

TILE TODAY

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SIGMA IN AUSTRALIA

**COTTO TILES
IN FOCUS**

**ACADEMY TILES
NEW SHOWROOM**



TILE

TODAY

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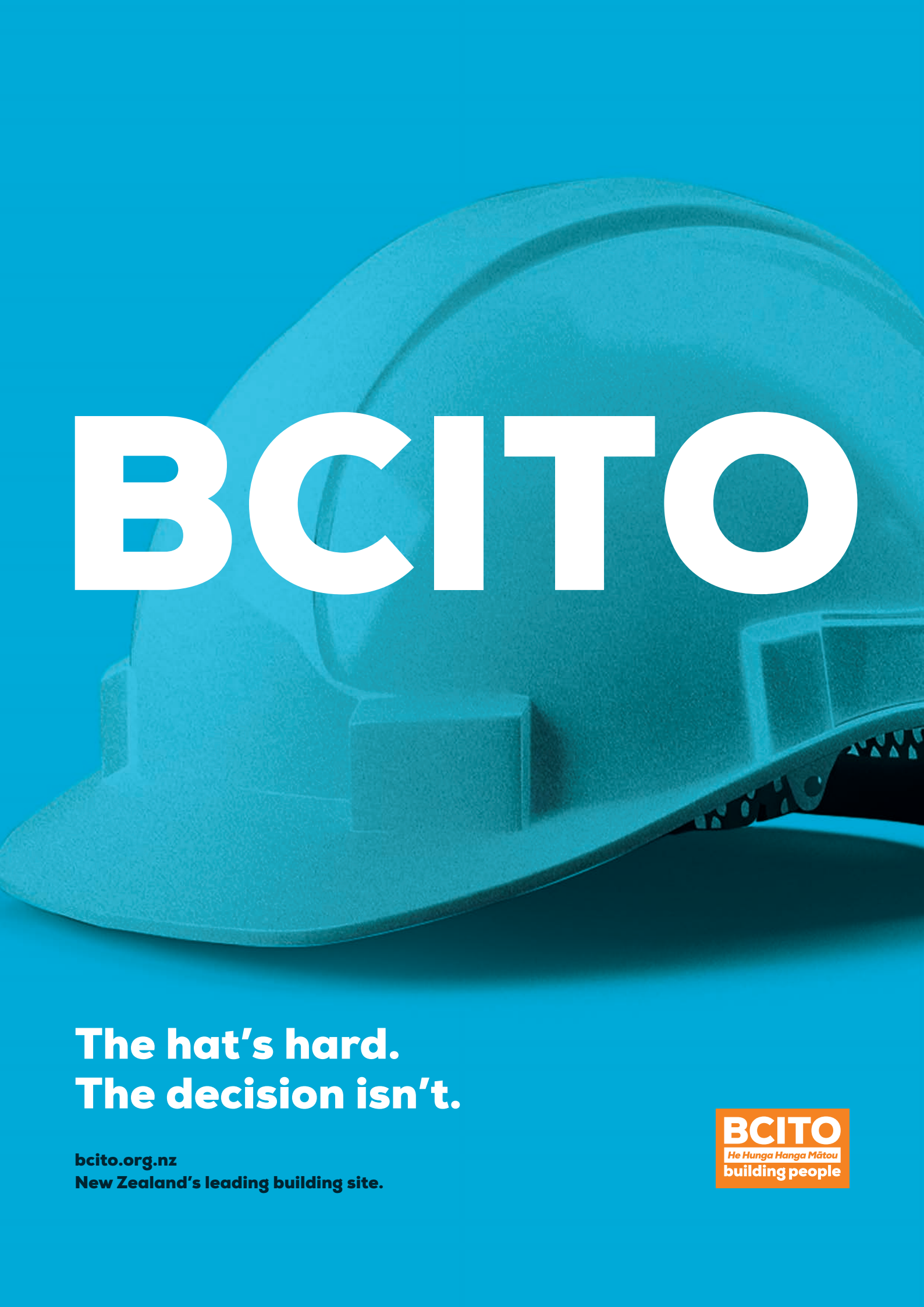
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When thinking about influential retail showrooms in the Australian tile industry, only a few come to mind. Anthony Zeaiter's Academy Tiles' new showroom in Sydney's Redfern (NSW) sets a high benchmark when it comes to displaying tiles and connecting with architects, designers and builders.

Developed as a creative hub, it represents a lot of Anthony's forward thinking. He told Tile Today: "Our showroom is more than just a retail space; it is an innovative community design hub. It has been conceived as a hospitality venue where architects and interior designers can host client presentations remotely from their studio space." The story starts on page 19.

In this issue, we also mark the history of how Sigma entered the Australian market. International Tiles Agency (ITA) has been pivotal in bringing it to installers, distributors and resellers. Thanks to ITA, the brand continues to grow its reputation as a top-notch tiling tool that many tile installers want to use.

Unlike blog posts that reference PR information, Google searches and captions on social media, Tile Today continues to produce magazine editions that provide context and analysis about the tile industry. Its online format means that it is easier to access and has more reach than just our subscriber base.

To keep up to date and not miss out, just click here:
<https://bit.ly/3dJ5EBc>

See you when we launch the Buying Guide special edition,



Betty Tanddo

FRONT COVER IMAGE

La Lampara from Antiche Fornaci D'Agostino have bright colours and sinuous lines that intertwine to create patterns that evoke the mysterious fishing lamp lights that shine in the dark sea of the Amalfi Coast. The collection represents a combination of tradition and creative design that recalls the magical atmosphere of local seascapes. It has a unique character and a charm that tells stories of the sea.



(l&r) Academy Tiles' sales manager Doug Jenkins and managing director Anthony Zeaiter



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Please note: Shade variation is an inherent feature of tile production. The Publisher is not liable for any discrepancy between images published in *Tile Today* and actual products.

PERFORMANCE



TILE TODAY BUYING GUIDES



COTTO

Natural-look tiles have a timeless appeal especially for tile aficionados. Cotto, a softer colour derived from Terracotta, is becoming a new classic.

Florence Stone Star Cotto Textured tiles (from Beaumont Tiles and National Ceramic Industries Australia)



The latest resurgence of authentic cotto tiles is not a fleeting design moment but rather part of a larger movement toward embracing natural materials, sustainability, and enduring style, according to John Melora at New York-based Merola Tile. He said:

“These tiles aren’t just materials — they’re storytellers. Their rich, earthy tones and rustic charm carry centuries of history, and yet, they’re effortlessly stepping into the spotlight of modern design trends in 2025. Whether it’s a sunlit Tuscan inspired or farmhouse style kitchen or a cozy bathroom retreat, cotto tiles have a way of grounding a space while adding undeniable warmth and character.

“Authentic cotto tiles are a perfect representation of creating beautiful and meaningful spaces — they embody history, craftsmanship, and a natural elegance that never goes out of style.”

Earthy, warm hues continue to dominate interior design palettes. From sandy neutrals and deep terracotta reds to subtle clay browns, cotto tiles bring a grounded, organic warmth to any space. Their versatile colour range complements rustic, traditional, industrial, and even minimalist interiors with ease.

The blend of rustic charm with contemporary minimalism also remains a popular aesthetic. Cotto tiles can seamlessly bridge this gap. Imagine a sleek, modern kitchen contrasted with textured, sunbaked tiles underfoot, or a minimalist bathroom accented by the warmth of handcrafted surfaces.

Cotto tiles have graced homes, villas, and palaces for centuries, standing strong against wear and tear. Their robust nature makes them ideal for high-traffic areas such as kitchens, entryways, and patios. Over time, they develop a soft patina that enhances their character, making them even more beautiful with age.

Made from natural clay and requiring minimal processing, cotto tiles are an eco-friendly choice for conscious consumers. Their production process minimises environmental impact, making them both sustainable and stylish.

From kitchens and bathrooms to outdoor patios, sunrooms, and garden paths, cotto tiles offer enormous versatility. Their natural slip-resistant texture makes them a safe option for both indoor and outdoor use, offering style and functionality in equal measure.

In a design landscape where trends often come and go, cotto tiles stand out as enduring symbols of craftsmanship and character. They are not just a stylistic choice but an investment in quality, heritage, and timeless elegance.

History

Originating from ancient clay-working traditions, cotto tiles became popular in the Mediterranean region, where the abundant natural clay made them a practical and accessible building material.

During the Middle Ages, cotto tiles continued to be popular in Europe, particularly in Italy. “Cotto” is an Italian word that literally means “cooked” or “baked.” This term refers to the process of making these tiles, where natural clay is shaped and then fired in a kiln at high temperatures to harden it, transforming the raw clay into a durable, solid material.

In the 20th century, cotto tiles saw a revival, particularly in Tuscany, Andalusia, and Provence because their natural, handcrafted look became highly valued in both historical restorations and new constructions aiming for a rustic or traditional aesthetic. These days, cotto tiles are a key feature in design trends that aim to imitate a Mediterranean style.

Manufacture

Cotto tiles are crafted from natural clay and shaped before being baked at high temperatures. This traditional firing process gives them their characteristic warm tones — ranging from sunbaked oranges and deep reds to muted browns and soft tans. Each tile carries a unique texture, subtle imperfections, and artisanal details that tell a story of craftsmanship.

Terracotta seen at Cersaie 2023 (Photo courtesy Beaumont Tiles)



A bathroom using tiles from Fragmenti Cotto



Unlike mass-produced ceramic tiles, cotto tiles possess a richness and organic quality that feels unmistakably genuine underfoot. They are not just surface coverings but timeless elements that speak of heritage, resilience, and artistry.

Cotto tiles are so compressed and dense that their natural unsealed surface does not need to be sealed, but most experts recommend a finishing topcoat of sealant for extra protection.

These tiles require a mild maintenance routine. Because of the heavier texture and density, cotto tiles tend to trap more dirt and require more maintenance to keep clean. Applying a coat of penetrating finish seal after installation can help to keep your cotto tiles in the best shape possible.

For its warm leather look, paired with its moderate maintenance and strength, cotto tiles offer a beautiful and durable surface for a wide range of design options. From traditional hacienda to desert modernism, cotto tiles are the ideal combination of a durable, modern tile made with natural materials that enhance the natural feeling of a space.

Applications

Cotto tiles have a significantly rougher surface than most terracotta tiles, making them ideal for indoor or outdoor uses.

For outdoor installations, cotto tile is the least likely to patina, or fade over time, even while installed in outdoor spaces. In outdoor applications, cotto tiles are suitable as flooring such as patio floors, outdoor kitchens or driveways, all under a covered area and not directly exposed to freezing conditions.

Their durability and natural slip-resistant texture make them ideal for outdoor patios, garden paths, and terraces.

Cotto tiles are less slippery when wet, so they are also recommended in wet areas such as shower floors and other

wet areas, but additional sealing is recommended while used in these installations.

In a world increasingly leaning toward sustainable choices and eco-conscious living, these tiles are more than a passing trend—they are a thoughtful investment in natural materials and timeless beauty.

Global tile shows

Cotto also featured strongly at this year's Cevisama in Spain. Overall, earthy tones have made a strong comeback, and cotto found a prominent place.

Tilemaker Peronda Francisco Segarra presented Nonna, which includes two decorative options with green and black olambrillas. It is a versatile tile, with an "All in One" finish, meaning it is suited for a wide range of uses.

Decocer showed its Orion collection that features Cotto tiles in a star shape.

Cotto was also a key player in Cersaie 2024. ABK Group's 14 Ora Italiana brand featured Cotto alongside Clay, Concrete, Sand colours. Cir used urban bricks as the inspiration for the Porta Nuova project. The colour palette begins with Bianco, moving to Cotto, the retro Oliva green and the neutral notes of Perla.

We'll find out later this year how popular Cotto will be in the North American market, but for the Coverings show in 2024, it played a major role. In fact, they reached a new level at Coverings. This included the standard square and rectangular floor tiles, but there were also interlocking star shapes, crosses, hexagons, and other interlocking pieces. The dominant colourways ranged from deep burnt orange through to very pale cotto. The lighter hues are most in vogue for the present day. ■

Sources: Melora Tile and Clay Imports

Scala Cotto from Merola Tile in Brooklyn New York, USA



Brick Cotto from International MTC





Terracotta seen at Cersaie 2023 (Photo courtesy Beaumont Tiles)



Cucina Cotto from the Ecologica range (Austile Imports)

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Sigma at Cersaie 2023

Sigma in Australia: A journey of innovation and timeless quality

The growth of the Sigma brand in Australia cannot be told without also telling the story of International Tiles Agency (ITA), a global consultancy for companies primarily in the ceramics industry.

With over 42 years of experience, ITA distinguishes itself by its foresight into markets and the continuous search for new opportunities. ITA was the first company to import manual tile cutters from Sigma into Australia. This led to a highly successful partnership between Sigma and ITA.

ITA was established in 1982 by Osvaldo Spadoni who had decided to set up his own business to export Italian ceramics to Australia. Prior

to this, he had already worked for a decade as a sales manager for Ceramica Artistica San Giuseppe SpA.

Spadoni was soon joined by his wife Francesca Bertolini, who managed the administrative side of the business. Back then, he was appointed as agent for a number of major ceramic companies operating in Sassuolo, Italy. This meant he could bring tiles to Australia — back when it was still considered a “new world” market. The demand generated by post-war European immigrants — from 1946 to 1980 — for ceramic products exclusively made in Italy meant that Australia developed into a very good market for ITA.

Alongside food and wine that reminded them of their ancestral homelands, many immigrants wanted tiles to pave their homes. This contributed to the growth of what was then a dynamic sector in construction and design.

During the first few trips to Australia, Spadoni visited customers using “city maps bound in large books that were found in cars” as he described it. Obviously, it was well before smartphone apps and GPS. In an earlier interview, he said:

“We looked for the addresses of customers who had contacted the various ceramics suppliers at the [Cersaie] fair. Business was often done after working hours, at



INTERNATIONAL TILES AGENCY



From left: Lorenzo Braglia, Osvaldo Spadoni, Davide Braglia and Chiara Binini

the homes of installers, or rather of those who were evolving to become retailers or distributors of ceramic tiles. Ceramic floors were becoming an essential element in Australian homes, particularly in the homes of Australians who were born in Italy."

Initially ITA focused on representing Italian ceramic manufacturers, and the company's mission was to target foreign markets, promoting and exporting Italian excellence in ceramics.

Over the years, ITA has been part of several prestigious projects around Australia including QV1 Plaza in Perth (WA), Galleria shopping centre in Morley (WA), a development designed by architect Harry Seidler (50 floors), Vibe Hotel and Dominion Apartments on Canberra, Canberra Airport, and Crown Casino complex (including Crown Tower) and many others. More recently, it has been involved in The Gladstone boutique apartments in South Melbourne through its work with Eterno Ivica pedestals.

By the end of the eighties,

ITA gained success through its involvement in supplying products for projects throughout South East Asia. In the nineties, ITA began exporting Italian marble and granite to Australia, New Zealand and Asia. In addition to Australia, other key markets for ITA include New Zealand, USA, Taiwan and Hong Kong.

These days, the focus for ITA has moved from purely ceramics to installation tools and cutting systems, as well as selected Italian stones. The business invests largely in educating and informing its markets regarding the Italian-made quality of the suppliers it represents, through field visits around the world and constant research for innovative, high performance solutions. After-sales service and support is fundamental for ITA, and has helped to strengthen and maintain its business-to-business relationships. Over the years ITA has gained the trust of its professional customers and developed a high degree of credibility.

Today ITA's core team includes

Spadoni as founder and managing director, Lorenzo Braglia who is CEO, Davide Braglia who works in business development and brand manager Chiara Binini.

Sigma in Australia

For tilers, Sigma is highly regarded for the high quality of its tiling tools and (handling) equipment. According to Lorenzo Braglia, Sigma's history in Australia began soon after European immigrants began connecting with ceramic manufacturers from the Sassuolo district in Italy to import tiles for their homes. "And since tiles require tile cutters, the first requests for these types of tools began to emerge," he explains.

"The first person to introduce Sigma to Australia was the late Graziano Fontana. By the early eighties, he passed the baton to Salvatore D'Angelo and Osvaldo Spadoni, who were tile agents at the time. Special mention also goes to Emilio Giovanardi, who, alongside these pioneers, believed in the quality they recognised in



INTERNATIONAL TILES AGENCY

Sigma, laying the foundation for its success in the Australian market."

Throughout its history, Sigma has continued to innovate and bring leading edge solutions to the Australian tile market. The company said:

"While other brands may try to imitate the aesthetics and features of our products, the real difference lies in the fact that Sigma works closely with industry professionals to constantly improve. It is not just a brand selling products, it is a trusted partner that listens, develops, and evolves alongside those who use its tools daily."

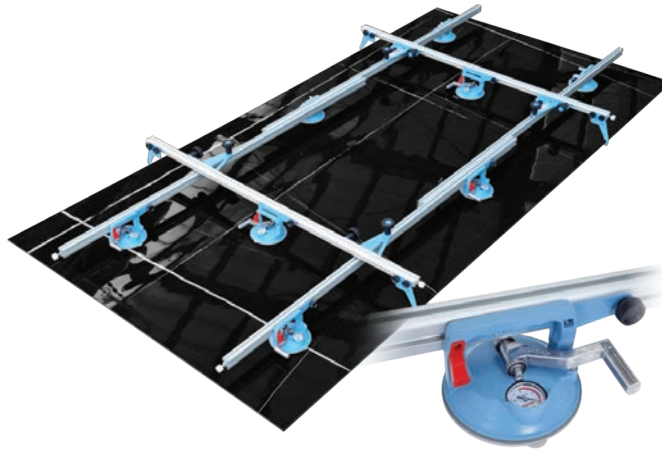
Since 1964, Sigma Italia has been synonymous with excellence in tiling tools, offering products designed to ensure precision, reliability, and durability. Sigma tile cutters, such as the Series 4 "NEX" push models and "UP" pull models, stand out for their exceptional accuracy and ease of use. They are ideal for both seasoned professionals and people new to tiling. The inventive design delivers clean, sharp cuts on any type of material and thickness, including the most challenging tiles.

With a keen eye for future trends, Sigma anticipated the arrival of large-format slabs long before they became popular. Today, these slabs are a cornerstone in architecture and design, but require increasingly high-performance tools for installation. As a result Sigma offers a winning combination of the KeraCut and KeraLift systems.

KeraCut ensures straight and precise cuts on large slabs, thanks to its highly accurate sliding guides. It is lightweight, modular, and easy to assemble, making it ideal for tackling even the most complex jobs with flawless results.

KeraLift is an advanced solution for handling giant slabs. Equipped with adjustable suction cups and an ergonomic structure, it allows tiles to be lifted and positioned safely and efficiently, reducing physical strain and the risk of damage.

Used together, KeraCut and



KERA LIFT Weight: 22.5kg (Lightest in the Lifter Pro category). New PRO GRIP suction cups - the vacuum gauge signals the vacuum level inside the suction cup at all times. Lifts up to 150kg



64S Vinyl tile cutting kit (LVT/SPC) Mounted on the Series 4 tile cutter with NEX handle, it allows deep engraving of vinyl tiles. Load capacity 150 kg



ERGO LIFT For handling and laying of tiles from 60x60cm up to 180x80cm
Ideal for 2cm and 3cm thick outdoor porcelain pavers
Load capacity 150 kg



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KeraLift provide the ideal combo for cutting and installing large formats, ensuring precision and safety at every stage.

In 2025, among the latest developments from Sigma include the vibrating electric tile beater, essential for achieving a bubble-free, perfectly adhered installation, along with the Ergo-Lift system designed to simplify handling heavy tiles while maintaining correct posture.

Additionally, every Sigma component is replaceable, and spare parts are available even for historic models like the legendary 4A.

Sigma Modular System

As a company, Sigma believes genuine innovation comes from ongoing dialogue with field professionals. "That's why we don't just sell products, we are committed to creating solutions that enhance the lives of professionals," it said.

The company also continues to drive change in the industry with the Sigma Modular System, developed to revolutionise the way professionals work. This system transforms a common tool, like the angle grinder (FLEX), into a multifunctional machine capable of cutting, bevelling, and polishing with unprecedented precision. It said:

"Our goal is not only to improve performance but also to reduce the industry's environmental impact. Thanks to smart design, Sigma accessories seamlessly integrate with grinders already in professionals' toolkits, eliminating the need for built-in motors. This approach boosts efficiency, cuts costs, and reduces environmental impact. In case of a fault, replacing just the grinder avoids the need for entirely new units — that means less waste, fewer electronics to dispose of, and significant savings for our customers."

The Sigma Community

Being a Sigma professional means not only owning a tool but also



Sigma tools on display at Cersaie 2023



Sigma's non-slip Magnetic Mat non-slip is for mosaic cutting, and compatible with all Series 4 models Sigma



INTERNATIONAL TILES AGENCY

being part of a community of experts committed to excellence. Worldwide, tilers and dealers who choose Sigma not only invest in high-quality tools but also join a tradition that has lasted 60 years. The company said:

"Our community consists of people who share ideas, solutions, and tips to make their work easier, more precise, and more productive."

Sigma and ITA

Lorenzo and Davide Braglia — who have taken over from Osvaldo Spadoni and are now the driving force behind ITA — continue to organise roadshows across Australia. They have hosted in-store demonstrations, giving tilers the chance to test Sigma's new Large Format Tools (LFT). These events foster direct dialogue with professionals, allowing Sigma to showcase the benefits of its tools and gather valuable feedback for continuous improvement.

A Thank You to Our Partners and All Tilers – from ITA

We would like to thank all our partners, from small tile shops to large distributors, who support Sigma across Australia. You have our respect and gratitude. Every single interaction helps us improve and grow together.

A special thank you goes to all the tilers who rely on Sigma every day on job sites to achieve perfect results. These professionals proudly carry our tools on their backs or in their UTEs as they walk the streets of Sydney, Melbourne, and every other city and town in Australia, knowing their best friend will never let them down.

Sigma is here to support you with the most innovative and reliable tools on the market. Contact your trusted distributor today to discover the solutions that will make your work easier and more precise, and continue to be part of our Sigma community. ■



KERA FLEX uses the KERA CUT guide for sawn cutting of ceramic materials with thickness of up to 25mm. KERA-FLEX is compatible with any grinder featuring an M14 attachment
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New product maestro

Anthony Zeaiter, managing director at Academy Tiles holds a unique place in the tile industry. He helps to set benchmarks in terms of what is possible and wants to see the sector continue to evolve.

It's not often that something feels genuinely new in the supply and merchandising of ceramic tiles in Australia. The Academy Tiles showroom in the inner Sydney suburb of Redfern ticks many boxes when it comes to establishing an original concept of what a tile showroom can be. As Anthony explains to Tile Today:

"Our showroom is more than just a retail space; it is an innovative community design hub. It has been conceived as a hospitality venue where architects and interior designers can host client presentations remotely from their studio space."

It's an approach that suits the products featured at Academy Tiles. These are designer tiles which are not only high-quality and aesthetically inspiring, but also offer superior technical performance. They can add an appealing and inspirational element to any project space.

But Academy Tiles also has a more broad-based approach. "That said, we also display and sell a huge range of complementary architectural body tiles to satisfy all floor and wall tiling requirements," Anthony explains.

This development was based on a long history, and a thorough understanding of the needs of both direct customers and designers.

Anthony talks about how the new showroom came about. He said:

"We have operated from the North Shore for 46 years and it was time to finally cross the bridge and create an inspiring space which more accurately reflects our reputation and abilities. A platform where we will be able to build more meaningful and creative relationships, in the heart of Sydney's A&D [architecture and design] community."

Exterior

Foot-traffic is half the task of any city-based tile retailer, and Anthony made sure the outlet would grab the attention — and imagination — of potential customers.

"We wanted a space which captures the attention of those passing by, so our new 600m² showroom has extensive street frontage. Here we offer a variety of custom interchangeable surface displays combined with highly adaptive creative zones designed for workshoping material selections with designers and their clients in a relaxed, inspirational environment.

"In this space we showcase a wide variety of materials displayed in vertical and horizontal formats balanced with generous breakout

spaces combining to provide a passive and organised retail experience.

"Fully equipped with audio/visual and bar facilities, our showroom aims to take customer service to a new level."

The design process

Anthony worked with architect Philip Chia of The Uncarved Block to implement his vision for the showroom. Philip specialises in hospitality and retail spaces. They have worked on a number of prominent projects together including the food court at Melbourne Central and The Galleries Victoria food hall. Anthony said:

"The idea was to create something communal where architects and designers can be comfortable to visit with their clients, to use the space as their own, and bringing along the other architectural finishes and materials that they're working on for a project, in a space filled with Academy Tiles' designer products. Our hospitality approach is focussed on accommodating, cooperating and collaborating in a venue with facilities for them to really enjoy make the most of the space."

(The Melbourne Central food court featured on the cover of Tile Today





#74 in 2012 and in the issue of the magazine. See the link.)
<https://www.academytiles.com.au/images/news/Tile%20Today%20issue%2074.pdf>

Trust

While the showroom illustrates Anthony's deep connection to architects and designers, it goes beyond the relatable display of high-end products. For Anthony, it's just as much about relationships. He said:

"It's being authentic and reliable, offering your guidance and expertise in our products, and it's about just genuinely sharing your knowledge and passion with clients who are aspiring to use interesting and innovative materials.

"As I always say to my sales reps, we are known for being creative, but first and foremost, we need to be trustworthy and conscientious.

"In terms of product, anyone can go to Italy or Japan or wherever and source something. That's true.

"But you need to back that up with the integrity, honesty, and the wealth of knowledge that we've accumulated for over 46 years now. And you need to share that in your daily interactions and advice you give regarding the realistic possibilities with our various materials. It's not about saying what someone wants to hear.

"I was really proud when another publication surveyed architects

and designers about trust. For the three years they did that survey, we came out on top as Australia's most trusted tile brand ... I told my team that everyone knows Academy Tiles as inspiring and decorative, but trust means more to me. In every interaction you have to be able to look yourself in the eye."

Made in Japan

Academy Tiles is also known as the largest importer of Japanese mosaics and tiles in Australia and New Zealand. It has a long-standing relationship with Nagoya Mosaic-Tile Co that began almost 16 years ago. (Nagoya itself was founded in 1938.) Anthony has been very effective managing exclusivity and growth for its products. He explains:

"It started with one collection with us showing catalogues and folders to different architects and designers in Sydney at the time, we were only in Sydney back then. Once you start delivering, and converting interest into results, your overseas partners become confident that when they have something new, they know that Academy Tiles will be a successful medium for them to get their products into our market. And they're not going to jeopardise that if we keep growing with them and respecting them.

"For the first few years of our relationship, we'd simply promote and sell what they presented to

us. But over the last 10 years, we've constantly designed and created our own products with them. Now they're manufacturing them for us exclusively to sell in Australia and New Zealand. And they're really beautiful ... we're creating materials that are really sought after in the Australian and New Zealand market.

"For us, it's a mutual relationship. These people are genuine friends now.

"We are proud of the loyal and mutually beneficial relationship we have developed, to the point that we are now their largest customer worldwide."

Product development

Not surprisingly, Anthony finds the product development work with Nagoya Mosaic-Tile Co the most exciting element of his job. He learnt a valuable lesson from his uncle (Michael Zeaiter) who originally purchased a small tile shop in Thornleigh, in Sydney's North-West. (Anthony's late father Joe Zeaiter, an accountant, also bought into the business. Anthony is now the sole owner.) He said:

"On my first trip to Cersaie in 2001, he said to me, 'Anthony, when you visit the factories, it's one thing to have a look at what they present to you, in their catalogues and showrooms, but try to have a look in their marketing departments or in their laboratories, and you'll see all the other products







or materials that they're considering or think might be successful'. And I've been doing that for over 20 years. The number of times I've walked in and pulled out a test product and said, 'Hold on, what's this?' This would be amazing in our market. I now do that every time I go to Italy and Japan.

"We've had some really successful collections on the back of that. And it's quite funny because sometimes they'll look at you and say, 'Really, you think that will be popular?' And I say, 'Absolutely it will be!'

"It's at the point now where, for the last few years in particular, I've seen many other Australian importers promoting Japanese-inspired tiles produced in China. They're promoting Japanese inspired, not Japanese made and it's just not the same.

"There's also a number of other Australians now going to Japan too. We've really helped create a demand for Japanese products, and we're proud of that."

Continuous change

Anthony's passion for new and inspiring tile products started when he was a primary schooler in his uncle and father's store when he helped to do stocktake in the warehouse. He said:

"Sitting with my uncle on a pallet and being driven up and down the aisles on a forklift counting stock. It felt exciting because I was pressing buttons on a calculator. I was only eight years old!"

By the time Anthony became a young adult, he briefly wanted to explore a different career pathway before seeing the benefits of owning your own business and directly influencing the way it is managed.

"I gained a commerce degree [majoring in marketing] at Macquarie University, then started doing work experience at a leading PR agency at the time in the city [Hill & Knowlton]. Whilst doing that, they offered me a full-time job which I enjoyed for a couple of years. Then I realised that my success was dependent on my client's success, whereas I had an opportunity to go back into the tile business when my father and uncle re-approached me. I appreciated that I could apply anything I'd learned and could help mould the business and our future directions.

"I became really passionate about that. And I never took it for granted ever again from that point.

"But the thing I love most that keeps me most passionate and enthusiastic is seeing and developing

new products. I adore that side of the business."

It would be highly inaccurate to describe Anthony and Academy Tiles as victims of change. He readily admits that he doesn't know everything, something that is simultaneously smart and realistic. He tells Tile Today:

"No one knows everything, it keeps evolving. This is the nature of business.

"From my experience over the past 25 years, I have learned the benefit of focusing on our own strengths and plans for growth, rather than being distracted and consumed by what others are doing in the market. I now understand that we cannot do and be everything in our industry for everyone. Instead, we are better off dedicating our energy and efforts to what we do best and then growing from that space."

This is one way in which the tile industry is somewhat unique. While other industries frequently benefit from "outsiders" with fresh ideas, in tile the best ideas usually come from the supreme insiders – like Anthony – who have a generational understanding of the industry, and combine that with a knowledge of market changes to create new opportunities. ■



Laticrete 3701 Fortified Mortar Bed

The 3701 Fortified Mortar Bed is a polymer fortified blend of carefully selected polymers, Portland cement and graded aggregates for use in renders and screeds. It can be used to achieve a feather finish or up to 50mm in height.

This Fortified Mortar Bed (FMB) from Laticrete does not require the use of latex admixture, and tilers only need to mix with water to produce mortars with superior compressive strength and especially suitable for extra heavy-duty streetscape installations.

It exceeds ASTM C270 requirements and can be used as a scratch or finish coat in place of standard or normal mortars. The product is also pumpable for large scale veneer projects. Suitable for the following substrates:

- Ceramic tile and stone
- Cement terrazzo
- Cement backer board (Consult the cement backer board manufacturer for specific installation recommendations and to verify acceptability for exterior use.)
- Concrete
- Concrete block
- Cement mortar beds
- Cement plaster
- Brick and concrete masonry
- Exterior glue plywood (Interior use only with wire reinforcing)

Unless otherwise stated in this article, Laticrete technical data sheets and guidelines, all work should be in accordance with AS3958–2023.

Note: Movement joints shall be provided through all bedding and tile work from all dynamic construction or movement joints in the substrate. Follow Australian Standard requirements for movement joints in AS3958 or TCNA detail EJ-171 “Movement Joints – Vertical & Horizontal”. Do not cover movement joints with adhesive.

When using wet plaster type mixes for wall renders or levelling bed application to horizontal surfaces, do not apply greater than 15mm per lift after an initial first coat of 12mm. Scratch and allow to dry between lifts or coats.

Where bonded semi-dry mortar beds are greater than 50mm in thickness, install wire mesh as outlined in the Unbonded Mortar Bed



section in the link to the Technical Data Sheet (TDS) below. Alternatively, install in multiple layers less than 50mm thick. Scratch and allow to dry between layers. Slurry bond coats are required between layers.

Do not allow slurry bond coats to skin or dry out; re-apply fresh slurry bond coat over skinned or dry slurry bond coat before applying fresh mortar. Do not apply slurry bond coats to areas that are not going to be immediately covered. See TDS 1009 for more information.

Preparation

All surfaces should be between 4°C and 32°C and structurally sound, clean and free of all laitance, dirt, oil, grease, loose peeling paint, concrete sealers, curing compounds or anything that may inhibit bond. Dry, dusty concrete slabs or masonry should be dampened and excess water swept off. Installation may be made on a damp surface.

Simply mix with water. For best results semi-dry mixes are best when mixed in a forced blade, static drum type mixer. Wetter, plaster type mixes are best when mixed in a rotating drum mixer. Do not mix semi-dry mixes in a rotating drum mixer. Laticrete's FMB can be used for the following applications:

- Interior and exterior
- Wet and dry
- Bonded and non-bonded thick bed mortar

- Conventional thick bed mortar
- Concrete repairs.

Limitations

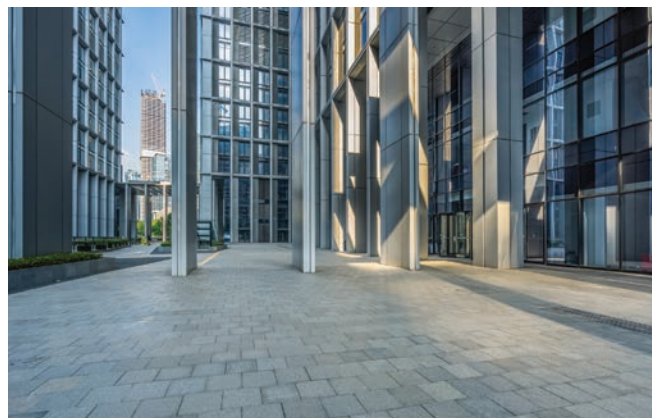
- Use LATAPOXY® 300 Adhesive for installing green marble or water sensitive stone, agglomerates or tile.
- Use white adhesive for installing white or light-coloured marble or stone.
- Not for use over expansion joints or structural movement cracks.
- Adhesives/mastics, mortars and grouts for ceramic tile, pavers, brick and stone are not replacements for waterproof membranes. When a waterproof membrane is required, use a Laticrete Waterproof Membrane.

Note: Surfaces must be structurally sound, stable and rigid enough to support ceramic/stone tile, thin brick and similar finishes. Substrate deflection under all live, dead and impact loads, including concentrated loads, must not exceed L/360 for thin bed ceramic tile/brick installations or L/720 for thin bed stone installations where L = span length.

(See TDS1011 for more details.)

Cautions

- During cold weather, protect finished work from traffic until fully cured.
- Contains Portland cement and silica sand. May irritate eyes and



Laticrete 3701 Fortified Mortar Bed is suitable for extra heavy-duty streetscape installations

skin. Avoid contact with eyes or prolonged contact with skin. In case of contact, flush thoroughly with water. Use rubber gloves and eye protection when handling product.

- Do not take internally. Silica sand may cause cancer or serious lung problems.
- Avoid breathing dust. Wear an approved respirator in dusty areas.

- Efflorescence is a normal condition of Portland cement. Contact LATICRETE for information on reducing the effects of efflorescence.

- Keep out of reach of children.

Overall, Laticrete's FMB is designed to be economical and saves time and money for users. It is supplied in a 20kg bag or 56 bags per pallet, and is grey in colour.

For more information, go the product's Technical Data Sheet (TDS) here:

<https://cdn-global.laticrete.com/-/media/project/laticrete-international/australia/product-documents/pds/ds-1000-1124-3701-fmb.pdf>

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- Tile characteristics
- Tile joints
- Tile lippage and surface flatness
- Care and maintenance

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Understanding Tiles and Tiling Advanced Training Course

Course content

- Tile installation
- Tile grouting and movement joints
- Gradient falls in wet area floors
- Waterproofing
- Slip resistance
- Problem solving

[Click to view](#)

Membership benefit turns into learning opportunity

The new online training courses from the Australian Tile Council address the ongoing need for relevant, updated information and education in the industry

Tile Today recently spoke to two participants of the ATC's newly launched online courses. They praised the digital platform and the relevance of the information for anyone interested in tiling or currently working with tiles.

Giovanna Toldi, managing director at Warmset, wanted to understand more about the world of tiling because her business provides underfloor heating and thus works very closely with tilers. Giovanna was also interested in the differences between how Italian and Australian tilers approach their tiling work. She told Tile Today:

"I recognised that I needed to understand more about the world of tiles and the problems that tilers may have when using my product while they are doing their part of the job. To someone who is not in the tiling business, a tile is a tile, but through the course I learned that there's many different types of tiles, and there's many different considerations. So for me, it was a way to bridge a

gap with a different trade with which I have to collaborate really closely. And it often avoids any issues later in the construction project."

Giovanna's awareness that she needed to know more about how tilers led her to do an online search for tiling courses and came across the Australian Tiling Council website. She explains:

"I became a member and saw that they had the two online courses that are included with your membership. I thought that's great value.

"So that's how I learned about the course. In my research, I couldn't find anything specific enough. There's a lot of videos on YouTube on tiling, but I couldn't find anything that would take you from the very beginning, and across a lot of topics. It talks about the quality, sourcing, glazing, the non-glazing, all those things. I'm not trying to become a tiler, but it really gave me a higher appreciation for the job of a tiler."

Giovanna has produced online courses in her previous professional

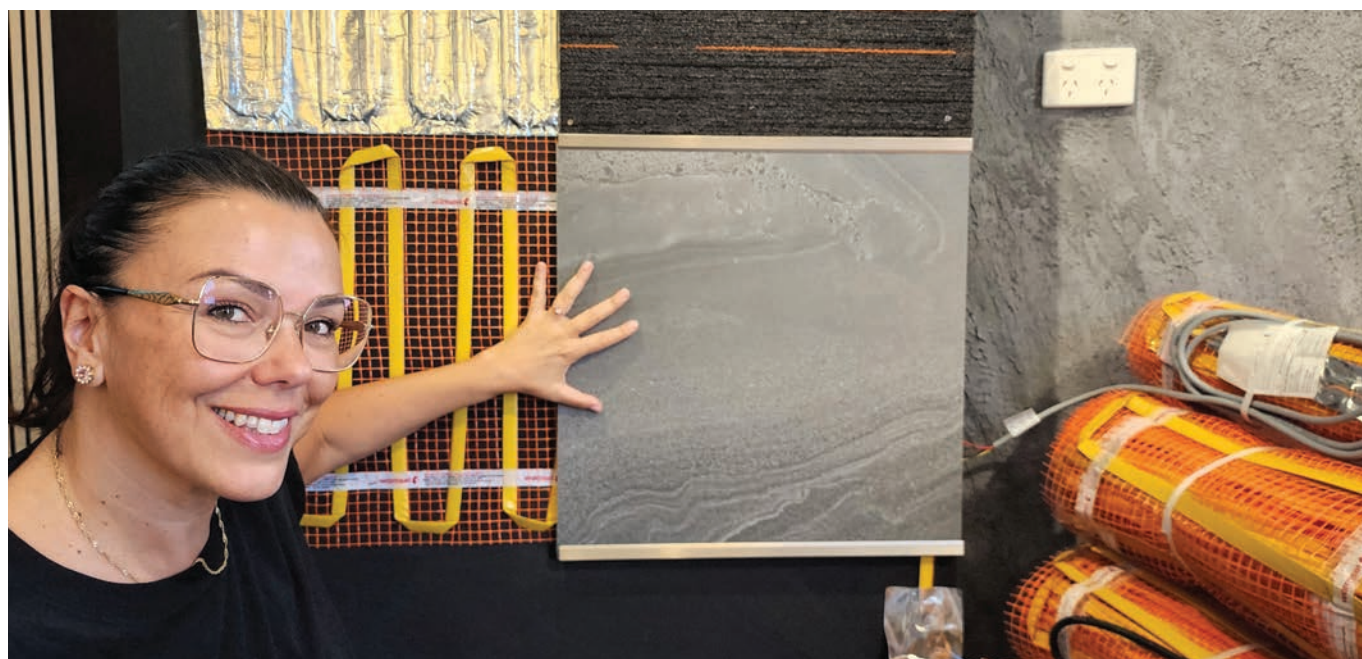
experience as a marketer, so she is uniquely positioned to point out the most useful aspects of the ATC course. She said:

"I thought it was a really well-structured course. Sometimes when you sign up for these courses, you come out of it thinking that it was a bit of a waste of time.

"But coming in as a new person into the tiling industry, I thought the course was really comprehensive as a sort of base level, starting point. What I liked was how the curriculum is well developed. The speaker, how he spoke, was a little bit fast for me [as Italian is my first language], but I thought he was good. I really like the fact that you had to take a test, although it was a simple test, to progress to the next chapter of the course.

"On a couple of occasions, I didn't pass the test, so I had to go back to find the information, which is a great way of learning."

Based on her positive experience, Giovanna believes the course is a very



Giovanna Toldi with the Warmset underfloor heating product

Futura SPECTRUM

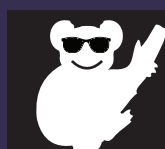
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reasonable investment in terms of money and time.

"As a starting base, I think anyone who is interested in the world of tiling for whatever reason, should really use it as a platform to start with the right foot. So that you don't acquire the wrong information from other people."

Giovanna believes there should be structure when it comes to providing knowledge about tiles and tiling. She said:

"I think the course is a really inexpensive way to do it. I would highly recommend it to tilers, especially those new to the industry, people who are just learning.

"I also recommend it to other trades that work with tilers. Because one thing that I have observed working in construction industry, one of the biggest problems that I see is the disconnection between different trades.

"They tend to think, 'I'm just the tiler. I'm only going to do this. I'm just electrician. I'm only going to do that.' But if they understood what others do, I think that would be good for the industry."

It makes sense to take a more inclusive approach with Giovanna's type of business. Warmset Australia is the exclusive importer of Italian made underfloor heating system products in Australia and New Zealand. It is part of Be Well Group. As Giovanna explains it:

"Warmset is an Italian brand that has been exported globally from Italy by a company called Filmcutter that's been around for around 40 years. I launched the business in South Australia first because I needed to test the market. And now that we have ended 18 months of commercial testing and getting things right like working with tilers. I found that a lot of tilers in Australia don't have any experience with tiling on top of underfloor heating.

"It's still very new, which is something that I didn't know, because in Europe, underfloor heating is very common. In the last 10 years, pretty much any new building in Europe would have underfloor heating.

"Now in 2025, I'm starting to branch into Victoria, and New South Wales. So it's still a new business, but in SA, we now work with some of the best builders and architects in that state, so I'm really happy with that.

"It's been a bit of a challenge to get architects and builders to try something new, but we managed to



Antoni Surjan is a business owner and tiling teacher

do that, and we have some really good projects. There's a luxury building that's been built on East Terrace, which is a 33, 34 apartment building. All the bathrooms have my product, so some milestones have been achieved."

Antoni Surjan

As a business owner and tiling teacher, Antoni said it is vital to keep up with the continuous changes in the industry. This includes standards as well as new materials and products that are being released. He believes there is not one place where all this information can be easily found unless you contact different suppliers. He said:

"That is part of the reason why I did the course. The way I found out about it was on the Tiling Council website. I haven't been a member for that long, but I have been a tiler for about 20 years."

Antoni's initiative to seek knowledge led him to do both the beginners and advanced courses offered by the ATC. He said:

"One of most useful things I found was the different Australian Standards, if they had changed, and about the different tolerances for tilers.

"To give you an example, having your shower falls, how much fall we need to go into the shower for the water to drain. It also had information about joints with tiles, cleaning methods, different substrates that we can tile on. It included quite a range of things, it was quite informative."

The presentation of the courses through online videos also suited

Antoni. He thought the questions at the end of each one was an effective way to learn the information. He explains:

"If you get a question wrong, then you've got to redo it. They don't give you the answer. If you've got it wrong, you must find it. Which is good because if you do get it wrong, then it makes you search for it again."

The time it takes to complete the courses does not keep you away from your daily work schedule. Antoni said:

"It's not that long so it's not like you're there for a day listening to everything. For how long the actual presentation is, the amount of content they have is quite good."

After completing the courses, Antoni sees an opportunity for the ATC to potentially play a role in closing the gap between the information tilers are using on the job and changes to the standards, as an example.

"If we don't search for it ourselves, we can't find it easily," he said. "I know a lot of tilers who've been doing for longer than me and they don't know half the things I've learned. They're still basing it on what they learned 30 years ago."

"A lot of the things I was getting told when I was younger in this industry, I ended up finding out weren't right."

"I learned a lot from speaking to my suppliers about products and what works with this, what works with that. Even with movement joints as there's so much that people don't know."

"Teaching students, they don't have a lot of platforms to go to, to get the right information. So when the Australian Standards change, I think tilers should be notified and sent links as to where they can go to find it"

But he concedes it might be impossible to reach out to working tilers around the country informing them of changes to building standards.

"The Australian Tile Council is the main association for the industry. I know this is probably something that's not possible, but I believe if you become a tiler, say when you finish your apprenticeship, you should automatically have to become a member. If this does occur, then the Tile Council can contact them about the changes that happen."

In addition to being the owner of North Harbour Tiling in Willoughby



Giovanna at one of Warmset's SA-based resellers, Rawsons Appliances

(NSW) trading as OAK Bathrooms, Antoni teaches tiling at two private colleges. There are also local students, but the majority come from overseas. Antoni explains:

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"I teach mainly international students who are coming here to learn the trade as part of their visa conditions. Then they can get into the tiling trade. There's a massive shortage."

Antoni also wants to eventually work within TAFE system and influence some of the information currently being taught. In the meantime, he is busy with his own business and told Tile Today about his history in the industry.

"I did my apprenticeship almost 16 years ago. I started off just doing my own tiling jobs here and there. Then I got my waterproofing certificate. I ended up getting my waterproofing licence, so I can just do anything on top of waterproofing. Then I got my KBL [kitchen bathroom laundry] licence. I concentrated on bathroom renovations and that's what I'm focused on now."

A key insight that both Giovanna and Antoni provided after doing these courses is the need for relevant, accurate



Antoni (centre) at work with some of his international students

updated information. The way the courses are easily accessible online acknowledges the way most people

receive their information in 2025. The courses are a useful incentive to be a member of the ATC today. ■

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News



Tile Today Digital is updated weekly to provide the latest breaking news in the tile industry. That includes trends, companies, raw material prices, major projects, and changes in design and manufacturing.

Events



Tile Today Digital offers extensive coverage of major industry events, worldwide such as Cersaie in Italy, Cevisama in Spain, and Coverings in the USA.

Products



Tile Today Digital tracks the latest products, including tools, new tile designs, adhesives, waterproofing and grouts. Our buying guides feature product comparisons, helping tilers make better decisions.

Holmesglen TAFE encourages emerging talent

Amber McLean is the latest top tiling student from Holmesglen TAFE. She is looking to further her experience in the industry.

Several tiling apprentices were recognised for their exceptional skills in wall and floor tiling in a ceremony that took place in late 2024. Their success can be attributed to a combination of technical proficiency, dedication, and professional approach to their craft, according to Frank Vanzella, a teacher for Trowel Trades at Melbourne's Holmesglen TAFE. He told Tile Today:

"Amber McLean was awarded the Wall & Floor Tiling Apprentice of the Year by Holmesglen Institute. Amber's achievement reflects her commitment to excellence in tiling demonstrate outstanding technical skills, a strong work ethic, and a passion for the trade."

Amber said she was interested in the tiling course because she wanted to work "hands on" in a creative way and do a trade.

"I wanted to do something that was really satisfying when I walked away and more artistic. That's what I really love, and I love colours as well. It combined everything that I enjoy into one thing and that's how I decided to get into tiling."

The course at TAFE had given her the chance to gain more knowledge in other types of tiles. She said:

"It was good to be able to come to TAFE and learn everything that I don't learn at work where I mostly did tessellated tiles. At TAFE, I learnt about other tiles for bathrooms and showers. It was great to be able to work with different tiles and meeting new people who are doing the same things as me. It was fun, it was a good time."

As a result of working with tessellated tiles, Amber has done a lot of installations for verandas as well as some outdoor projects with stone pavers. Now she is interested in interior spaces such as bathrooms.

At the time of speaking with Tile Today, Amber had been working for Regeneration Tiles for three years. She was looking for another workplace as the business owners were retiring. ■



(From left) Frank Vanzella (Holmesglen TAFE), Amber McLean, George Elkhouri (SIKA), Corey Downes, Chris Stenhouse & Daniel Minos (Laticrete)



(l&r) Hanna Smithson (first year apprentice winner) with Debora De Amicis (Holmesglen TAFE)



(l&r) Sergio De Stafani (second year apprentice winner) with Debora De Amicis (Holmesglen TAFE)



Liz Jansz, Dean - Building, Construction, Design and Electrotechnology at Holmesglen



Amber McLean, Holmesglen's Wall & Floor Tiling Apprentice of the Year

Best tile range at TISE 2025

MSI's Exotika porcelain tile collection wins the top tile award at The International Surface Event (TISE) 2025 in Las Vegas, Nevada USA

California-based MSI International Inc. (MSI) was presented with the Best of Tile Award at TISE that celebrate the highest levels of innovation and creativity from the tile industry in the previous 12 months.

Its large format Exotika Collection was acknowledged for its contribution to progressing the industry forward. The range offers a striking colour palette including a spectrum of greens, blues, purples and more, with rectified edges for seamless installation and minimal grout visibility.

The porcelain tile line takes its inspiration from onyx and marble and is designed for both floor and wall applications in a polished finish. Paulo Pereira, vice president at MSI said:

"As the second-largest porcelain supplier in the United States, MSI continues to push the boundaries of innovation and design. The Exotika Collection is a testament to our commitment to on-trend designs, offering our customers unique and high-quality products that cater to their evolving needs and tastes. We are honoured to receive The Best of Tile Award from TISE."

Founded in 1975, MSI maintains 50 state-of-the-art showrooms and distribution centres across the US and Canada. The company's product assortment includes an extensive offering of quartz, LVT, tile, turf, natural stone, and porcelain products imported into North America from over 37 countries.

The Best of Tile Award is part of the first annual "What's Hot - Best of TISE Awards" sponsored by US trade publications Floor Covering News, Stone World and Floor Trends & Installation.

The awards recognise businesses and acknowledge brands, products and projects that provide inspiration and insights that drive the success of each category. Amie Gilmore, director of The International Surface Event, said:

"TISE continues to push the surface, stone and tile industry forward by showcasing the best and most innovative products that stay ahead of the evolving demand of the market. These products and

companies are setting a standard and encouraging others to adapt game changing strategies that makes the design, manufacturing and installation process more efficient, sustainable and impactful."

The International Surface Event returns to the Mandalay Bay Convention Center in Las Vegas between January 27-29, 2026. For more information, go to <https://www.intlsurfaceevent.com/en/home.html>



MSI was presented with the Best of Tile Award at TISE 2025 for its Exotika Collection



The porcelain tile range is designed for both floor and wall applications



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What you might have missed on *Tile Today* Digital

If you missed a number of stories that were featured in *Tile Today*'s recent e-newsletters, here is an overview on a few of them and some useful links that will take you directly to the story page.

ABS PPI data show tile prices rose in 2024

While price rises slowed considerably in 2023, in 2024 price growth for ceramic tiles increased sharply, according to data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Producer Price Index.

<https://tiletoday.au/articleGeneral/2025-08-1740386839390-004/general>

Terracotta house wins at architecture awards

Terracotta tiles sourced from Italy provide warmth, texture and tonality at the Burnt Earth Beach House in Anglesea (VIC). The house was bestowed with the Emil Sodersten Award for Interior Architecture and the best for Residential Architecture – Houses (New) at an event organised by the Australian Institute of Architects.

<https://tiletoday.au/articleGeneral/2025-03-1737330679899-003/general>

ARDEX Australia opens its HQ

The official launch of ARDEX Australia's regional headquarters in Kemps Creek took place as the NSW Government commenced the first sites for a trial of modular social housing.

<https://tiletoday.au/articleGeneral/2025-03-1737330679899-002/general>

New Products: Outdoor tiles

Pompeii CrazyPave from Beaumont Tiles is available in three colours, and the embossed, textured microtec tile is designed to provide when wet, a high-grip surface. Keope's marble-effects Versilia collection and Casalgrande Padana's Stonetech porcelain stoneware range can also be used for outdoor applications.

<https://tiletoday.au/articleGeneral/2025-03-1737330679900-004/general>

Tile drenching for a cohesive look

As the name implies, tile drenching is a design approach that envelopes walls, floors, and ceilings with tile. But unlike the typical multiple or mosaic installations, this method requires only a single tile type to deliver a bold and immersive impact.

<https://tiletoday.au/articleGeneral/2025-08-1740386839390-003/general>

Beaumonts 2025 Tile of the Year

Beaumont Tiles has named its exclusive Crossland collection as the 2025 Tile of the Year. Italian ceramic tile supplier Unicom Starker designed the collection. Its durability makes it ideal for high-traffic areas.

<https://tiletoday.au/articleGeneral/2025-08-1740386839390-005/general>

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