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# TILE

Magazine

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## Miami condo harmonizes with oceanfront setting

A range of Italian porcelain tile and mosaics bring a sophisticated vacation-home feel to an upscale residence in Miami Beach, FL

by Kerri Walker





Set on the Atlantic Ocean in Miami Beach, FL, with views of pristine blue waters and pure white sandy beaches, is an AIA award-winning oceanfront remodel inspired by its natural surroundings. Before its renovation, this high-end condominium was a designer-ready unit constructed in the late 1980s — with scattered compartments and corridors. The owners wanted to open up the space to the oceanfront views and give it a casual beach feel. Italian porcelain tile proved to satisfy the requirements for both presentation and essence, and as a result, it was extensively used throughout the interior design.

Every single surface was demolished and re-built to the client's high standards of minimalist design. "The client wanted a casual beach feel," explained the project's architect, Germán Brun of Den Architecture in Miami, FL. "Their primary residence is Sao Paulo, Brazil, so they wanted to have a vacation feel in their second home."

The field tile applied extensively throughout the apartment was La Faenza's "Nouvelle B" in the color beige, which was manufactured in Italy. The 4- x 20-inch rectangular-format pieces were distributed by Ceramica Esparza. Designated for all of the rooms in the home except for the guest bathroom, Nouvelle B established a sophisticated,

**FACING PAGE** An oceanfront remodel in Miami Beach, FL, involved demolishing and rebuilding every surface to the client's high standards of modern minimalist design. An assortment of Italian tile was employed throughout the living space to successfully achieve the design objective.

**ABOVE** The field tile applied extensively throughout the home was La Faenza's "Nouvelle B" in the color beige. The 4- x 20-inch rectangular-format slabs were distributed by Ceramica Esparza.



In the master bath, “Dry 10” porcelain tile from Brix of Italy was laid in an irregular wall pattern to mimic the irregular patterns left on the sand when ocean water recedes.

distressed wood look for a boardwalk kind of feel throughout the residence.

In the master bathroom, the backsplash wall features “Dry 10” in 9.6- x 9.6-inch cut tile from Brix of Italy. The plaster-colored tile — distributed by Five Star Surfaces — gives an interlocking irregular pattern. “Since it was designed to mimic irregular patterns in the sand, the tile has an irregular format and was installed in a complex pattern to avoid any repetition,” explained Brun. “Adjacent to the backsplash is the mosaic shower wall installation in which the tile is hand-made in California with a custom-glazed crackle finish.”

The master bath shower wall is clad in 12- x 12-inch mosaic tile pieces from Heath Ceramics “Dwell Collection” in the color “Crackled Tropics

Blue.” Heath Ceramics, a California-based manufacturer, distributed the tile, whose pattern is termed “Little Diamond Mix.”

The use of tile continues into the children’s bathroom, where the floor tile perpetuates the beach feel of the apartment with a different tile than the staggered boardwalk field tile. “The design challenge was to find square-format tiles that are applicable for walkable and wall surfaces for the guest bathroom, used by the client’s two sons,” explained Brun. “We selected different colors of a beach ball and used three colors of tile that are on all four surfaces — walls and floor — in a staggered pattern for a more playful feel.”

Imola Plain Series 8- x 8-inch tiles from Italy were selected in three col-

ors — azurro, aquamarine and white. The tiles were staggered vertically on the walls and floors of the children’s bathroom. Several other options were considered for this room, but friction for the floor was needed, so that narrowed down the selection of tile that could be used.

### GETTING IT JUST RIGHT

Construct LLC carried out the installation of the tile. The total construction schedule of the project was six months, with the installation of the tilework taking approximately one and a half months. Construct LLC, who was also the general contractor for the project, had an average of three installers on the job at a time.

“The design and layout of the tile





Imola Plain Series 8- x 8-inch tiles from Italy in three colors — azurro, aquamarine and white — were staggered vertically on the walls and floors of the children's bathroom.

was very design oriented and required above-normal levels of precision in its installation,” Brun said. “For instance, the master bathroom backsplash tile was almost a prototype product in that it was so new. It was a premium Italian-made product (Brix ‘Dry 10’ in 9.6- x 9.6-inch cut tile) with a hefty price tag of \$29 per square foot, so it was imperative that the installation of

the tile showcase the beauty and innovation of the product. The installation had to match the superb quality of the tile. The main challenge here was the installation of the tile in an irregular pattern to minimize any pattern, repetition or grout lines.

“The guest bathroom design, on the other hand, used a more conventional square tile but had a layout that required

extreme precision because three different color areas had to line up perfectly on all four surfaces — floor, walls and ceiling — in all directions, while using a vertically staggered installation pattern,” Brun went on to explain. “This was achieved by using laser technology to triple check everything constantly, classic time-honored installation best practices and a healthy dose of patience.”

## PUTTING EVERYTHING IN PLACE

Construct LLC used different methods of installation to set the assortment of tile. For the field floor tile, which pulled the living space together, the staggered pattern was laid over a 3/4-inch mortar mud bed, with both tile and floor “back-buttered” with multi-bond thin-set adhesive, over 3/64-inch Nobleseal SIS (Sound Isolation Sheet) on top of the existing concrete slab.

The shower tiles and mosaics were installed with premium non-modified thin-set adhesive over a Schluter Systems Kerdi waterproofing membrane over 1/2-inch Hardie Backer Board attached to metal studs. The installers sealed with Miracle Sealants 511 Impregnator Sealer prior to grouting to prevent “clouding.” The backsplash tile installed in the master bathroom was set with multi-bond thin-set adhesive over 1/2-inch water-resistant green board with white Mapei epoxy grout. Finally, the shower floor tiles were installed over a mortar-mud mix over a continuous rubber shower pan sloped to an integral drain (as per TCNA Detail B431-09. Pre-formed Kerdi foam shower curb installed as per TCNA Detail B417-09).

“We’ve used all these methods of installation before except the pre-formed foam shower curbs, which seemed a better alternative to a labor-intensive concrete curb or a standard built-up wood curb with successive pressure treated two-by-fours,” said Brun. “This new shower curb worked fine once it was properly fixed to the existing concrete slab of the condominium with construction adhesive, which was a challenge. I prefer mechanically fastened curbs.”



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## AN AWARD-WINNING FINISH

Since its completion, the project has garnered three major awards: Ceramic Tiles of Italy 2013 Competition (Residential Honorable Mention), Coverings 2013 Installation & Design Residential Tile Design Award and a 2013 AIA Excellence in Design Award for Interiors.

The project has been very well received, and everyone involved is pleased with the outcome. The apartment remodel — now free of corridors and hallways — is open and flows seamlessly with its natural beachfront backdrop. **TILE**

## Installation Details

**INSTALLER:** Construct LLC, Miami, FL

**TILE MANUFACTURERS:** La Faenza, Italy (Nouvelle B tile); Brix, Italy (Dry 10 tile); Heath Ceramics, California (Dwell Collection); Cooperativa Ceramica d’Imola, Bologna, Italy (Plain Series)

**TILE DISTRIBUTORS:** Ceramica Esparza, San Juan, Puerto Rico (La Faenza Product); Five Star Surfaces, Hialeah Gardens, FL (Brix Product); Heath Ceramics, California (Dwell Collection); Imola Tile, Miami, FL (Cooperativa Ceramica d’Imola Product)

**INSTALLATION PRODUCTS:** Amerimix Type S Mortar, Saint Petersburg, FL; Jamo premium non-modified thin-set adhesive, Jamo multi-bond thin-set adhesive and Jamo non-sanded grout, Jamo of Miami, FL; Mapei two-part epoxy grout, Deerfield Beach, FL; Miracle Sealants 511 Impregnator Sealer, Miracle Sealants, Arcadia, CA; Schluter Kerdi continuous polyethylene water proofing membrane, Schluter Systems, Plattsburgh, NY

**NUMBER OF INSTALLERS:** approximately 3 working at one time

**INSTALLATION TIME:** 1½ months