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Think outside the box while staying within the lines – Unique Tile paves the way in modern home design

By Kandice McKee

When it comes to customizing kitchen and bath design, your grandmother probably used wallpaper and your mother used paint. But now you can explore your (perhaps unfounded) creative and artistic side with the boundless possibilities of tile.

“We are now adding luxuries to the obvious use of the modern American bathroom,” says Unique Tile’s President Melissa Turpin. “It’s turned into a spa – a retreat – a space of luxury solitude by adding TVs, steam rooms, hot tubs and Jacuzzis.”

With all that a bathroom is becoming, why would you settle for anything less than the best finishes and designers when planning your remodel?

Unique Tile offers all you need for the hottest bathroom designs – everything from porcelain, metal, stone and glass tiles; stain-resistant grout; and the expert designers you need to invent the bathroom or kitchen you’ve yearned for. Traveling the world to cherry-pick the market for the best American looks manufacturers have to offer, Unique Tile purchases the latest designs from Italy, Spain, Germany and several American factories to offer you the greatest and most up-to-date styles.

Now, forget about monotonous kitchen and bathroom designs. The latest look is entirely personalized and can be as free-formed as you want.

Due to the moisture and frequent cleanings of kitchens and bathrooms, it’s best to stick to ceramic, porcelain, metal and glass tiles – and you can personalize your kitchen or bathroom design by using a chic combination of all four.

If you like the look of hardwood floors but know that true hardwood doesn’t work well in high-moisture areas and high-traffic applications, consider one of the newest styles of porcelain tile offered at Unique Tile – wood-look tiles.

Wood-look tiles have been around for quite some time in European countries since they have clay instead of wood as a natural resource, Turpin says.

Think outside the box (cont)

“People in the U.S. are catching on to the fact that you can get the look of wood and the indestructibility of porcelain tile,” she says. “This is especially nice in high-traffic areas as well as residential kitchens and bathrooms where there is a lot of moisture.”

And beneath these tiles, you can bring the feel of warm, sun-touched sandy beaches home with the latest SunTouch floor heating technology. SunTouch heating systems radiates heat beneath your floor, giving your room heat and a cozy feel for your feet. Having electric radiant heating allows you to turn the central heating system down while turning the comfort level and energy efficiency up.

You can even feel the heat in your shower before the water ever starts running by warming the bottom of your tile shower floor with SunTouch’s Mat and WarmWire systems.

The “sheer comfort” of radiant heating has helped make this technology one of the most asked for amenities in kitchen and bathroom remodeling, says Unique Tile’s Vice-president Paul Mudd.

“Imagine stepping onto a nice, warm floor after, or even during, your morning shower or while enjoying your Sunday morning coffee and paper,” he says. “It’s also a great way to keep entryway and mudroom floors dry and warm.”

SunTouch also allows for just as much customization as your tile designs. SunTouch’s Mat system is easy to install and can be easily customized to fit rooms of all shapes and sizes; the WarmWire cable system is great for large and odd-shaped areas; and the UnderFloor product is available for those who want warm floors but already have a finished floor.

The beach isn’t the only atmosphere you can mirror in your home. Mimic the relaxing mood of the spa while also adding depth to your bathroom with Unique Tile’s large collection of tiles. To help give the illusion of a larger room and open up even the smallest of bathrooms, you can set these tiles on a diagonal or use larger format tiles. Add mosaic tiles to finish off the new spa-like feeling of your reinvented bathroom.

More control in the size of tiles has recently been given to remodelers as manufacturers have begun producing a 36” X 72” sheet that can be cut into tiles of any size – allowing you more freedom to design the bathroom or kitchen of your dreams.

When it comes to color schemes, Turpin says one of the latest trends is to go gray.

“Color trends are moving toward taupes and grays,” she says. “We are mixing up taupes, grays and blacks with crème colors to make the room feel warmer.”

Though Unique Tile offers sheets of glass tiles with color schemes already coordinated, you also have the artistic freedom to design your own color schemes and special order sheets to harmonize with the bathroom design you desire.

Think outside the box (cont)

While the most popular trend in color schemes may be neutral, the types of finishes you choose don't have to be. Accentuate your backsplash tiles by mixing matte and glossy finishes. You can use tiles finished with glass or metal pieces to give additional shine and sparkle while also highlighting specific areas of your room.

For the environmentally conscientious remodeler, keep in mind that tile's performance, durability, ease of maintenance and longevity make it a more practical choice than other flooring options. While nearly 5 billion pounds of carpet ends up in landfills each year, according to the Carpet America Recovery Effort, tile can last up to 50 years, or more, and many can be recycled – not ditched in a landfill – when it's time to upgrade or replace.

Even up to 60 percent of glass tile is manufactured from recycled glass – keeping old windshields, bottles and other materials out of the landfill while dazzling your kitchen and bathroom design.

When it comes to keeping your tiles together, the hottest grout currently on the market revolutionizes what can be an overwhelming and tedious project.

StarQuartz takes the guesswork out of grouting since it comes pre-mixed – leaving you with the confidence of consistent color, texture and look. StarQuartz is even self-sealing, making the grouting process even simpler.

You no longer have to worry about your grout fading, either, as StarQuartz's QuartzLock² Grout offers non-fading quartz colors. And made with your glass and metal tile designs in mind, StarQuartz's StarGlass Grout offers lucid, 3-D and reflective colors to bring together tiles and leave a stunning, unique look.

With a wide variety of grouting color options available, Turpin says its important to consider what you want to be most distinguishable – your tile or your grout.

“Coordinating grout and tile colors makes for a more consistent look and shows off the tile better. A contrasting grout shows off the lines, makes the design more busy and accentuates the grout,” she says.

And, again, for those keeping Mother Nature in mind during their remodel, StarQuartz Grout is LEED certified with low VOC, no waste, and is BPA- and NMP-free.

When your grouting project is complete, you can rest assured that your StarQuartz Grout will keep your kitchen and bathroom looking luxurious for years as it is stain-, chemical-, mildew- and UV-resistant.

Whether the creative freedom that comes with designing your tile kitchen and bathroom entices you or worries you, Unique Tile has the designers you want to help you as little or as much as you need.

With such flexibility in tile designs, why consider anything else when it's time to change your home's mood and look?