focused exclusively on flooring. That has expanded to include a full line of tile, raw wood, natural stone slabs and a variety of manufactured countertop products. The tile work ranges from standard to more complex installations, such as vaulted ceilings





and intricate shower and backsplash designs.”

As part of its personalized service, TTS staff meets with customers who are selecting exotic granite colors. During these meetings the staff presents an overview of the material and discusses its strengths and weaknesses and its suitability for the application. More importantly, these sessions allow buyers to see the pattern and color variations within the actual slab before fabrication begins.



TTS staff keeps up with current trends by visiting trade shows and paying attention to its customers’ requests. It also relies on strategic alliances with its distributors and importers to keep informed of trends, Carrera said. “Our installers keep abreast of the latest design trends and new materials. They learn state-of-the-art techniques through continuing education workshops offered by the National Tile Contractors Association, the Greater Houston Builders Association, the National Home Builders Association and our own vendors.”

“Right now, large-body modular tile is popular because it allows cleaner installations and sleeker designs,” Carrera said. “Digital ink jet printing on ceramic and porcelain tile is also making its way across to America,” Carrera said. “This technology is replacing analog printing and allows an unlimited number of designs and colors.” According to Garay, “If you want to know what trends





are coming, look to Europe.” Natural-looking products have grown in popularity thanks to improvements in the manufacturing process, and tiles that look like real wood and leather are now available and appeal to many customers. He noted that white is a very popular color for tiles and countertops now and that Silestone, a man-made quartzite, is increasing in demand. “Quartz is making a comeback and will be the next big trend,” agreed Carrera.

Garay has seen number of material and stylistic changes over his 21 years in the industry. “In the early 1990s, the trend was smaller tiles. Now, sizes can range up to 32” x 32” square. It’s all part of the move to more open-concept homes. Larger tiles look better in open spaces. Another trend is pure porcelain tiles. Pure porcelain has the color all the way through the tile instead of a colored glaze like ceramic tile. They are incredibly durable and if they chip, it’s hardly noticeable.”

Both Carrera and Garay see an increase in demand for glass mosaics, subway tile in a variety of sizes, tumbled or honed travertine, limestone, and even more porcelain tile. “There are going to be porcelain slabs coming into the U. S. for use as countertops,” Garay said. “They are gorgeous and amazingly resilient - and already very popular in Europe.”

TTS also offers restoration services, including cleaning and re-staining grout lines, acid tile washing, natural stone sealing and repair of loose and cracked tile. “Many people don’t realize that their natural stone countertops and tiles need to be adequately sealed and maintained. Not only do we want to keep your home looking its best, but we want to add to its value,” Carrera noted. “As an option we also offer a 15-year stain-proof warranty sealer for natural stone countertops to show our service commitment to our clients.”

Carrera is optimistic about the next five years. He expects to enlarge the company’s production facility and is making plans to expand to San Antonio and Austin. “We are a very conservative company,” Carrera said. “We make any decision to grow very carefully and with much forethought.”

With Houston’s – and Texas’ - housing market continuing to show strength, the future looks bright for Texas Tile Services.