

QUARTER

A publication by SOLUS. Issue 33.

RECOVER

Every fragment, a future.



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EDITOR'S NOTE

Welcome to Quarter 33, the Solus magazine, designed and written in-house.

As I read through Quarter for the umpteenth time (checking commas, captioning images, making sure every detail sings) I'm struck by how much this magazine reveals about the work we do at Solus.

What we put into the world is more than just promotional, it has purpose. The events we organise are designed to spark ideas and change, not just footfall. The projects we feature aren't just visually compelling; they represent some of the most thoughtful and progressive practices in architecture and design. The products we introduce are beautiful and are made by manufacturers striving, genuinely, for environmental responsibility.

And our closing feature, Under the Table, is fast becoming one of my favourite things we do. It's not just a long read; it's a deep, often moving, often surprising conversation with one of the industry's leading voices. This time, it's Simon Allford, and he doesn't disappoint.

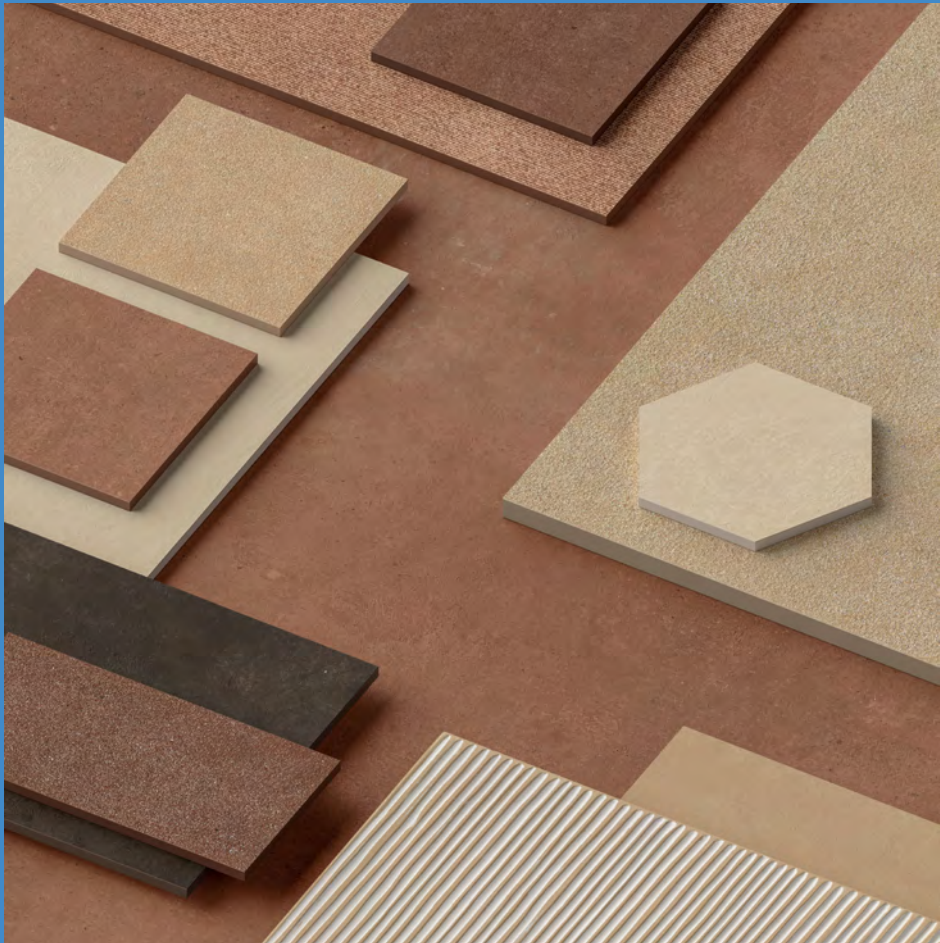
At the heart of it all is a belief, championed by our Creative Director, that business can be about more than profit. That design can make a difference. That we can use our platform to advocate for something better: socially, environmentally, and aesthetically.

We hope you feel that spirit in these pages.

Thanks to the whole Marketing team for their support in getting the edition to print. It's always a team effort but special mention must be made of my colleague and friend, Ricardo Jardim, who has designed all 33 issues.

Conleth Buckley, Editor

conlethbuckley@solusceramics.com



I'm proud to welcome you to the 33rd issue of Quarter, our magazine for the architecture and design community.

Each issue is a labour of love, and this one is no exception. Within these pages you'll find a selection of new and innovative tile ranges, alongside four remarkable architectural projects that celebrate thoughtful design and material excellence. We've also included a handful of features we think are worth your time: pieces that explore not only what we build, but how and why we build.

Quarter is always a team effort. My sincere thanks go to our brilliant in-house team, whose talent and tenacity bring each edition to life. Special gratitude to Conleth Buckley, our Editor; Katie Mitchelmore, our Brand Manager; and Sam Frith, our Creative Director. Your vision and support make it happen.

I hope you enjoy exploring this issue as much as we enjoyed creating it.

Ricardo Jardim, Senior Graphic Designer
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New ranges

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Chauvigny limestone with environmental credentials.	Achieve the concrete-effect at a fraction of the carbon.	Italian design inspired by Italian design: aesthetic circularity?	Grace in sharp silence.	Architectural clarity in porcelain.	Light reveals it.	Shadow and shine in perpetual motion.

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Quarter magazine is printed on Carbon Balanced Paper using vegetable-based ink.
Written, designed, and produced in-house at Solus.



BUILDING MINDS 2025

EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN CONSTRUCTION AND ARCHITECTURE

This 1944 image of Dorothy welding on “The Ladies’ Bridge” (Waterloo) reminds us how women built under fire, literally, during WWII. Their role was vital, yet written out of history. We share it to honour their skill and challenge their erasure.

SOLUS



carhartt



MAPEI



crosswater

Burlington

LUXY

Building Minds: Empowerment of Women in Construction and Architecture was a thought-provoking event that celebrated progress while addressing the ongoing challenges women face in the building sector. Part of an ongoing initiative to spark meaningful dialogue, this edition focused on gender equity—creating space for influential women to share experiences, challenge bias, and envision a more inclusive future.

Moderator:

The panel:



Kate Marlow
Founding Partner,
Here Design



Rachael Davidson
Founding Director,
SMITHS



Paula Chandler
National Design Director,
Wates Construction



Rebecca Heald
Founder of The Heald
Method



Federica Minozzi
CEO, Iris Ceramica
Group



Cassandra Codling
Regional Director,
NHBC

The event was extremely well-attended and received. Our guests remained after the talk to engage further with the audience.

Setting the scene

Kate Marlow, founding partner of Here Design moderated the talk and opened with a sobering overview of the industry's gender imbalance. Women make up just 15% of the UK construction workforce and 31% of architects, while leadership roles remain overwhelmingly male. In Kate's own field, the design sector, only 17% of Creative Directors are women. The gender pay gap persists, with RIBA's 2023 Business Benchmarking revealing a 16% disparity in architecture.

Against this backdrop, the panellists explored the systemic barriers women face and discussed the structural changes needed to create a more inclusive and equitable professional environment.

Voices of resilience

Paula Chandler set the tone by discussing the resistance she faced early in her career. She shared a revealing anecdote about her boss denying her a promotion, saying that there was no way he could promote her because then he'd lose his 'king maker'. In summary, Paula was the driving force behind exceptional

outcomes but, as it turned out, he was taking all the credit for it. This shocking exchange highlights the systemic bias that often prevents women from advancing to leadership positions. Paula emphasised the need for systemic changes in how companies evaluate and promote talent, advocating for merit-based advancements that disregard gender and inviting women to “project manage their own destiny”.

Federica Minozzi, CEO of Iris Ceramica Group, offered an international perspective, noting that only 3% of companies in Italy currently have women on their governance bodies, a shocking figure in 2025. She spoke frankly about the persistence of traditional cultural norms in Italy, which often limit women to ‘caregiving’ roles and restrict their professional growth. She underscored the urgent need for corporate policies that promote gender diversity, to dismantle stereotypes and open pathways to leadership.

Rachael Davidson, Founding Director of SMITHS, tackled the balance of motherhood and professional life, challenging the bias that women cannot be both dedicated mothers and successful professionals. Rachael explained, “I want to be a role model to my children. Particularly my daughter, in terms of you can work, and have a career, and be creative and ambitious, but you can also be at home and do all the things that you need to do as a mother.” She advocated for more flexible working environments that accommodate the needs of working parents.

Rebecca Heald, Founder of The Heald Method, as a former teacher turned professional coach, spoke about the power of visibility, representation, and education in shifting perceptions of the industry. She highlighted her work in schools—not just with students, but with teachers—explaining how a lack of awareness limits the options presented to young people. Reflecting on her time in the classroom, Rebecca shared: “Probably half of my class would’ve been perfect for the construction industry. Did I have a clue? No. Because as far as I was concerned, I had to get them through their GCSEs.” Her story reinforced the importance

of early exposure and relatable role models in diversifying the sector.

Cassandra Codling, Regional Director at the National House Building Council, spoke about the need for accessible training. She introduced NHBC’s multi-skill training hub, developed to address the industry’s skills shortage. One standout initiative offers practical training to women in prison, equipping them with the tools to find employment on site after release. Cassandra also tackled imposter syndrome, urging women to acknowledge their accomplishments and believe in their potential. She closed with a powerful mantra: “Believe in yourself. You’ve got this.”

Deconstructing bias

Each panellist shared strategies and reflections on dismantling bias in construction and architecture:

- **Creating inclusive cultures:** The panellists agreed on the importance of building workplace environments that challenge gender stereotypes—through education, open dialogue, and clear anti-discrimination policies.
- **Policy reforms:** Federica Minozzi called for policies that go beyond preventing discrimination, advocating for initiatives like equal pay, targeted leadership development, and support programmes for women.
- **Support systems:** Rachael Davidson emphasised the role of support systems, including formal mentoring programs, networks, and alliances within the industry, which provide crucial support and advocacy for women.
- **Public advocacy:** Rebecca Heald and Paula Chandler discussed their efforts in public advocacy to raise awareness about gender bias, participating in forums, writing articles, and engaging with media to highlight issues and solutions.



PHOTOGRAPHY:
Luis Kramer



Our limited-edition tote, in collaboration with Carhartt Workwear, designed in-house by Lara-Jane van Antwerpen, was a big hit.

Moving Forward

Each panellist concluded with a personal call to action, an invitation to drive change:

- **Paula Chandler:** “Never underestimate the impact you have on others, use your influence to make the path less steep for those following in our footsteps.”
- **Federica Minozzi:** “Together, we can do so much. Let’s dream together to shape a better future.”
- **Rachael Davidson:** “Be kind and curious. Learn about your colleagues’ experiences and use that insight to build supportive environments.”
- **Rebecca Heald:** “We’re doing great work empowering women; let’s also remember to support the young boys and men in our industry.”
- **Cassandra Codling:** “Move away from imposter syndrome. Have confidence and believe in yourself, you’ve got this.”

The event closed on a hopeful note, with a renewed commitment to advancing gender equity in construction and architecture. As attendees left Building Minds 2025, they carried with them not just insights and inspiration, but a responsibility to champion change within their organisations and across the wider industry.

Thank you to our brilliant panellists for their honesty and leadership, and to Kate Marlow for expertly moderating the conversation. We look forward to continuing the momentum.

The second part of our event Building Minds: Empowerment of Women in Architecture and Construction began when double-gold Olympian, Dame Kelly Holmes joined host Conleth Buckley on stage for a live interview.



DAME KELLY HOLMES

Unapologetically Driven

Skipping the small talk, Conleth offered his congratulations to Kelly on recently coming out as gay. This set the tone for a candid and moving interview in which Kelly reflected upon her intersectional identity and her journey of actualisation and empowerment.

"It sounds weird, doesn't it? Congratulating someone for being themselves." Kelly mused, explaining that when she first realised she was gay, she was in the British Army. At that time, being openly gay in the military had severe consequences, including imprisonment. She shared how she had witnessed fellow soldiers, some of whom had been on frontlines, stripped of military honours and discharged simply for being themselves.

"Imagine being vilified in your own quarters, your belongings rooted through and strewn about, just because of who you love," In those days, even the suspicion of homosexuality could trigger aggressive, punitive inspections. It was a stark reminder of how different things were for gay people not so long ago and provoked the thought that liberation is tenuous and requires defending.

"I lived with fear all my life until I decided I wanted to live, truly live, and that meant coming out and being me," she declared, "and now I don't care what anyone thinks" which got a roar of approbation.

Kelly spoke movingly about her experience of burnout, of her mental health struggles, compounded by the demands of an athletic career in which she redefined her sport and became the first British woman to win two gold medals at the same Olympics. Conleth suggested that her highs were as extreme as her lows, to which Kelly agreed, emphasising that she had always found ample support from her team and family.

Kelly drew parallels between her military and sporting experiences and broader issues like gender equality in professional fields. Her athletic and military careers exemplify the perseverance and resilience she displays in all aspects of her life.

"I like being driven, because if I drive, I learn something," Kelly described herself as 'unapologetically driven,' a phrase she attributed to Suzy Eddie Izzard. She had this message for people who might feel the same, "What you're saying is real — life's too short to keep putting yourself second. You're driven, and that's not a flaw; it's part of who you are. You don't want to stop because doing, learning, and growing gives you purpose — and if you can pass that on, even better. People say 'find balance' but for someone like you, balance might just mean making sure what you're doing fuels you, not just everyone else. You care deeply, and that's a strength — just don't forget to care for yourself too."

With an audience of architects, contractors, and designers, Conleth asked Kelly to share a story demonstrating her building project management skills. Growing up in Hildenborough, Kent, Kelly had frequented a traditional sweetshop which had ceased trading by the time she became an adult. She was determined to resurrect the shop as it had been a pivotal community space.

Kelly recounted how she had become personally involved in the architectural and structural planning, noting that she had intervened when others on site overlooked critical details. "I noticed technical and structural changes that had been overlooked. I ended up project managing significant parts of the build," she explained, highlighting her hands-on approach and meticulous oversight, which were crucial to the project's success. There was much nodding at this!

"I like being driven, because if I drive, I learn something."

The interview concluded with Kelly addressing the future, urging the audience to think ambitiously. She spoke of the need for systemic change to support not only women but all marginalised groups within professional sectors. "We need to change the narrative, challenge the status quo, and ensure everyone, regardless of their background or identity, has a fair chance to succeed."

The talk was inspiring, leaving everyone not just moved by Kelly's unapologetic drive but motivated to push for a more equitable professional world, especially in industries like architecture and construction where there are many systemic inequalities. Her story of overcoming adversity also emphasised the need to pave the way for others, a fitting message for an event dedicated to empowering women within the industry.

"I lived with fear all my life until I decided I wanted to live, truly live, and that meant coming out and being me."



ELEMENTS

Elements was a three-event series which ran from late 2024 to early 2025. Taking the classical elements of Earth, Water, and Fire as guiding themes, our Elements series explored how these forces not only combine in the creation of ceramics, but also shape our environment, industries, and ways of thinking.



Designed by:

Stiff + Trevillion



PHOTOGRAPHY:
Luis Kramer and Christopher L. Proctor



Kiln and Kitchen combined as we explored sustainable futures with some leading lights of the zero-waste revolution.

ABOVE:
Martyn Odell
BELOW:
Douglas McMaster
Beren Kayali



Our partner, Florim, takes conservation seriously. The elements they use in producing high-quality porcelain ceramics are treated as precious resources—handled with care, responsibility, and innovation. Their manufacturing processes include extensive material recycling, heat recovery systems, and a closed-loop water management approach.

A striking central installation by Stiff + Trevillion interpreted the water cycle in architectural form: a suspended pool of water evaporated from a circular porcelain base, condensed on a cool, cloud-coloured slab above, and returned as droplets to the pool below; an elegant loop of transformation.

EARTH - Mike Stiff of Stiff + Trevillion, Chiara Carpi of Florim, and Sam Frith of Solus, introduced the series and discussed ceramics in a sustainable future. Chiara highlighted Florim's achievements, including becoming the first ceramic manufacturer to attain B Corp status, and presented Earth, a tile collection by Matheo Thun (see page 26).

Chef Martyn Odell brought his inimitable charisma to a cooking demonstration extolling the virtues of zero-waste cooking and drawing parallels between efficient tile and food production.

WATER - Our second event, The Future of Water: Design Solutions to the Water Crisis, gathered a panel of leading designers and thinkers. Jane Withers introduced her exhibition Water Pressure. Kate Marlow of Here Design spoke about Thames Glass, made using invasive mussel shells from London's waterways. Karlijn Sibbel of Notpla shared how seaweed can replace single-use plastic, and Beren Kayali presented Deploy Tech's flat-pack concrete water tanks for remote infrastructure and disaster relief.

FIRE - Our final event examined the parallels between construction and the food system. Douglas McMaster of Silo, the world's first zero-waste restaurant, shared his regenerative approach: turning waste into compost and rethinking every stage of the food journey. His stories and short film, A Failure of the Imagination, challenged us to see waste not as a by-product, but a design flaw.

From the conversations and connections made, it's clear the Element series had a powerful impact. Each event illuminated the enduring relevance of the classical elements, inviting us to reimagine the materials and systems we depend on. As we move forward, let's continue to question, design, and innovate with care for our finite world.

LOOP- STONE

LoopStone contains 60% pre-consumer recycled material and has the appearance of stone. These are high-quality, beautiful tiles that reduce impact upon the environment.

"LoopStone shows how design can honour natural beauty while embracing circular production. It's a range that feels refined and timeless, but with a future-facing approach to sustainability that's genuinely impressive."

Justin Jennings,
Product Manager, Solus



5 COLOURS
5 FINISHES
8 SIZES
4 MOSAICS
3 DECORS

Floor:
2LSN102



A stone-effect porcelain tile combining natural elegance with advanced sustainable manufacturing.

LoopStone by Solus captures the layered elegance of Chauvigny limestone in a porcelain surface shaped by sustainability. Featuring 60% pre-consumer recycled content, this range sets a new standard for circular manufacturing. Thanks to highly efficient processes, the factory generates very little production waste of its own, sourcing additional material from neighbouring producers to further minimise environmental impact.

This closed-loop system reduces reliance on virgin raw materials while delivering tiles full of natural character. LoopStone's subtle lithic patterns create a rich and tactile surface inspired by timeless geologies.

Enhancing its eco-profile, LoopStone is produced at an efficient 8mm thickness, cutting resource consumption, improving transport efficiency, and achieving a 14.8% lower carbon footprint per square metre compared to traditional porcelain. Available in five earthy tones (Pale, Beige, Desert, Grey, and Dark) and a wide range of sizes and finishes, including durable 20mm outdoor options, LoopStone is designed for interior and exterior spaces that demand both beauty and environmental responsibility.

LoopStone brings together refined design and real sustainability for a new generation of architecture.



LoopStone is made with 60% pre-consumer recycled content combining raw processing waste and fired material with 40% natural resources.

60%
pre-consumer recycled content



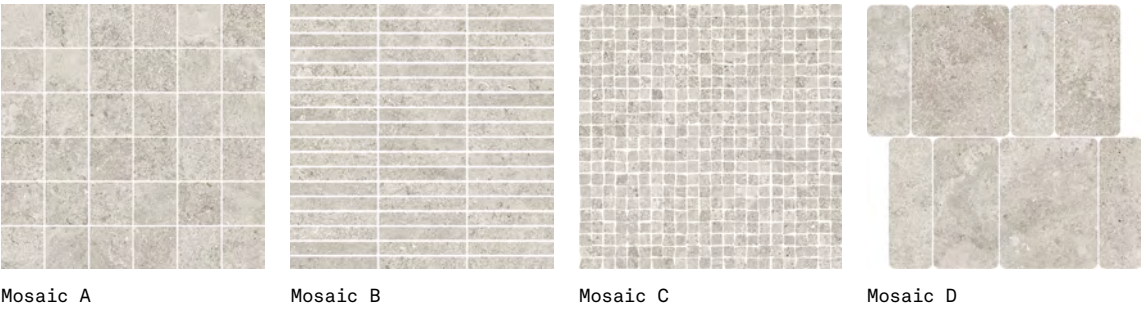
FINISHES:
Matt Textured R9, Natural R10, Natural R10 (A+B),
Anti Slip R11 (A+B+C), Textured R11 (A+B+C)

APPEARANCE:
Stone

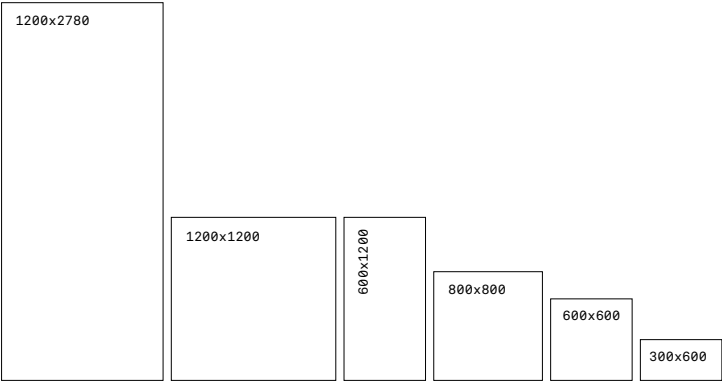
MATERIAL:
Porcelain

USAGE:
Floors and walls

SHADE VARIATION:
V2 - Light



Decors and mosaics are available in
a variety of colours and sizes.
Please ask for details.



All sizes are in mm. PTV results available on request. EPD available on request.
Search for LoopStone at solusceramics.com for more information about this range.



Floor:
2LSN101
Wall:
2LSN101D003

LOOP- CRETE

With 60% pre-consumer recycled content, LoopCrete offers the elegant appearance of concrete and a welcome reduction of impact on the environment.



8 COLOURS
4 FINISHES
9 SIZES
3 MOSAICS
2 DECORS

Floor:
2LCR103
Wall:
2LCR101D001



LoopCrete is a sustainable porcelain collection inspired by concrete crafted with 60% pre-consumer recycled material.

Developed through an advanced manufacturing process that generates very little waste, LoopCrete embraces reclaimed material, extending the reach of circular production.

Its clean, textural surfaces, inspired by the smooth concrete of urban landscapes and highlighted with small clastic particles, offer a distinctive and confident aesthetic. LoopCrete complements contemporary, minimalist, and industrial spaces, balancing bold design with outstanding technical performance.

Produced at an optimised 8mm thickness, LoopCrete cuts resource use and transport emissions, achieving a 14.8% lower carbon footprint per square metre compared to standard porcelain, while maintaining exceptional strength and quality.

Available in five muted tones (Bone, Sand, Camel, Grey, and Dark) and a broad choice of formats including robust 20mm outdoor options, LoopCrete delivers flexibility, resilience, and a lighter environmental impact.

LoopCrete shows how modern industrial design can build a future where sustainability is never an afterthought.

A concrete-inspired porcelain collection delivering bold urban aesthetics with a lighter environmental impact.





FINISHES:
Matt Textured R9, Natural R10, Natural R10 (A+B), Anti Slip R11 (A+B+C)

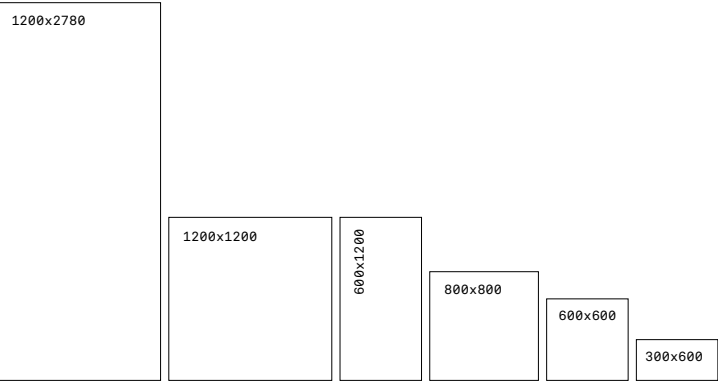
APPEARANCE:
Concrete

MATERIAL:
Porcelain

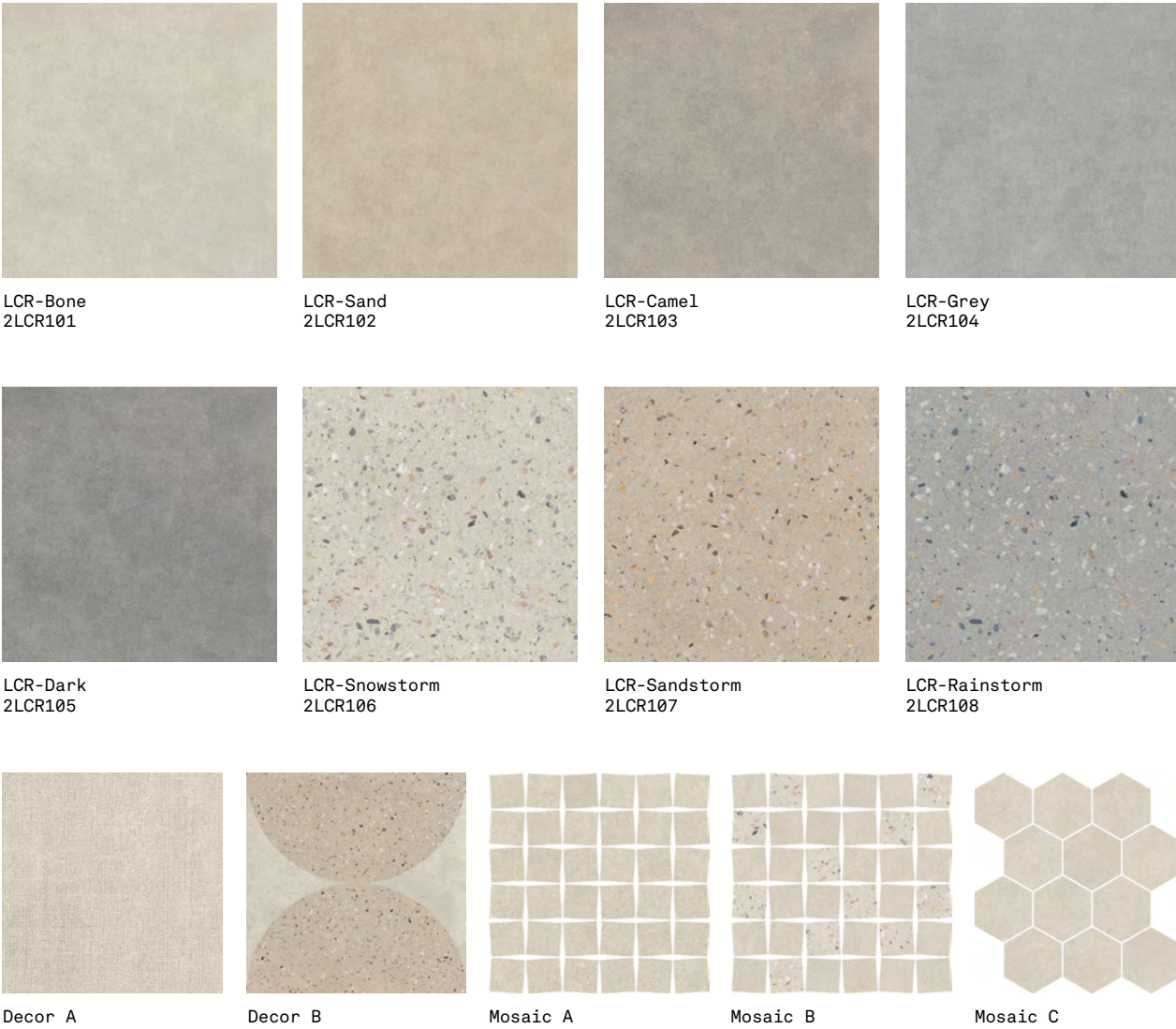
USAGE:
Floors and walls

SHADE VARIATION:
V2 - Light

60%
pre-consumer
recycled
content



All sizes are in mm. PTV results available on request. EPD available on request.
Search for LoopCrete at solusceramics.com for more information about this range.

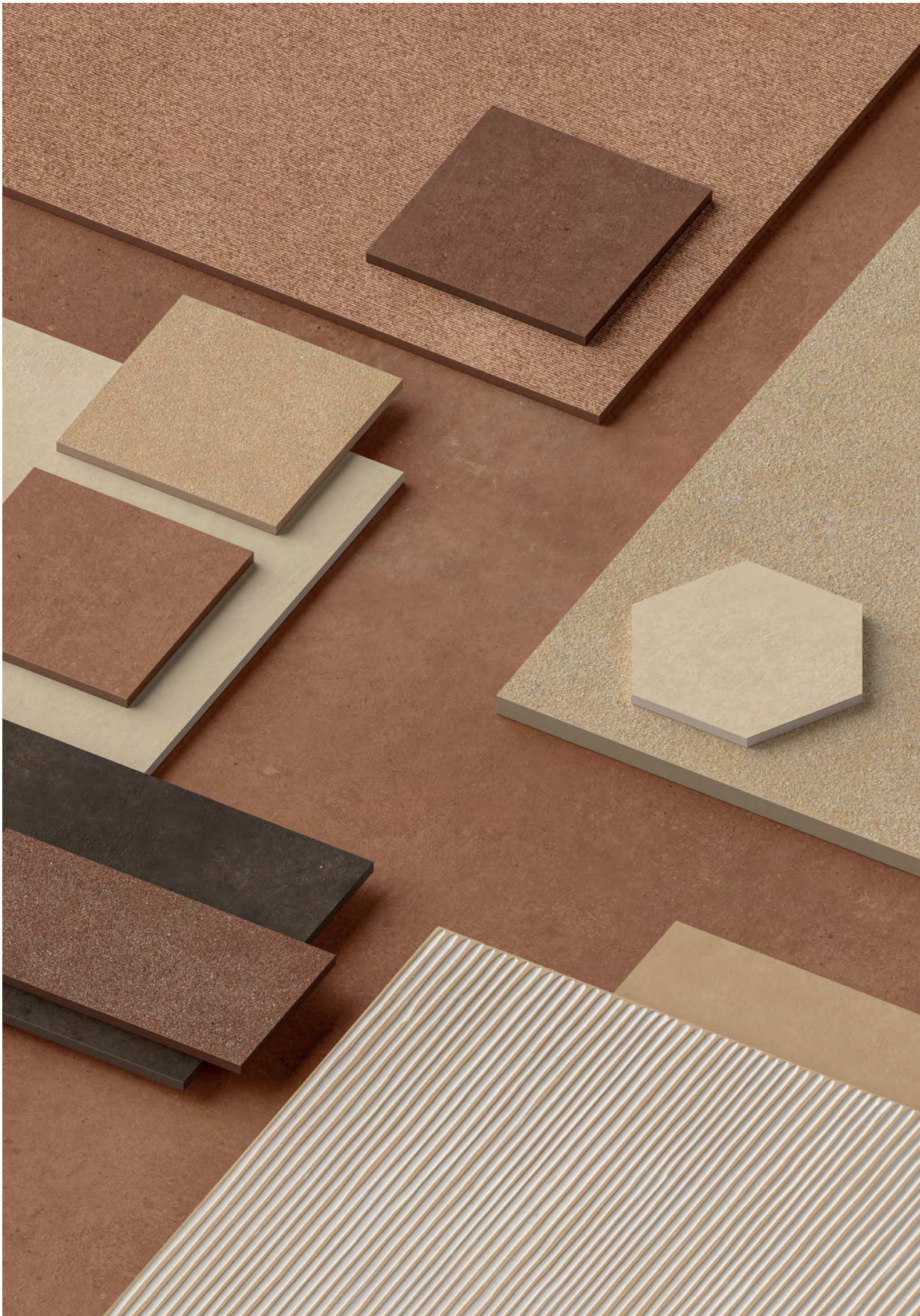


Decors and mosaics are available in
a variety of colours and sizes.
Please ask for details.



“LoopCrete is all about strength with conscience.
It delivers that raw, industrial look that designers
love, but it's backed by real innovation in recycling
and low-impact production.”

Justin Jennings,
Product Manager, Solus



NEW RANGE

EARTH

A modern expression of ancient craft.

12 COLOURS | 3 FINISHES | 13 SIZES | 7 MOSAICS | 2 DECORS



Inspired by the spirit of handmade terracotta, Earth is a reimagination of traditional materials from the sustainable innovation of Florim.

From the hands of Tuscan artisans to the floors and walls of today – Earth by Solus.

Designed by Matteo Thun and Benedetto Fasciana, Earth is a porcelain tile collection that reinterprets the artisanal traditions of Italian terracotta. Drawing inspiration from the handcrafted vases of Bitossi, Earth brings the raw beauty of earthenware into the robust, sustainable world of modern porcelain.

Launched as part of our Elements event series — where we explored the fundamental forces shaping ceramics — Earth embodies the spirit of 'Earth' both materially and metaphorically. It celebrates the natural tactility, irregularity and narrative of traditional craft while delivering the performance expected of contemporary surfaces.

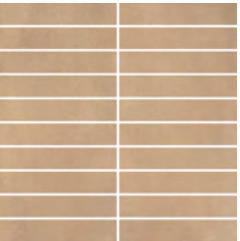
Crafted in collaboration with Florim, one of the world's leading manufacturers renowned for their sustainability credentials, Earth is available in six organic tones — Cotton, Sand, Blush, Brick, Mocha and Carbon, with two appearances, soft and grain. Three distinct finishes: Natural R10, Natural R10 (A+B) and Anti Slip R11 (A+B+C), a broad range of formats, from 150x300mm tiles to expansive 1200x2400mm slabs, as well as intricate mosaics, offers extensive creative freedom across interior and exterior spaces.

More than just a surface solution, Earth is a tribute to material memory and human craftsmanship — a versatile, sustainable choice for spaces that seek lasting elegance and a connection to nature.





Twelve colours, three finishes, infinite creative possibilities: Earth transforms the language of clay.



Mosaic A
300x300x9mm
Natural R10 (A+B)



Mosaic B
300x300x9mm
Natural R10 (A+B)



Mosaic C
230x440x9mm
Natural R10 (A+B)



Mosaic D
570x690x9mm
Natural R10 (A+B)



Mosaic E / F
370x460x9mm
Natural R10 (A+B)



Mosaic G
300x400x9mm
Natural R10 (A+B)
Textured Mix R10/R11



Decor A
600x1200x9mm
Textured



Decor B
600x1200x9mm
Natural R10

Mosaics and Decors are available in different colour options. Please ask for details.

FINISHES:
Natural R10, Natural R10 (A+B),
Anti Slip R11 (A+B+C)

APPEARANCE:
Terracotta

MATERIAL:
Porcelain

USAGE:
Floors and walls

SHADE VARIATION:
V2 - Light



ERH-Cotton
2ERH101



ERH-Sand
2ERH102



ERH-Blush
2ERH103



ERH-Brick
2ERH104



ERH-Mocha
2ERH105



ERH-Carbon
2ERH106



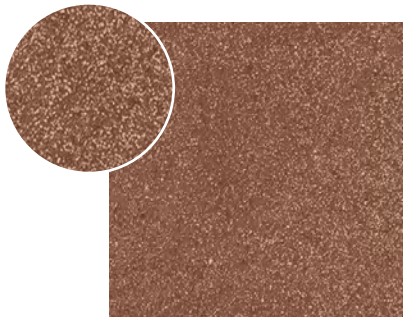
ERH-Cotton Grain
2ERH107



ERH-Sand Grain
2ERH108



ERH-Blush Grain
2ERH109



ERH-Brick Grain
2ERH110



ERH-Mocha Grain
2ERH111



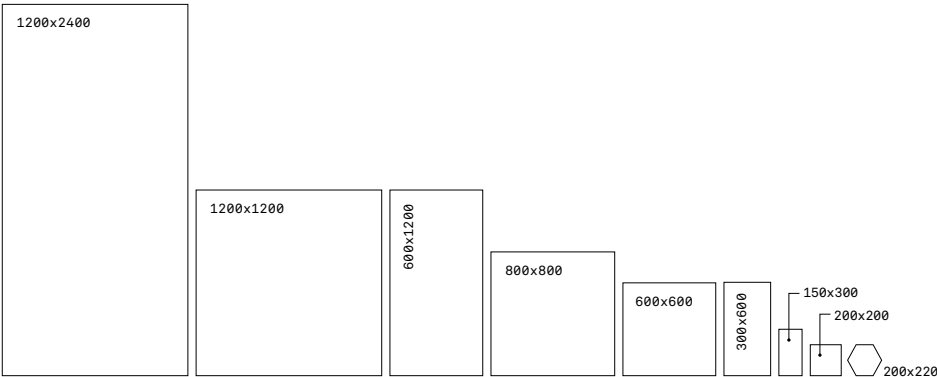
ERH-Carbon Grain
2ERH112

The Grain colours have a sand-like pattern.

“Working with Florim is always a pleasure; they set the standard for design, craftsmanship, and sustainability.

Earth captures a deep, authentic beauty – a collection that honours the essence of handmade terracotta while offering all the technical excellence we expect today.”

Justin Jennings,
Product Manager, Solus



All sizes are in mm. PTV results available on request. EPD available on request.
Search for Earth at solusceramics.com for more information about this range.

NEW RANGE

SIDELINE

Minimal Japanese precision expressed
through scored porcelain geometry.



6 COLOURS | 1 FINISH | 1 SIZE | 1 DECOR

A line of beauty, inspired by Japanese precision

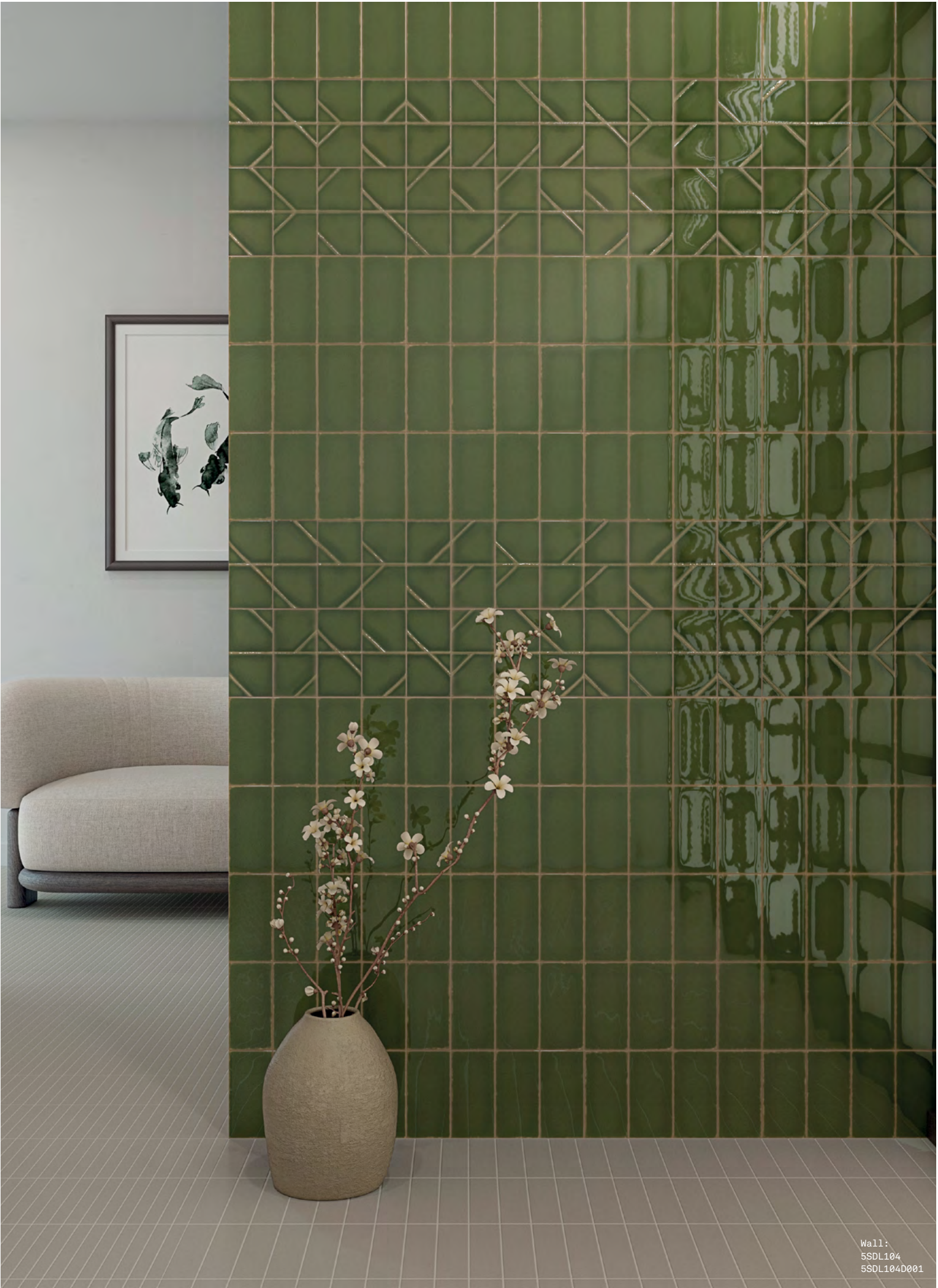
Sideline is a ceramic wall tile inspired by the meticulous artistry and refined geometries of traditional Japanese crafts. The collection includes tiles which feature scored lines, an elegant gesture that evokes the sharp fold of Origami paper, or the precise cut of a stem in Ikebana flower arranging. It is the line of beauty, poised between control and creativity.

This sculptural mark is brought to life through deep, luminous glazes that catch and reflect light, enriching both colour and texture. Subtle variations across the surface add a sense of movement and depth, balancing restraint with quiet dynamism.

Sideline's palette, featuring soothing and subtle tones, draws inspiration from natural Japanese landscapes, offering an organic tranquillity suited to both traditional and contemporary interiors.

Available in 62x125mm, Sideline allows for thoughtful, versatile installation. Whether used in repetition or as a singular detail, the tile brings a sense of calm precision to any space.

This is a collection for those who value quiet beauty, architectural clarity, and the enduring grace of craftsmanship.



FINISH:
Gloss

APPEARANCE:
Mono Colour

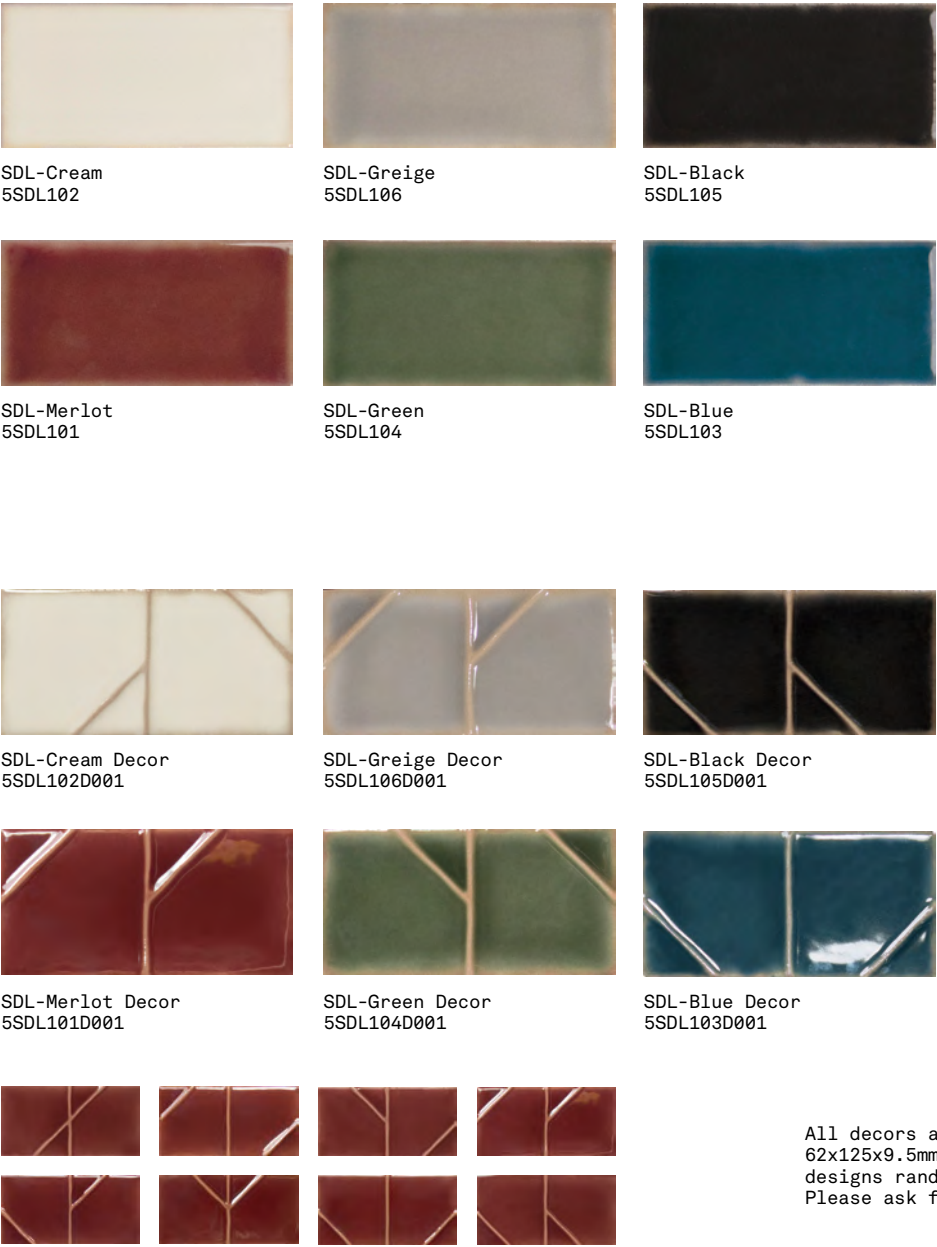
MATERIAL:
Ceramic

USAGE:
Walls only

SHADE VARIATION:
V2 - Light

“Sideline is about quiet power. That single line, like the fold of paper or the keen edge of a blade, brings clarity and grace to the surface - it’s minimal, but deeply expressive.”

Justin Jennings,
Product Manager, Solus



All decors are available in 62x125x9.5mm, supplied in 8 different designs randomly mixed within the box. Please ask for details.



All sizes are in mm. Full EPD available on request.
Search for Sideline at solusceramics.com for more information about this range.



Wall:
5SDL106
5SDL106D001

Struktur

A practical porcelain tile range defined by texture and a palette of muted colours including, green, red, blue and black.



7 COLOURS | 3 FINISHES | 9 SIZES | 2 MOSAICS | 2 DECORS

NEW RANGE



Architectural clarity in porcelain

Struktur is a reimagined porcelain tile collection defined by rhythmic texture, material honesty, and restrained colour. Rooted in the aesthetic of structured surfaces and inspired by the architectural precision of concrete agglomerate, this fully vitrified porcelain stoneware range offers designers a minimalist toolkit for sculpting space with depth and intent.

Struktur’s colour palette includes seven muted, architectural tones; Green, Black, White, Grey, Greige, Red, and Blue, each formulated to pair effortlessly across the collection’s varied formats. From the soft, biophilic undertones of Green to the elegant desaturation of Blue and the grounded warmth of Red, each tone supports either calm continuity or striking contrast in both commercial and residential projects.

Tiles are available in multiple formats from 200x200mm to 1200x1200mm, offering flexibility for both expansive floors and intimate wall compositions.

The collection’s standout features are the decors. Ribbed linear surfaces play with shadow and reflection, introducing architectural rhythm and tactility to vertical surfaces.

Complementary decors are innovative and varied, enabling rich patterning and sculptural layering across interior and exterior schemes.





Floor:
2SKR104
Wall:
2SKR104D001

FINISHES:
Natural R10 (A+B), Satin, Anti Slip R11

APPEARANCE:
Concrete

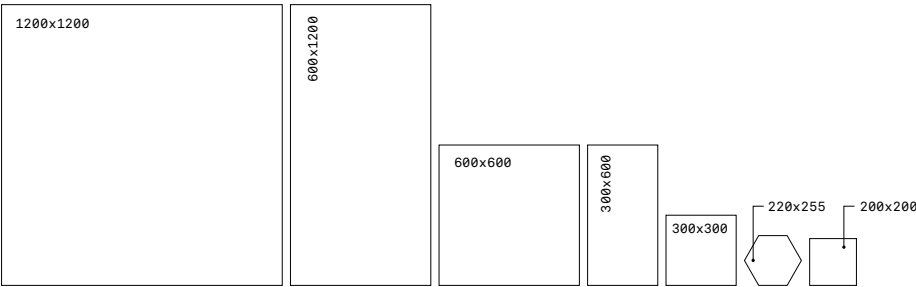
MATERIAL:
Porcelain

USAGE:
Floors and walls

SHADE VARIATION:
V2 - Light

“Struktur doesn’t just look refined—it’s engineered for modern life. With surfaces that actively resist dirt and bacteria, it’s an ideal choice for spaces where hygiene matters just as much as aesthetics.”

Justin Jennings,
Product Manager, Solus



All sizes are in mm. PTV results available on request. EPD available on request.
Search for Struktur at solusceramics.com for more information about this range.



SKR-White
2SKR101

SKR-Grey
2SKR102

SKR-Greige
2SKR104

SKR-Blue
2SKR107



SKR-Green
2SKR106

SKR-Red
2SKR105

SKR-Black
2SKR103



Mosaic A
300x300x9mm (50x50 chips)
Natural finish

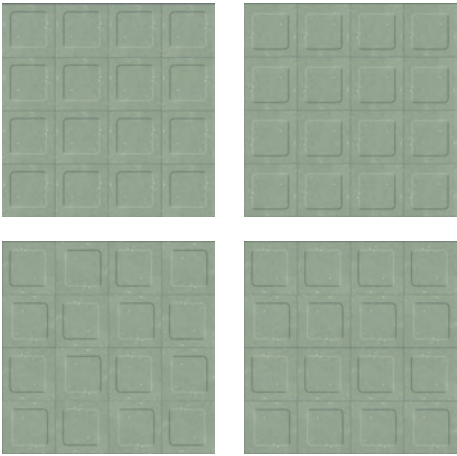
Mosaic B
300x300x9mm (50x150 chips)
Natural finish

Decor A
600x1200x9mm
Natural finish

Decor B *
200x200x9mm
Natural finish

Mosaics and Decors are available in all colours.
Please ask for details.

*The 3D effect on the two-dimensional surface is achieved through a graphic play of light and shadows.



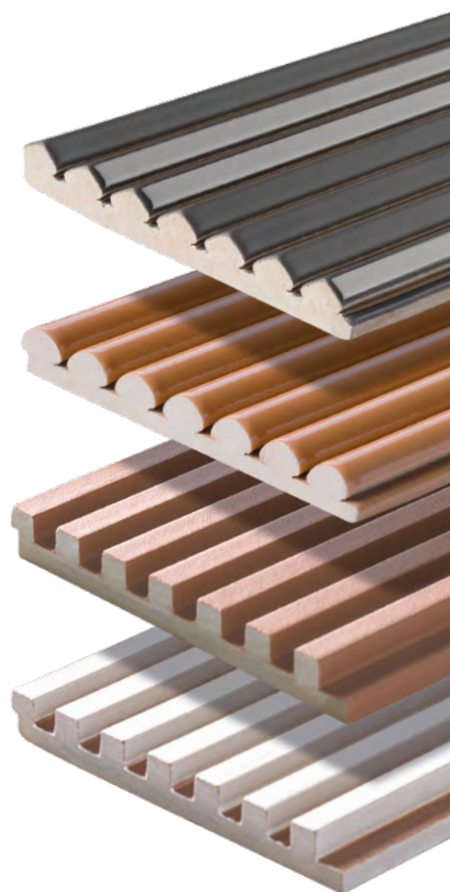
Wall:
2SKR101D002

NEW RANGE

STRIA IS A MONOCOLOUR
PORCELAIN WALL TILE
THAT CREATES A DYNAMIC
STRIPED EFFECT

STRIA

16 COLOURS
3 FINISHES
1 SIZE
1 DECOR





ARCHITECTURE IS BOUND TO SITUATION. LIGHT IS THAT WHICH REVEALS IT.”

Steven Holl

Taking its name from the Latin word for ‘groove’ or ‘furrow’, Stria is a sculptural wall tile collection where rhythm, geometry, and light converge. With three distinctive profiles (U, C, and V), Stria forms a cohesive design language that is both architectural and expressive.

Each shape brings its own character: the U profile gently softens walls with concave curves, the C form carries visual continuity, and the sharp V introduces crisp, angular accents. When used together, they create striking compositions of depth and shadow. Thanks to rectified edges, the tiles can be installed with minimal joints, enhancing their seamless, monolithic appearance. Matt and gloss finishes amplify this effect, interacting with light to achieve a vision of architectural volume.

Crafted from durable porcelain, Stria is suitable for both interior and exterior applications. The collection’s true innovation lies in its tongue-and-groove edge design, which allows tiles to be installed at varying angles, enabling flowing curves and three-dimensional surfaces that defy the flat plane. This design flexibility transforms walls into dynamic, sculpted features.

Rooted in the bold experimentation of the 1960s, Stria reinterprets retro influences with a contemporary sensibility. Offered in a refined palette, White, Ash, Olive, Clay, and more, it elevates everyday spaces into architectural statements, where every surface becomes a play of form, texture, and light.

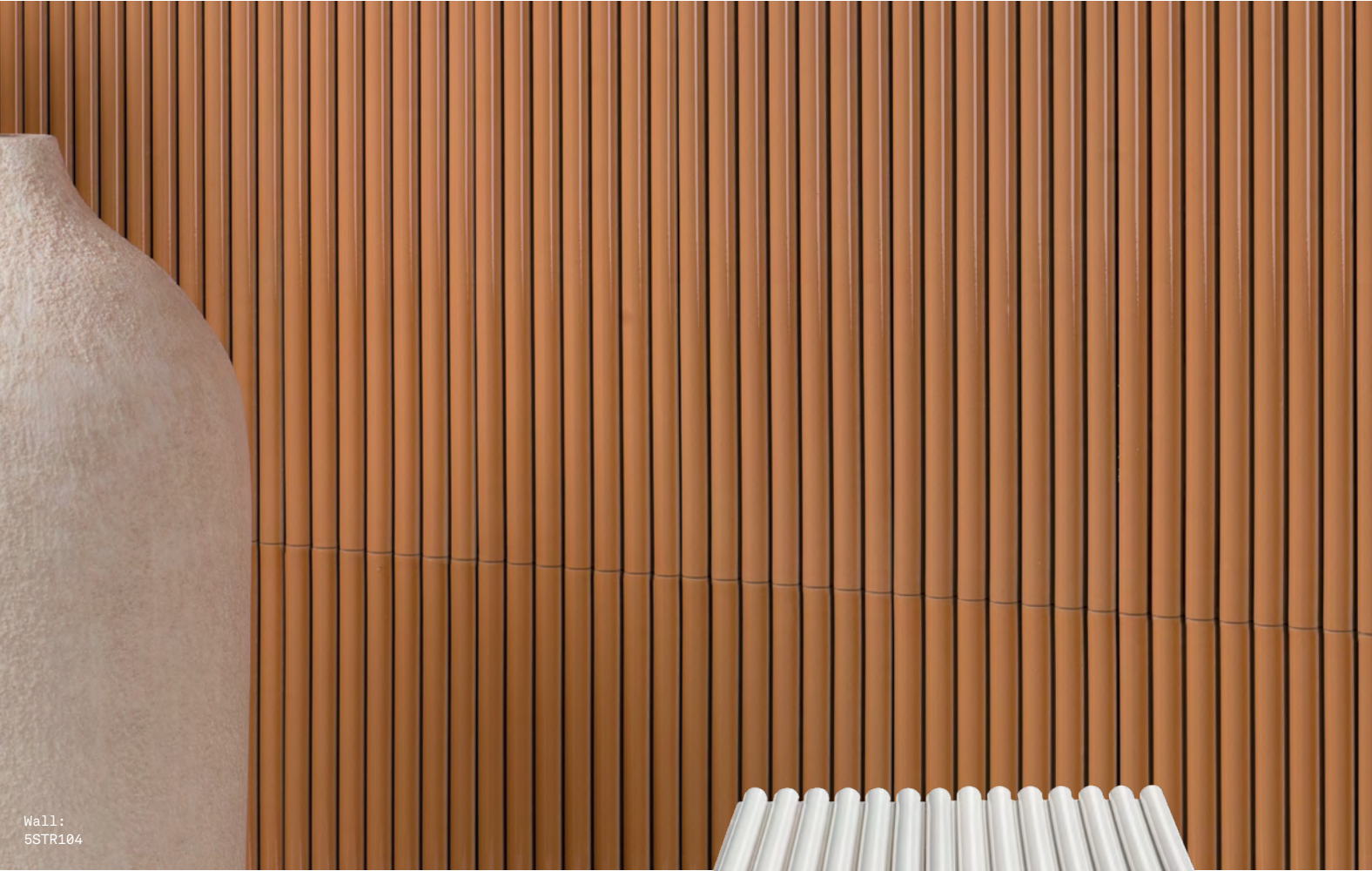
“Stria is all about texture, rhythm, and light. It’s a bold, architectural range with real design flexibility—perfect for creating sculptural wall features in both interior and exterior spaces.”

Justin Jennings,
Product Manager, Solus

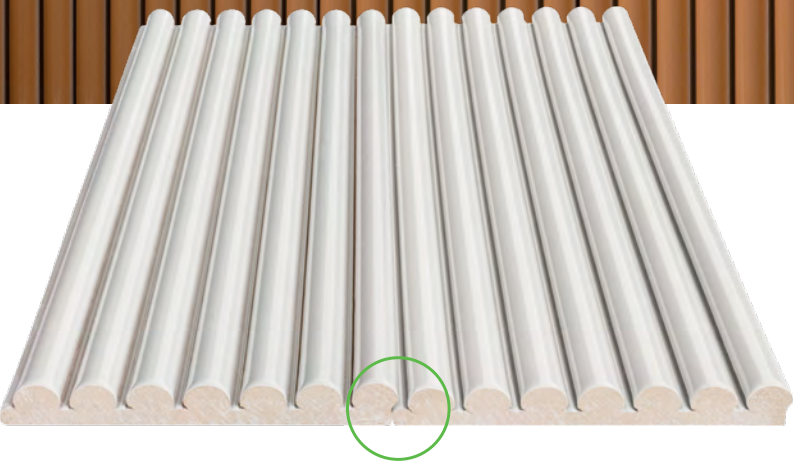
Wall:
5STR112
5STR121D001



Wall:
5STR104



Rectified porcelain tile with jointless assembly that doesn’t require grout.





Wall:
5STR108



Wall:
5STR120D001
5STR116



Wall:
5STR109



Due to glazed corners, the tiles
do not need cutting at 45°.

FINISHES:
Matt, Gloss,
Gloss Matt Mix

APPEARANCE:
Mono Colour

MATERIAL:
Porcelain

USAGE:
Walls only

SHADE VARIATION:
V1 - Uniform

SIZE:
100x390mm

**GLOSS FINISH
COLOURS**



STR-Snow
5STR101



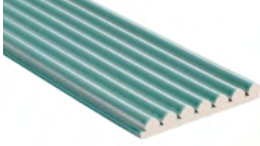
STR-Sky
5STR103



STR-Cream
5STR102



STR-Honey
5STR104

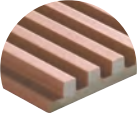


STR-Aqua
5STR105

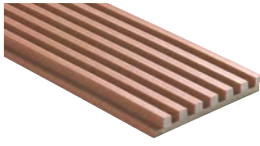


STR-Grey
5STR106

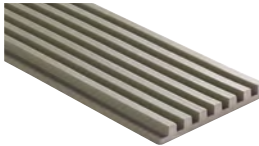
**MATT FINISH
COLOURS**



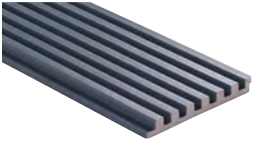
STR-Ice
5STR112



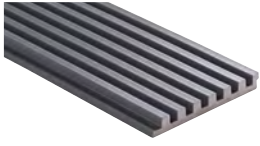
STR-Russett
5STR116



STR-Green
5STR115

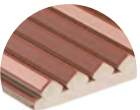


STR-Blue
5STR114



STR-Graphite
5STR113

**MATT GLOSS
MIX FINISH
COLOURS**



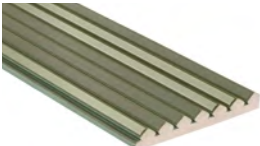
STR-White
5STR107



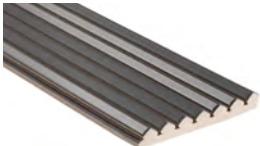
STR-Ash
5STR108



STR-Clay
5STR110



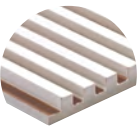
STR-Olive
5STR109



STR-Black
5STR111

**Decors feature
a colour base**

**DECORS
(MATT ONLY)**



STR-Graphite Decor
5STR117D001



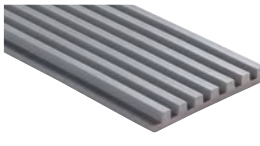
STR-Blue Decor
5STR118D001



STR-Green Decor
5STR119D001



STR-Russett Decor
5STR120D001



STR-Storm Decor
5STR121D001

Full EPD available on request.
Search for Stria at solusceramics.com
for more information about this range.

NEW RANGE



Wall:
5FLF101

5 COLOURS
1 FINISH
1 SIZE

Faculty Wall is a collection of five porcelain tiles featuring a striking interplay of matt and gloss finishes, where partial glazing at sharp, angular cuts creates a unique, light-responsive surface.

FACULTY WALL

Faculty Wall – a light finish

A creative expression of texture and tone, Faculty Wall is a porcelain ceramic wall tile that plays with light through a dynamic blend of matt and gloss finishes. 138x138mm tiles feature a subtle pattern of intersecting rectilinear forms, where areas of gloss cut through the matt surface, creating a shifting, visual effect as the light moves across the installation.

Offered in five minimalist tones, Genius (white), Skillful (gold), Gifted (petrol blue), Tuition (black), and Brilliance (blue), Faculty Wall is designed for architects and designers who seek understated drama and sophistication in contemporary interiors. The surface variation within each tile enhances the architectural language of a space, offering a refined yet animated finish that changes depending on perspective and lighting conditions.

Faculty Wall balances technical performance with bold design intent, bringing a quiet energy to residential, hospitality, and commercial projects alike.

Intersecting gloss details carve through matt finishes, creating depth and dynamic movement.





Walls:
5FLF103

FINISH:
Matt Gloss Mix

APPEARANCE:
Mono Colour

MATERIAL:
Porcelain

USAGE:
Walls only

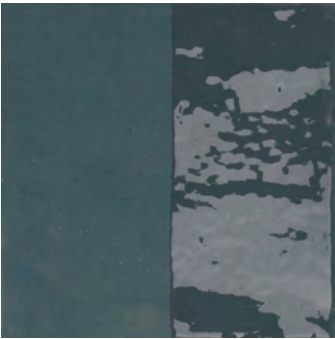
SHADE VARIATION:
V3 - Moderate



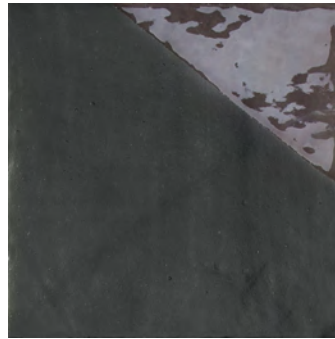
Genius
5FLF101



Skillful
5FLF102



Gifted
5FLF104



Tuition
5FLF106



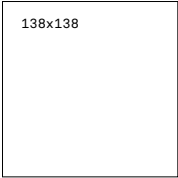
Brilliance
5FLF103

"We're always excited to collaborate with this fantastic Spanish manufacturer. Their commitment to innovation shows in every collection, and their values really align with ours too, with women making up 50% of their directorial and middle management roles.

Faculty Wall is a perfect example of their creativity; a range that brings subtle energy and sophistication to any space."

Justin Jennings,
Product Manager, Solus

For complementary Matt floor and wall tiles, see our Faculty range. Please ask for details.



All sizes are in mm. Full EPD available on request.
Search for Faculty Wall at [solusceramics.com](https://www.solusceramics.com) for more information about this range.

Hartley House

THISS Studio unlocks hidden potential with a bold, sustainable reworking of a Victorian home.

ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN:
THISS Studio

LOCATION:
London

PHOTOGRAPHY:
Henry Woide

RANGES USED IN THIS PROJECT:
Earthstone
Sparkle
Waveform

RESIDENTIAL PROJECT



Floor:
36XT105

Light, texture and joy emerge from a once-cramped terrace, crafting a home where every detail feels alive with intent.

At Hartley House in Waltham Forest, North East London, THISS Studio has demonstrated the transformative potential of imagination. Tasked initially with designing a side return extension to a Victorian terraced home, the studio instead re-envisioned the brief, showing that true spatial value can be unlocked within existing footprints. By prioritising smart design over expansion, THISS Studio not only met the family's functional needs and dramatically reduced the project's carbon footprint, avoiding the environmental and financial costs of a traditional build-out.

THISS Studio, a London-based practice known for its people-first, material-conscious approach, worked closely with the clients to understand their essential requirements: a generous family kitchen, better connection to the garden, additional workspace, and a home imbued with playful character. With their rigorous curiosity and technical dexterity, the studio challenged assumptions about space and form, proposing a bold reorganisation of the ground floor that opened the home to light, functionality and joyful individuality.

Central to the redesign was the kitchen and dining area, the vibrant heart of the house. By opening the back of the property and borrowing space externally with a cantilevered bench framed by oversized sash windows, THISS Studio maximised light and visual connection to the garden. A significant discovery early in the process—a large void beneath the existing floor—became an opportunity. Rather than seeing it as a structural obstacle, THISS Studio embraced it, stepping down into the kitchen and gaining an extra metre of ceiling height, reinforcing the room's sense of airiness and flow.

Material choices throughout Hartley House reflect a commitment to natural textures, sustainability, and visual warmth. Solus' Earthstone Gitchfield tile was selected for its terracotta tones, continuing seamlessly from the interior kitchen floor onto the circular garden patio. Inside, subtle tonal shifts create playful rhythms that define spaces without enclosing them. Solus' Sparkle Canavrel introduces bright, joyful accents, while Waveform's Wav White tiles bring a subtle, tactile wave texture to key surfaces, adding depth and interest without overwhelming the simplicity of the scheme.

The kitchen cabinetry, handmade locally from FSC-certified pine timber, balances honest materiality with bespoke craftsmanship. A mint green floor-to-ceiling shelving unit injects a fresh burst of colour, and playful floral light fittings introduce moments of whimsy that resonate with the family's lively spirit. To maximise the glazing area without resorting to expensive custom solutions, THISS Studio cleverly specified timber-framed sash windows, a cost-effective choice that maintains the quality and character of the space.

Outside, THISS Studio's eye for sculptural detailing shines through. A curved canopy, laser cut from recycled aluminium, projects gracefully over the south-facing windows, offering shade while introducing a dynamic, organic form that softens the building's rectilinear lines. A smaller aluminium ledge beneath it serves as an informal table or seating spot, extending the indoor-outdoor connection.

Elsewhere, the previously misplaced kitchen at the front of the house has been reinstated

Hartley House feels abundant with light, comfort and character without the environmental cost of overbuilding.



“

At Hartley House, it was essential that the tile choices supported the natural, joyful and sustainable ethos of the project.

I recommended Earthstone Gitchfield for their warm terracotta tones, perfect for bridging the interior and exterior spaces; Sparkle Canavrel to add bright, colourful highlights that reflected the family's vibrant personality; and Waveform Wav White to introduce a beautifully subtle texture that brings surfaces to life without overwhelming the calmness of the design.

Working with THISS Studio on this project was a pleasure, they really know how to bring out the best in materials.”

John Rose, Area Sales Manager
johnrose@solusceramics.com

Floor:
3GXT105
Backsplash:
5WAV101

Cantilevered sash windows frame the new kitchen-diner, flooding the space with natural light.



Floor:
3GXT105
Backsplash:
5WAV101



Floor:
3GXT105

as a restful living and study area, painted in butter yellow to create a calm, inviting space. A compact WC and utility room have been inserted off the central hallway, efficiently rationalising the floor plan without sacrificing style or generosity.

THISS Studio's approach embodies sustainable thinking at its most creative. No new concrete was used, no new foundations poured; the emphasis instead lay on refining and adapting what was already there. Materials were chosen for their longevity, low impact and recyclability, from FSC-certified timbers to infinitely recyclable aluminium. The result is a home that feels abundant with light, comfort and character, without the environmental cost of overbuilding.

“Building bigger does not always mean you'll have a space with functionality and quality. We worked with our clients to understand what they really needed as a family, which was actually better, more usable space. In rethinking the home as a team, we have saved a huge amount of carbon and allowed our clients' budget to be redirected into quality, more sustainable materials and fittings that means their home has a sense of beauty, and they will love being there for many years to come.” Sash Scott, Founder of THISS Studio.

ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN:
Quarterback

TILE INSTALLATION:
Arcade Tiling

LOCATION:
London

PHOTOGRAPHY:
Uncommon
Taran Wilku
Sam Bush

RANGES USED IN THIS PROJECT:
Bespoke Terrazzo, Naples, Scenario,
Program, Terraware, Peninsula,
Resource, Pliant, Marbalite



Uncommon Holborn

WORKPLACE PROJECT

A carefully curated space
for wellbeing and work.

From bespoke terrazzo to a curated palette of eight tile ranges, Uncommon Holborn is a masterclass in how materials shape mood, movement, and meaning.



Floor:
Bespoke Terrazzo



Floor:
Bespoke
Terrazzo

At Uncommon Holborn, thoughtful design, sustainability, and bespoke craftsmanship come together to create one of London's most progressive flexible workspaces. Uncommon's latest project, housed in the revitalised Templar House, exemplifies excellence in materiality, wellness, and the art of placemaking. At its heart is a deep attention to detail, from the original architectural features that have been sensitively retained to the selection of finishes that define its contemporary identity.

Solus played a pivotal role in shaping this environment, working closely with Uncommon and developer and design studio Quarterback to deliver a layered, sensory-rich experience. Among the project's highlights is a bespoke terrazzo, created through a close collaboration between client, designer, and supplier.

Pete Toule, Area Sales Manager at Solus, accompanied designer Chere Falconer and Jim Garvey from Quarterback, along with Chris Davies, CEO of Uncommon, to a terrazzo manufacturer in Italy. There, the team was able to experience the production process firsthand and choose the chips, refine the mix, and witness their bespoke terrazzo come to life.

This immersive, collaborative process reflects how far Solus goes to help clients craft the right solution; not just supplying material but shaping it in partnership.

The resulting bespoke terrazzo is now a defining feature throughout Uncommon Holborn. Its texture, tone, and material honesty mirror the project's ethos: a space built with care for both people and the planet. Complementing the terrazzo are eight Solus ranges, carefully selected to enrich different areas of the building, each choice contributing to the project's finely balanced atmosphere.

The Naples range lends an understated elegance to the changing rooms on the lower ground floor, its soft textures echoing the building's biophilic principles. The showers are finished in Scenario, a range selected for its excellent grip and subtle tones.

In the member's café bar, Resource was chosen for its natural finish and sustainable credentials, aligning with Uncommon's environmental focus. Meanwhile, the vibrant bar walk area is finished with Marbalite, adding a touch of dynamism as visitors move through the space.

Arcade Tiling's craftsmanship was instrumental in realising the intricate terrazzo and tiled finishes across the ten-storey building.

Secondary café areas showcase further curated choices. Terraware grounds the setting with its artisanal, earthy feel.

Each selection responds not only to aesthetic criteria but also to practical and sustainable considerations, themes that run throughout Uncommon Holborn's design approach. Materials were chosen for durability, ethical sourcing, and their ability to age gracefully, reducing the need for future replacements.

The installation was entrusted to Arcade Tiling, with Rob Melanson and Ryan Marsh leading the process with exceptional craftsmanship. Their skill and attention to detail ensured that the intricacies of the terrazzo and tile finishes were fully realised across the varied spaces, helping to bring the project's design vision to life.

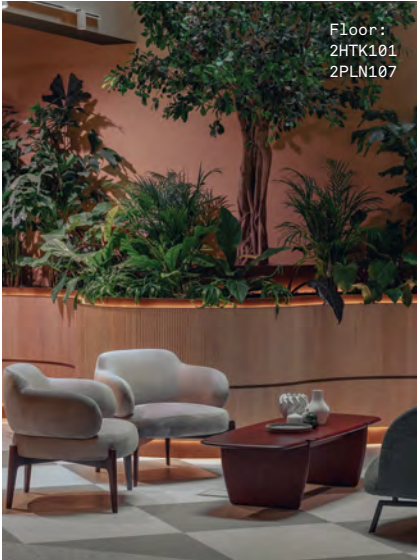
Beyond the technical execution, what makes Uncommon Holborn exceptional is the way material choices support the wider experience of the building. From the lush biophilic environments to the airy workspaces flooded

with natural light, every detail is geared towards human wellbeing. The textures underfoot, the rhythm of surface changes, and the careful transitions between social and reflective zones create a workplace that feels both uplifting and intimate.

The revitalisation of Templar House, led by architecture studio astudio with interiors by Quarterback, reflects a deep respect for the building's heritage. Original 1950s elements have been reinterpreted with a contemporary sensibility, while strategic upgrades aim for BREEAM Excellent certification, championing a more sustainable approach to commercial real estate.

With its blend of timeless materials, tactile finishes, and spaces for quiet focus as well as community connection, Uncommon Holborn sets a new benchmark for flexible workspace design. The bespoke terrazzo, together with eight distinctive Solus ranges, helped define a project where every surface tells a story — one of collaboration, care, and conscious design.

Natural textures, enduring materials, and human-centric design underpin Uncommon Holborn's reimagined workspace.



Working on Uncommon Holborn was a special experience because it was truly collaborative from start to finish.

Travelling with Chere and Chris to Italy to design the bespoke terrazzo really shows the level of personal involvement we bring to every project. Seeing the final result, a space that's so thoughtful, sustainable, and beautiful, is something the whole Solus team is incredibly proud of."

Pete Toule, Area Sales Manager
petetoule@solusceramics.com

The bespoke terrazzo at Uncommon Holborn was developed in Italy by Solus, Uncommon, and Quarterback, tailoring every chip to the project's vision.

Aire Park

A new commercial neighbourhood where design, nature and community converge.



DESIGN:
turnerbates

DEVELOPER:
Vastint

TILE INSTALLATION:
GF Holding Ltd.

PHOTOGRAPHY:
Alex Maguire

LOCATION:
Leeds

RANGES USED IN THIS PROJECT:
LoopCrete
Peninsula
Rockstone



Floor:
3JDT103
Wall:
5PAS107
Benches:
5PAS103

turnerbates and Solus at Aire Park: A New Chapter for Leeds

At the heart of Leeds' South Bank regeneration, Aire Park is redefining city-centre living. Developed by Vastint UK, this 24-acre mixed-use neighbourhood brings together almost a million square feet of commercial space, 1400 new homes, and an eight-acre city park – the largest new city centre green space in the UK.

The site, once occupied by Tetley's Brewery, reconnects Leeds with its industrial past while ushering in a vibrant, sustainable future. Alongside new buildings, the development retains historic landmarks such as The Tetley Art Gallery and Salem Chapel, blending old and new with care and creativity. Simon Schofield, head of development north at Vastint UK, said that they are "looking forward to writing a new chapter in South Brook Street's history with the launch of Aire Park's new commercial space." The first two buildings, 1 and 3 South Brook Street, offer 190,000 sq ft of Grade-A office space, designed with ESG and resilience at their core, targeting BREEAM Excellent and WELL Gold certifications.



Wall:
5PAS102

Within these landmark buildings, designers turnerbates have delivered a vision for interiors that placed human experience and sustainability at the centre – supported by Solus, who supplied sustainable ceramic tiles for the project.

turnerbates' work at Aire Park focused on the interiors of The Atrium and The Lobby, establishing a tone of warmth and welcome. Lead Designer and Associate Joanna Gomm explained that "we wanted to design spaces people would want to use, not just pass through." With a strong background in hospitality projects, turnerbates translated that sense of comfort and invitation into a working environment, avoiding the cold, sterile feel of traditional corporate lobbies.

The design concept was deeply informed by Vastint's brand vision of "Stronger by Nature", realised by Vastint's Head of Design, Mark Burke. Natural textures, sculptural forms, and earthy colours dominate the spaces, creating

Bringing the outside in was key, connecting the interiors to Aire Park's living landscape.

“

Our grounded approach to design was shaped by the forms and colours in the surrounding natural environment.”

Joanna Gomm,
Lead Designer, turnerbates



Floor:
2LCR106
3JDT103



Floor:
2LCR106
3JDT103
Counter:
5PAS102



Floor:
2LCR106
3JDT103
Walls:
5PAS107
Benches:
5PAS103



Floor:
2LCR106
3JDT103
Walls:
5PAS107

“

It was a real pleasure working with turnerbates on Aire Park. We have built a strong relationship with their team over the years, and it's always great to see that trust reflected in projects of this calibre.

Vastint have been fantastic to work with too – their commitment to quality and sustainability shines through at every stage. I'd also like to give a special thanks to Steven Shipley and the team at GF Holding, who did an outstanding job with the tiling installation.

The finished spaces are absolutely beautiful and it's been a privilege for Solus to play a part in such a landmark development for Leeds.”

Pete Toule, Area Sales Manager
petetoule@solusceramics.com

an authentic connection between the interiors and the eight-acre park beyond. “We wanted to create a sense of place using the immediate locality and language of nature,” said Joanna. A key feature of The Atrium is the suspended sculpture: delicate petals formed from copper mesh, inspired by the magnolia trees planted throughout Aire Park.

Flow was a central design principle throughout the project. Drawing on similar experiences from projects in Vilnius, Joanna explained that the goal was to create a space that encouraged movement without barriers, keeping the environment dynamic and open.

Delivering The Atrium was not without its challenges. Heating and cooling such a large, open space presented technical hurdles, particularly as it had to remain visually light and inviting. “The Atrium space was where the meat of the challenge lay,” said Joanna. “Getting the ceiling and the lighting design right was critical. We had to create dynamic, sculptural features that captured attention without becoming barriers to flow.”

Materials played a vital role in the success of the interiors. Solus provided sustainable ceramic tiles that supported the project's environmental ambitions while complementing the crafted, natural aesthetic developed by turnerbates.

turnerbates' longstanding relationship with Vastint proved crucial throughout the process. Joanna said, “Vastint are a dream client – committed to sustainability, open to creative ideas, and always focused on how people will actually use the spaces.” She also praised the Leeds construction team from Vastint – Scott, Simon, and Dan – for their support, and Megan for her role in bringing the brand vision to life.

Thanks to this collaboration, Aire Park's interiors successfully embody the spirit of Leeds' South Bank transformation.

Joanna summarised the project simply: “It's about creating places that people connect with, that reflect their environment and celebrate their city's identity. Leeds is stronger by nature – and Aire Park embodies that perfectly.”

Solus' sustainable ceramic tiles complement crafted materials across the social spaces at Aire Park.

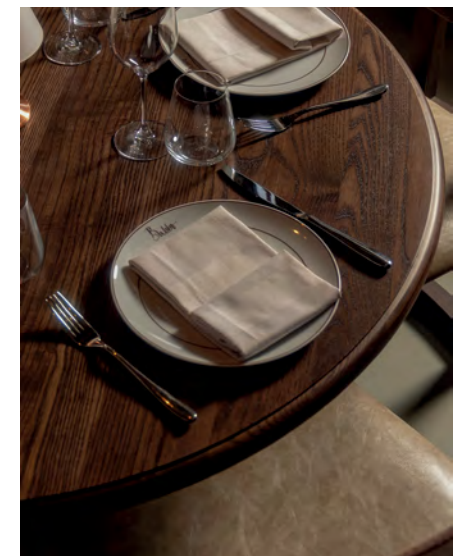


Floor:
2LCR106
3JDT103
Walls:
5PAS107
Benches:
5PAS103



HOSPITALITY PROJECT

Babbo



“Who’s Your Daddy?” – Studio du Feu deliver stunning design at Babbo Restaurant

ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN:
Studio du Feu

LOCATION:
London

PHOTOGRAPHY:
Lensmans Ltd. and Frederick Goff

RANGES USED IN THIS PROJECT:
Crest and Modular

Burgundy awnings and a vintage Fiat Cinquecento set a playful, unmistakably Italian tone on St John’s Wood High Street.

Babbo, which means “Daddy”, in Italian, is a modern Mediterranean restaurant with an outstanding wine list and an ambitious kitchen. Located on St John’s Wood High Street a few doors down from The Ivy, burgundy awnings shade a heated terrace and a delightfully improbable Fiat Cinquecento.

We spoke with Becky du Feu, founder of Studio du Feu, the team behind Babbo Restaurant. Becky has worked in architecture and design for over 20 years. Having succeeded at various firms and achieved a directorship, she felt confident starting her own practice during lockdown. “This wasn’t a pandemic pivot but a long-held ambition. Lockdown wasn’t the cause; it was the catalyst.”

We explored how Studio du Feu’s design approach aligned with the post-pandemic shift toward blended spaces. Becky explained that while the pandemic sped up the adoption of multi-functional spaces, the core concept was

something she’d been developing for years. As she recalled her time in Dubai in 2007, she noted, “Even then, I was designing banks to feel like retail stores, anticipating this very evolution.”

The Babbo job came about through word-of-mouth. Becky’s extensive list of contacts and active networking secured the gig through a contractor friend. The client, Kia Joorabchian, was a pleasure to work with. “It was great working with Kia. He had a clear idea of what he didn’t want, and we were able to arrive at a design scheme through a process of elimination. He also wanted something special. A dream client really.”

The interior is defined by shades of red against polished plaster; vermillion, burgundy, terracotta. Dark wood furniture, loose and fixed, from Furniture Fusion provides the seating, and the round tables foster a convivial and family-friendly atmosphere. Wavy wooden wall



Floors:
5QNA349



Solus’ Modular Burgundy tile was used to create striking rosettes which became a key motif in the branding of the restaurant.



A place to conduct business and enjoy pleasure – a blended space.



“

It's always great to work with Becky. She has such a wonderful and distinctive aesthetic. We were delighted to advise on the ceramic rosette which is so good it became a hallmark of the branding for Babbo.

It's rare to see a tile go from floor to feature to branding like that. It just shows how powerful the right material, used in the right way, can be.”

John Rose, Area Sales Manager
johnrose@solusceramics.com

The right material, used in the right way, can be transformative.

sculptures and bespoke timber are striking notes as is the beautiful ceiling mirror, created by artist Ruth Parker. “I'm lucky to call Ruth a friend. She does remarkable things with mirrors to create light-infused artworks. We used these to create a feature panelled ceiling and backlit them with adjustable lights. A unique feature.”

There are no curtains at Babbo, the client opting instead for dynamic glass which can become opaque at the flick of a switch, providing privacy for the restaurant's often celebrated guests. A place to conduct business and enjoy pleasure, a blended space, like much of Studio du Feu's work.

Solus ASM John Rose worked with Becky to provide some signature touches. A rosette of radiating tiles was so impressive that it found its way into the branding for the restaurant itself, appearing on the menus as a motif. And elsewhere, Solus tiles provided their customary technical and aesthetic excellence to support the overall scheme. “I've known John a long time and we always use Solus. They're wonderful to work with!”



Floor:
5QNA349

SIMON ALLFORD

PHOTOGRAPHY:
Tim Soar
AHMM

This interview with Simon Allford took place at the London studios of Allford Hall Monaghan Morris, the practice he co-founded in 1989 and has helped shape into one of the UK's most influential architectural firms. A former President of the RIBA, Allford is known not only for AHMM's widely acclaimed work across housing, education, health and workplace sectors, but for his outspoken advocacy for reform within the profession.

“I’ve never been interested in reinforcing closed systems. Architecture should be open: to new people, new voices, new ways of thinking.”

We met at AHMM's home at Morelands on Old Street. Before the conversation began, Simon gave us a tour of the building: through the model shop, the materials library, and the layered additions that demonstrate the practice's thinking in built form. He spoke with characteristic energy about reuse, constraint, and the life of buildings long after the architect has left the scene.

This interview forms part of Under the Table, a series inspired by a story told by Alvar Aalto. As a child, Aalto recalled crawling beneath his father's kitchen table and experiencing a primal sense of architecture: enclosure, safety, prospect. Each interview in the series explores something of that early intuition: how our subjects first encountered architecture, what shaped their outlook, and what they've carried with them since.

What follows is a heavily edited version of a much longer conversation. Due to the constraints of the print edition, entire sections have been cut for length. A full version of the interview is available online.

How did you come to architecture?

I came to architecture a bit later than some, around seventeen. I'd been thinking about doing history or English. I liked words, but didn't like being told what to read and when to read it. I'd always drawn but hadn't taken art O-level. I suppose I wanted to be creative in another way. So I said, "I'm going to be an architect." Which sounds like it came from nowhere, but my dad was an architect.

He was surprised. He said, "It won't be easy. You'll never work for me, that wouldn't be fair, but if you want to do it, don't let me stop you."

Looking back, it had probably been brewing. Many of our family photos are on building sites. At dinner, there was always an architect or engineer from somewhere in the world. I just didn't realise how immersed in architecture I was until I stepped out of it.

As a young man, I thought I might be a footballer. I got to a decent level but eventually realised others were simply better. That was a moment of clarity. I decided to leave London and go somewhere different: Sheffield, where my dad was from, and where my beloved Sheffield Wednesday played.

I was a Londoner with northern roots, a bit of an outsider. My mum was from Redcar, my dad from Sheffield, but most of the family had passed away. There was a kind of mythology about the north which I found fascinating. When I got to Sheffield, I realised how much architecture had shaped my life. Suddenly I



Adelaide Wharf,
London

“A practice should be open, like a school of life. People come and go. Some return as collaborators or friends. It’s sad when firms fear departures, as if they’re afraid of what that change might mean.”



Soho Place,
London

recognised names from lectures; not because I’d studied them, but because I’d heard their names around the dinner table: Mies, Cedric Price. Cedric and Frank Newby, the engineer, were my dad’s closest travelling companions.

Did your parents’ socialist beliefs inform your desire to ‘create a landscape of choice’?

Yes. My parents were socialists: they believed in fairness, in meritocracy, in the idea that talent should rise regardless of background. My dad grew up on a council estate in Sheffield, the son of a steelworker who died aged 53. There were no family connections, no safety net, just ability. That stayed with him. And it stayed with me.

He was made a partner by FRS Yorke, whose partner before the war was Marcel Breuer. But that trajectory wasn’t about privilege; it was about capability.

That mindset shaped how I think about architecture. I’ve never been interested in reinforcing closed systems. I talk about creating a “landscape of choice” because architecture should be open: to new people, new voices, new ways of thinking. The profession doesn’t belong to us. It belongs to those who will use it, live in it, change it.

Some of that thinking came from the post-war period. The war was one of the great drivers of creative invention. People in their twenties were suddenly given enormous responsibility, forced to solve critical problems under pressure. When peace came, they returned with that confidence and found a country that needed rebuilding.

There’s a story I often think about. In 1943, Churchill wrote to Arup about the Mulberry Harbours: massive concrete tanks floated across the Channel to create landing sites for D-Day. He said, “They must float up and down with the tide. The problem of the anchor must be solved. Let the details look after themselves.” And Arup had three months to make it happen.

Today, that brief would generate five steering committees and a 200-page risk register. But back then, it was clarity, constraint, and trust that drove invention.

Do you think post-war Brutalism failed?

Not entirely. Many of those architects cared deeply. The failure, if there was one, wasn’t about style, it was about speed and scale. Too much was built too quickly. Too many assumptions were made. Not enough thought was given to how people actually lived or wanted to live.

And the context was extreme. London had been bombed into fragments. Watch The Lavender Hill Mob; the city is rubble, cratered plots, standing pools. There was a kind of tabula rasa. In that void, architects tried to build a better world.

Some of it worked. Some didn’t. The Barbican was unfashionable when it opened, now it’s desirable. But it never fulfilled the dream of everyone moving to the first floor. It’s still isolated, still flawed, though it’s beginning to work.

That’s something architecture has to accept. Buildings begin their real life when we stop working on them. What starts unfashionable may later be loved. And what’s fashionable may fade without trace.

We need humility. Passion is no guarantee. Just because you care doesn’t mean you’re right. The willingness to listen — to others, to doubt, to time — is part of the job.

And that’s where I think today’s government gets it wrong. When they talk about housing, it’s all numbers. “We’ll build 400,000 homes.” But that’s not the question. The question isn’t how many; it’s how good. It’s who for. The answer can’t just be volume.

What qualities make a good architect and good architecture?

Architecture is always collaborative. You work with clients, designers, builders — but also with society. Because a building outlasts the people who commission it. If it’s any good, it becomes a long-term asset that adapts and evolves.

That’s where generosity comes in. And openness. You don’t absorb every comment, but you do listen. If someone says, “Can

it be blue instead of yellow?” the real question is: What are they trying to say? You reflect that back through the architecture.

Ideally, a building has enough personality that people can use it in ways you never imagined. They take it over, change it, and it still works. We’ve always believed that design should welcome real life, not resist it. If a project looks better once people move in and start living, that’s success.

Le Corbusier once said, after locals altered his modernist houses at Pessac, “Life is always right.” I think that’s true. You can’t over-prescribe. That’s why we talk about “long life, loose fit”: giving a building the flexibility to grow, adapt, take on new meanings over time.

Reuse isn’t a trend; it’s tradition. For centuries, buildings were repurposed, materials recycled, ideas reworked. We forget that. Most “new” innovations are just old ideas in new packaging.

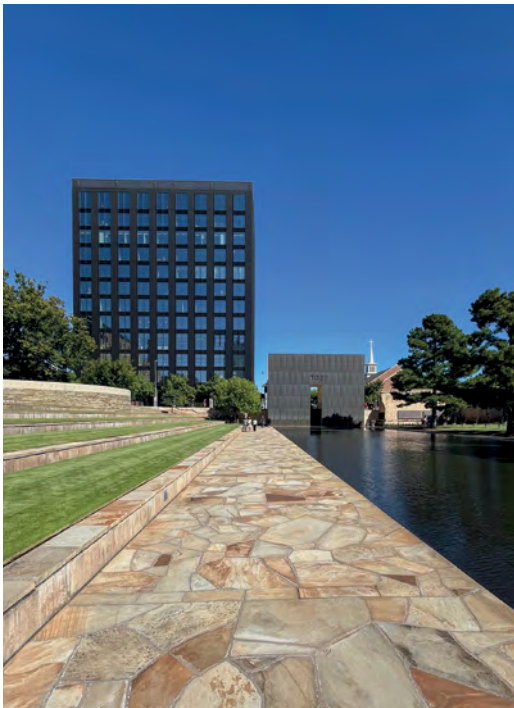
We learn by doing. I walk around projects and see things that aren’t as good as they should be: not to criticise, but to improve. If you get 3% better each time, across ten projects, that’s serious progress. In light, in air, in joy, whatever it might be.

Colin Chapman, founder of Lotus, said “Simplify, then add lightness.” Does that principle inform your practice?

Yes. Asking a difficult question of yourself or the project is always a good place to begin. We have a saying here: if a design review ends with everyone satisfied, it probably isn’t very good. You need challenge. You need to think hard to make something better.

Chapman’s idea was to gain speed through lightness, not horsepower. Architecture in the 1960s did something similar. Cheap energy allowed for light, demountable buildings.

Then came the oil crisis. Energy got expensive. Buildings got heavier, to retain heat. We began pouring energy into the fabric of buildings. And now, with a greener grid, we’re asking if that embodied carbon is justified. If operational carbon is dropping, maybe the weight isn’t worth it.



The Citizen,
Oklahoma City

The whole logic around lightness, energy and carbon has shifted over my career. And I don't think the profession's fully caught up.

Buckminster Fuller talked about designing as if Earth were a spaceship, with finite resources. That mindset still matters. Buildings are systems. We need to think like systems designers.

But we must be careful not to turn sustainability into dogma. Context changes. What made sense five years ago might not today. Values need testing, not just repeating.

That's why we say architects don't own architecture, society does. And our best clients understand that. They're building for the long term. Schools, homes, healthcare, workplaces: they're converging. So we talk about longevity, how the building will age, how it can adapt.

Because if the client is thinking about the future, you can design for it. If they're just flipping the building, that's when architecture becomes short-term and forgettable.

How do you know when a client or project is the right fit?

When I was a young architect, we had no money, no work, and anyone who walked through the door was a potential lifeline. Owen Luder, a twice-president of the RIBA and a south London lad from Brixton, gave us a piece of advice: "If a difficult client turns up, write them a cheque for £20,000 and ask them to leave; you'll lose more by keeping them."

We didn't have £20,000, but the point was clear: you can only make good architecture with people who care. That starts with the client, and it extends to everyone on the team: the contractor, the trades, the makers.

They need to know what the idea is. What's the thinking behind the building? What are we trying to do structurally, materially, emotionally? If someone's going to be working through cold, wet months on site, they need to believe in the why: not just the what. I'm not romantic about it. It's hard. We're often saying, "We need to deliver more for less." So it's a negotiation: of ownership, risk, responsibility. But that's the human side of it.

We talk about the human side of architecture after it's built. But the making of it is just as human, and just as extraordinary. You walk onto site and there are hundreds of people—local, international—all contributing to something that's never existed before. Every building is a prototype.

People say buildings are expensive. They are. But they're not like cars. We don't make thousands of the same one. Most of the time, we're working in complex, historic environments. There are constraints below ground, in the air, in the fabric of the city. And within that, you have to hold a vision and carry people with you.

It's an opera. And like all operas, it can soar or collapse. The trick is making sure everyone can hear the music.

You've spoken elsewhere about the galvanising effect of a health scare. Would you mind telling us about that?

I've always been sporty, but I live life fairly large too. One of my clients, who owns this building and was involved in some important projects, suggested I get a well-man test. I'd been running a lot, felt fit, didn't think much of it.

Then I got a call from someone I didn't recognise. I told our receptionist, "Don't know her, I'm busy." She came back and said, "She says she's a doctor." It was the doctor who'd done my test. And then she delivered the famous line: "I don't wish to alarm you,



White Collar Factory,
London



Urbanest Battersea,
London



University of Amsterdam,
Amsterdam



but you could drop dead at any moment." Quite an unsettling thing to hear in a meeting.

I had a session that afternoon at Richard Rogers' office. I thought, What do I do? Well—I went to the meeting.

That evening, I told my wife, "I feel like an extra in Scanners, my head could explode at any minute." Then came the next dilemma: Sheffield Wednesday were playing Brentford in the playoff semi-final at Hillsborough. I said, "If we score, I'll jump up, and that'll be it." She said, "Well, if you're going to die anywhere, die there." As it happened, we won. Then won again. Then went to Wembley and won that too. And I'm still here.

For six or eight weeks, I was in limbo, waiting for scans and answers. Eventually, they said, "At worst, you'll need a pacemaker." I thought, Fine. Crack on.

It definitely shifted something. I'd gone from feeling healthy at 42, to being told I could go at any moment, to realising it was manageable. That arc puts things into perspective.

I've tried to treat it as a lesson. I like life. I lost a sister to a brain tumour. Whatever problems I've got, they're nothing compared to that. So, for fuck's sake, enjoy it. It can't be a hedonistic joyride, but try to enjoy the opera. Even the problems. Otherwise, it'll wear you down.

How did you meet Sam Frith? Tell us about that relationship.

I work on a lot of projects, with a lot of brilliant people, but I don't always get to dive into the detail as much as I'd like. One day Steve Taylor said to me, "You should meet this guy, Sam Frith." I didn't know who he was, or where he was. Turned out he was on Hatton Garden. So I said, "I'll just pop in, have a coffee, see what he's about." I stumbled through a big timber door, probably muttered, "fuck it" as I went in, and I had a black eye at the time,

which I think Sam remembers. I was wired, between meetings. But I walked in and thought: this place is magic.

It wasn't a showroom in the usual sense. It was a space full of ideas. You opened drawers and there were glazes, surfaces, strange materials. It was like a toy shop. He'd worked with Simon Astridge on the design, so it was clever, not just about materials, but a material itself. The courtyard, tiled in terrazzo, felt like a room. The whole thing was architectural and completely personal. It was Sam's project. His mind, laid out.

I told my friend and long-time client Simon Silver, "Just go down there. Don't go looking for tiles, just go for the conversation."

Sam knows more about ceramics than I ever could or want to. That's the point. I'd rather explore his brain than try to fill mine. I throw something at him, he comes back with something unexpected. That's the joy.

Now we're working on a new project together: Baker Street, with Simon Silver's firm. There are four buildings on site. We said: there's material worth keeping here. So Sam went in to do an audit. Not to find a finish. To find meaning. Old letters, bits of façade, fragments to recast, reuse.

He doesn't make, but he knows the world of makers. Through him, you enter into conversations with materials, history, people.

That's the best kind of collaboration. It's not defined by deliverables; it's defined by dialogue. It's creative, material, emotional. A journey. And that's what you need in life. The building is a journey. The material is a journey. The conversation is a journey.

And let's be honest, buildings fucking hard. I tell clients that all the time. So you need honest, generous relationships. You need people you want to walk the journey with. That's what I've had with Sam. And the best part is, it's still going.

What’s your advice for young people thinking about entering architecture or design?

If you’re interested in architecture, engage with it. It’s a brilliant, rewarding career. And while people say the education is long, it’s really not: three years, plus two. Soon, it might be three plus one. We’re working on new earn-and-learn models, bringing back some of the older ways of learning: on the job, not just in the classroom.

But more importantly: don’t study architecture because you feel you have to become an architect. Study it because you’re curious. No one says they “dropped out” of philosophy. But you hear that about architecture. I’d say, if you studied it, it changed how you see the world. That’s enough.

Architecture touches everything: people, place, science, systems, culture. That’s why so many people who study it become filmmakers, designers, planners, writers. Around 40% don’t end up in practice. That’s not failure, that’s the sign of a great education.

Even if you stay in the field, you might not become an architect. Some of the most brilliant collaborators I’ve worked with moved into construction or development. They still love architecture, they just apply it differently.

“The fact that you care doesn’t automatically make you right. The willingness to listen, to criticism, to doubt, even to your own uncertainty, is a vital part of architecture.”



Lansdowne House,
London

And even if you walk away from it, it gives you something lasting. It trains you to ask: What’s the real problem here? What’s driving this? How might we change it? That’s what architecture does. It just happens to use buildings as its medium.

There’s a Cedric Price line I love. After four meetings with a couple who wanted an extension, he told them, “You don’t need an extension. You need a divorce.” Sometimes the most creative act is not building. That’s still architecture, rethinking what’s already there, how it could work better.

You don’t need to have a fixed idea of what kind of architect you’ll be or if you’ll be one at all. Come with curiosity. Let that guide you. It might lead you to policy, planning, craft, or even regulation.

One thing I’ve said before: the GLA made north-facing flats illegal. But I live in one. I get no solar gain, my blinds are always up. Meanwhile, the one south-facing window overheats. The blinds are always down. So who got it right?

Designers need to test those assumptions. Sometimes, constraints are the best starting point: not because they make life easy, but because they make you think.

And if architecture teaches you anything, it’s how to think.



The Yellow Building,
London

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