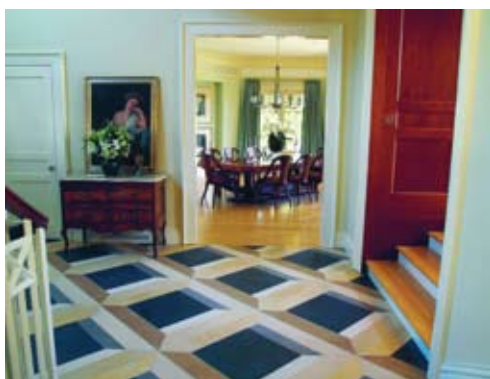


## FEATS OF CLAY

The earthworks on display in these showrooms include red-bodied tile handmade in Mexico, antique stone from faraway places, handcrafted mosaics, and much more BY DEVON FLEMING



CLOCKWISE FROM THE TOP LEFT: Antique Bourgogne Limestone; Bourgogne Clair Limestone; Gray and White Spanish Machael; Antique Andalusian Gray and White Marble with Custom Gray and White Spanish Machael pattern; Newport Custom Limestone Pattern.



### Paris Ceramics

Customers choose Paris Ceramics not only for the look of its reclaimed stone and original flooring, sourced worldwide, but for the stories that come with them, notes Leslie Lombino, manager of the firm's Greenwich showroom. "Most of the stones have an interesting provenance," she says. "They can be hundreds of years old, taken from ancient, unique quarries. People want to use important material, and we've got it."

The firm—founded in 1982 in King's Road, London, *not* in Paris—quickly became the preferred supplier of high-quality stone flooring and tiles to Smallbone, the noted kitchen-design company. In 1988, Charles Smallbone bought Paris Ceramics and proceeded to open showrooms in 10 major cities in the U.S., while retaining the London showroom. In addition to ancient and antique stone from faraway places like Jerusalem, India, and the South of France, the company offers a wide range of new stone and

tile products, including custom fireplace mantels, handcrafted mosaics and roundels, and a range of limestones, terra cottas, and marbles that can be custom-carved.

And while the ancient and antique stone can be more expensive because of its rareness, the company offers newly quarried materials that can be distressed to provide an Old World look that's virtually indistinguishable from that of the original. "By creating a design that mixes the old and the new, we can give clients the story they want—say, a portion of the floor that was originally in an old French château—and keep the budget reasonable by incorporating a harmonious new material around it," Lombino explains. "That way, the provenance is preserved—and that's truly special." >>

Paris Ceramics, 19 West Elm Street, Greenwich, CT 06830. 203.862.9538; [www.parisceramics.com](http://www.parisceramics.com)



CLOCKWISE FROM THE TOP LEFT: Ferroker Caldera 17x26 (floor tile), Lavagna Crema 24x48 (wall tile); Slate Nepal 12x12 (floor and wall tile) mosaico Slate Nepal (12x12); India Pulpis 24x24 (floor tile); Twin Cemento Manhattan 12x35 (wall tile), Ferro 13x13 (floor tile); Nepal Pulpis 12x35 (wall tile), pro-part stainless steel deco accent.



## Porcelanosa

Founded as a small company in the 1970s in Castellón, the center of Spanish tile manufacturing, Porcelanosa has grown into a major supplier of tile, stone, and bathroom and kitchen products throughout the world (with more than 400 showrooms in 70 countries). The family-owned firm added Riverside, Connecticut, to its list in July 2007.

The Riverside space, like the other U.S. Porcelanosa showrooms, presents customers with vignettes (25 of them here), each designed to showcase a different vanity and different tile and stone compositions on the floors and walls. The products range in style from the traditional (subway tile for walls or beige limestone for floors, for example) to contemporary; there is much evidence of a modern European aesthetic in the showroom, particularly in the sleek kitchen products, with lots of clean lines, minimalist design, and metal and high-gloss-lacquer finishes

“We’ve seen more people choosing transitional styles, moving away from the traditional to more contemporary choices of clean lines, bolder colors, and materials such as metals with oxidized finishes,” says territory manager Alfonso Beltran.

Current popular lines include Ferroker and Ruggine, which have the look of metals or woods, but are actually porcelain (the tile most impervious to water). The tiles come in a palette of warm colors, with rectified edges (uniformly cut on all sides, with minimal joints, so the flooring is flat) and in large format (up to 24 by 48 inches). Also very popular are the company’s glazed-porcelain tiles; they look like glass, but are so durable that they can be used as flooring.

Beltran and two design consultants work with homeowners to show them possibilities they may never have considered—like the Woodtec line, which mimics natural hardwood flooring. “We try to show people that tile and natural stone can be used beautifully in more than just the kitchen and the bathroom. Living rooms and bedrooms are wonderful options, too,” says Beltran. “Tile offers crisp lines and easy maintenance, and the look of stone or wood adds an interesting warmth and texture, aesthetically speaking.” And when it conceals radiant heat, Porcelanosa flooring can bring *actual* warmth as well. >>

Porcelanosa, 1063 East Putnam Avenue, Riverside, CT 06878. 203.698.7618; [www.porcelanosa-usa.com](http://www.porcelanosa-usa.com)



THIS PAGE, LEFT: **Border tile—Contessa Collection, Arabesco Field shown in Silver Leaf. Backsplash tile—Contessa Collection, Sevilla Field 4-5/8" x 4-5/8" shown in Silver Leaf.** RIGHT: **Studio Moderne Collection by Michael Berman, Fretwork Pattern, shown in Noir inches.**



## Walker Zanger

“Our clients have a strong desire for tile that somebody’s hands have created—in this machine-made world, that in itself is a luxury,” declares Tristan McManaman, marketing director for Walker Zanger, the high-end stone and tile company. Now headquartered in Sylmar, California, the company was established more than 50 years ago in New York City, and it retains its showroom in Manhattan.

Pairing traditional tilemaking skills with the most recent advances in technology, Walker Zanger’s most recent lines bring an “Old World aesthetic in patterns and colors reinterpreted for the 21st century,” McManaman says, pointing to the Contessa line, which includes handmade red-bodied tiles hand-pressed in Mexico. “Instead of traditional overly detailed motifs, the motifs on these tiles are pared down to their essence, then glazed and waxed in one or two colors like a gold or silver leaf. The results are evocative of centuries-old, imperfect materials, yet perfectly at home in the modern or contemporary settings of today.”

In an effort to provide clients with “total environment”

options, the company recently launched the Studio Moderne collection, by Michael Berman, which offers a range of complementary options for floors and walls, with combinations of stone and ceramic tiles, as well as large-format, handcrafted tiles (18 by 20 inches) with crisp, 3-D embossing.

“In a lot of homes, living spaces are large and multi-purpose, and we wanted a cohesive collection that allows tile to transition easily from space to space. With Studio Moderne, there’s the opportunity to really piece together an entire living space,” McManaman continues. “Plus, with the relief elements, the tile and stone can be used to create architectural interest such as a feature wall or a vivid wall in a foyer—it’s not just for backsplashes anymore.” TME

Walker Zanger Tile and Stone Showroom, 37 East 20th Street, New York, NY 10003. 212.844.3000; [www.walkerzanger.com](http://www.walkerzanger.com);

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