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CERAMIC TILES
OR
HOW CLOSE
ONE CAN GET
TO
NATURE'S BEAUTY

Cersaie, or the International Exhibition of Ceramic Tile and Bathroom Furnishings as it is officially called, is a ceramics festival that takes place every autumn in the Italian city of Bologna at Cersaie. It is the world's most important international exhibition for ceramic tiles and bathroom furnishing. It used to be a gathering of tile fitters and plumbers but in recent years it has evolved at high speed into a sophisticated display of creativity. To realize this transition, the organizers called in the guidance of famous architects and designers like Massimo Iosa Ghini.

To underline the creative, international aspect, at each event famous architects are invited to shine their light on design and architecture in the cultural program 'building, dwelling, thinking'. In 2017 the African architect Diébédo Francis Kéré from Burkina Faso, Chilean architect Sebastián Irarrázaval, Australian architect Sean Godsell, designer, architect and blogger Fabio Novembre, and Spanish architect Elisa Valero Ramos gave acte-de-présence.

For the outsider a forest of tiles, colors and structures; for the insider Cersaie is a cherry on a creative ceramic cake. A delight for architects and interior designers who are presented with the latest trends in ceramic tiles.

As Cristina Faedi, trend watcher and head of promotional activities for Cersaie noted in regards to the 2017 event:

"In terms of styles, materials, colors, design techniques and tile installations, the continuous research and experiments in combination with the creativity of designers and architects, has resulted in an almost unlimited range of aesthetic applications and uses."

Confindustria Ceramica's communications director, Andrea Serri (an acclaimed ceramics expert) described the increasingly high levels of aesthetic and functional performance of porcelain tiles:

"The key factor in terms of surface quality is the advent of digital printing technology, which is capable of reproducing natural materials, especially marble and wood, with an astonishing degree of fidelity; while ensuring far superior characteristics of strength, sustainability and ease of maintenance, coupled with lower costs.

As for the ceramic bodies, the use of cutting-edge manufacturing technologies together with

high-quality raw materials make it possible to produce very thin and consequently much lighter tiles that are nonetheless extremely resistant and hard-wearing. These thin tiles and panels come in an extremely wide range of sizes, from very small through to extra large, and the fact that they can be installed over existing surfaces like a second skin makes them ideal for renovation projects."

He continued:

"While many porcelain tile collections are inspired by natural surfaces, the most prominent this year are the ones that reproduce the veins, gloss and color tones of high-quality marble and stone. In many cases the original stone surfaces are not simply reproduced but are entirely reinterpreted to create something new and utterly original."

According to Serri: "The second category of natural material widely used as inspiration for porcelain is wood in all its different varieties, without losing the warm look of the original material. Again, this is not limited to mimicry but includes creative and experimental interpretations. Examples include surfaces with a unique craquelé look inspired by ancient Japanese burning techniques and those with worn or antiqued yet utterly contemporary effects".

As for sizes, the large-format trend was dominated by ultra-thin, large-size panels, in many cases with surface effects inspired by resin, metals and fabrics. Also new, was the reintroduction of a smaller size tile such as the classic 20x20 cm; in many cases combined with larger modules, monochrome designs or decorations taken from original prototypes created by historic names in the world of architecture.



Above: ceramic tiles from the upmost decorative to the functional with on the left ceramics by **De Castelli** and on the right a Cotto d'Este kitchen from the Cement Project by Panaria Group.

Right-hand page: 'Goldfinger' (with tiles by Manifattura del Duca) at Milleluci - Italian Style Concept, the central show at Cersaie. It drew inspiration from the TV variety show conducted by Mina and Raffaella Carrà in 1974. The curators were Angelo Dall'Aglio and Davide Vercelli. They created an evocative voyage through luminous atmospheres which highlighted the material, textures and design of bathroom furnishings, balanced between classical forms and alternative styles. The exhibition, in a retro mood recalled the Seventies. The background of each installation was an image relating to a given film or work, to which the set itself referred.

Participating companies: Ceramiche Ricchetti, Artemide, Casalgrande Padana, Ceramica Flaminia, Gaudi'Decor, Cordivari, Danese, Del Conca, Emilgroup, Hom, Julia Marmi, Lea Ceramiche, Melogranoblu, Ragno, Rubinetterie 3M, Oikos, Tagina Ceramiche D'Arte, and Wall&Deco.