
Native Tile & Ceramics

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THE SHOEMAKER RESIDENCE

Manhattan Beach, California

The Shoemakers were building their dream home from the ground up. Inspired by their many visits to the historic Adamson House, they wanted to create their own version of a home in the California Mediterranean style, and they knew that decorative tile would have to take a prominent place throughout the home.

The tile needed to fit comfortably with their eclectic mix of furniture, art and the whimsical objects they'd been collecting together over the years. We settled on a style of tile that emulated the historic D&M Tile Company. I had spent a lot of time with Norman Carlson, antique tile collector and founder of Country Floors, creating a line of D&M inspired tiles. The technique I developed is a variation on cuerda seca, but is made in a way that gives the pattern a more painterly look. We incorporated this style, and many of these patterns, for the Shoemakers throughout their project. Kathy Shoemaker loved bright colors, but also wanted to incorporate some earthy variations of color within the patterns, to help ground them. For the bathrooms, the Shoemakers wanted the pattern in the tile to be more pronounced and graphic, more like the Malibu Potteries tile. By staying consistent for both bathrooms, mixing the two different styles worked beautifully.

For this project, we did not create any custom glazes or patterns; we did select a palette of colors, patterns and glazing styles that together created a unique and appropriate statement for this client's dream home.



Photograph by Jack Coble



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THE BILTMORE HOTEL

Santa Barbara, California

As part of a large-scale historic renovation project, Native Tile was commissioned to create decorative ceramic tiles for numerous areas throughout Santa Barbara's Biltmore Hotel. I saw it as both a challenge and a compliment, that my tiles would be juxtaposed against historic tile that I held in such high regard.

It was crucial to the project that the new tiles flowed seamlessly alongside the historic Gladding McBean tiles. To accomplish this, historically accurate reproduction tiles needed to be produced; we did this by creating a custom clay body and numerous custom glazes.

An open dialogue, with a very aware and scrutinizing client, contributed to the success of this project. He appreciated that what made the old tile unique were its subtleties, including the quality in which the glaze was applied to the surface. With the wainscot tiles, in order for the new walls to look the same as the old, three molds had to be made, with varying sizes and undulations on the surface. Likewise, four different greens were formulated and randomly used in their respective areas on the tiles throughout the installation, to create the variation necessary.

For our tile work at the Biltmore Hotel, Native Tile received first prize in the 2009 Spectrum Awards, which celebrates creativity and achievement in the use of tile and stone.



Photographs by Edmund Barr



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