

QUARTER

A publication by SOLUS

CLOUD TO CLOUD

Set the Controls for the Heart of the Sun.



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EDITOR'S NOTE

Welcome to QUARTER

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In this 30th edition of Quarter, we are delighted to launch our new branding and share with you the story of our reimagined Clerkenwell showroom. As the UK's leading independent supplier of architectural ceramics, we take design seriously. We hope that our new branding expresses to you, our reader, our passion and commitment to excellence in design, and that you will come and visit us in our new showroom.

Quarter 30 features exciting projects from Associated Architects, JM DA, Louis de Soissons, and A Small Studio. We visit London, Birmingham, Helsinki, and a supercar showroom in Hertfordshire. We present seven amazing ranges chosen by our Product Manager Justin Jennings, that represent the cutting edge of ceramic design.

We speak to Graphic Artist Anthony Burrill, Architect Robert Delius of Stride Treglown, and Colour Consultant Justine Fox, on the relationship between design, optimism and change.

And we travel to the home of renowned Finnish Architect and Educator Juhani Pallasmaa for a deeply personal interview in which he reflects upon the fundamental essence and purpose of design, and explains why he sees "... the task of architecture as the defence of the authenticity of human experience."

Conleth Buckley, Editor
conlethbuckley@solusceramics.com



We're excited to release the first issue of Quarter with our new branding! Over the years, Solus has grown a lot as a business, with sustainability, design and community at the centre of it all, and it was time for our branding to evolve with us. The brief for branding agency TM Studio was to create a brand that fully reflects who we are; our values, culture and purpose; and it's great to see it come to life in Quarter!

Special thanks to Ricardo Jardim, Senior Graphic Designer, who has created every single issue of Quarter since the beginning (thirty issues ago!), for completely redesigning the whole magazine to incorporate the new branding. And of course, Conleth Buckley, Editor of Quarter, for his ever thoughtful and inquisitive words. We hope you enjoy!"

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SOLUS CLERKENWELL

What is the purpose of a showroom in a world of next-day delivery and high-resolution imagery available round the clock?

There is a simple answer - connection.

While technology has improved general access to products, few would deny that it has reduced the opportunities for human interaction. For designers and architects, receiving a warm welcome in an inviting space, taking time to see and touch materials, to hear their stories from people who care is a valuable resource. At least that's what we believe!

We opened our reimagined Clerkenwell showroom, designed by Simon Astridge and Nicholas Szczepaniak, in March 2023. It represents a departure from the paradigm of showrooms as repositories, towards something more about connection.

Architects:
**NICHOLAS SZCZEPANIAK
AND SIMON ASTRIDGE**

Tiling Contractor:
COPLEY LTD

Photography:
NICHOLAS WORLEY



REOPENS ITS DOORS



Solus Clerkenwell is a story-telling space in which we can take our customers on a journey, both physically and imaginatively.



An induction hob sits underneath a porcelain worktop.

Showrooms have been an important sales tool for hundreds of years. In London, spaces to present products for order are attested as far back as 1610. For Solus, this single function feels like a missed opportunity. Our customers deserve more and the location of our Clerkenwell showroom demands more; so, we are delighted to launch a new kind of paradigm-shifting showroom.

What is a showroom for, then? This is the question that Architects, Simon Astridge and Szczepaniak Teh, and Solus Creative Director, Sam Frith were considering when they began the design process.

Sam Frith explains, "The showroom, as was, is dead. A space that is solely a sample repository is of limited interest to our audience. We need to engage with them, capture their attention. Architects and Designers still want to see and hold products; they want to feel their weight, their texture, see how the colours behave. But most significantly and increasingly, they want to hear their story. Solus Clerkenwell is a story-telling space in which we can take our customers on a journey, both physically and imaginatively."

80 Clerkenwell Road has always been the prime position in the Clerkenwell design district. Located on one corner of Clerkenwell's answer to Shibuya Crossing, the building housed a temperance café during the Victorian era. What the original occupants would think of some of the parties that now happen in the space is not difficult to imagine!

Double glass doors give onto a small atrium with steps up to an open area (a ramp can be deployed to enhance access). This is the exhibition space. Every three months, a new installation or exhibition from an architect or designer takes pride of place here, acting as a draw to the inquisitive, passing by the large, street-level windows. The concept for the space was clear to Sam Frith long before the redesign began. "Very simply, we want to do cool stuff with cool people. How amazing is it that we can offer this outward-facing, busy corner in the heart of the design district in one of the great cities of the world, to artists, architects, designers, performers as a place to display their creativity?"

The balustrade was painstakingly ground down to the bare metal, creating a pleasing tactile experience and an unexpected industrial note.



Tiled by: **COPLEY**
copleyltd.co.uk



The big idea here is that exhibitors will collaborate with one of our major partners to create something interesting: this could be connected to activism, aesthetically driven, material-focussed, or something else entirely. Accompanying the exhibitions are programmes of events, talks, screening, tastings, practical sessions, to amplify communications. The purpose of both the space and the activities is one of cultural and social engagement.

Brand Manager, Katie Mitchelmore explains, “We want the showroom to nourish the mind and spirit of the creative community. Takeaway pizza, Prosecco, and a playlist had a good run, but it is time to move on. There will still be food and drink, but it will be more considered, more intentional. Exhibitors will showcase their work to their peers, collaborate with serious patrons, and explore ideas with the community.”

“Adaptation to the changing demands of our key audience is business critical. We’re lucky to have partners that trust our understanding of the market and who support this initiative. We’re also lucky to have an incredible team at Solus who are making it happen.” Ryan Bennett, Managing Director of Solus.

The entire ground floor is tiled with our most popular range, Travertine 1. An open plan kitchen facilitates the transition from the entrance into the space. A long birch and ceramic counter with integrated induction hob that transmits heat directly through the worktop includes, at one end, a welcome desk and seating for the showroom manager. Moving past the counter you come to an open space with AV equipment. Talks, panel discussions, presentations and screenings are held here. Stools made from recycled plastic and coffee from Mater surround a specially commissioned table from social enterprise, Goldfinger.

“The programmatic entities that we identified early on are the welcoming, community-facing ground floor, and the more personal and private lower ground floor. Both areas have multiple use requirements and quite clear and distinct personalities. We wanted the light and dynamism of the street-level to shift to a more womb-like and contemplative atmosphere below.” Architect Simon Astridge tells us.

As you turn the corner to the stairhead you will notice the burnished steel staircase, angle-ground by one determined sub-contractor, it is a striking industrial note in a soft, minimal space. Clay-painted walls with occasional bright inclusions follow you down the stairs. This bespoke finish continues throughout the basement and was provided by Clayworks. It incorporates



The ground floor is a space for cultural and community engagement, designed to celebrate creative collaboration.



ground-up, discontinued samples from our old showroom – a rare example of post-consumer ceramic recycling.

The open ground floor gives way to something more studious and quiet as you descend. This is the library. Rows of birch joinery displaying the most sustainable and innovative ceramics from around the world stretch through the space. A librarian’s desk, from which samples can be ordered, is situated at the foot of the stair with a well-lit display table to the right. A ‘necklace’ of joinery runs around the perimeter, displaying products that we are particularly fond of, as well as art, design and architecture books for inspiration. Alcoves punctuate this necklace providing spaces for dry laying and private meetings. Using our Naples range, the flooring features two different finishes helping clients to visualise the product in use.

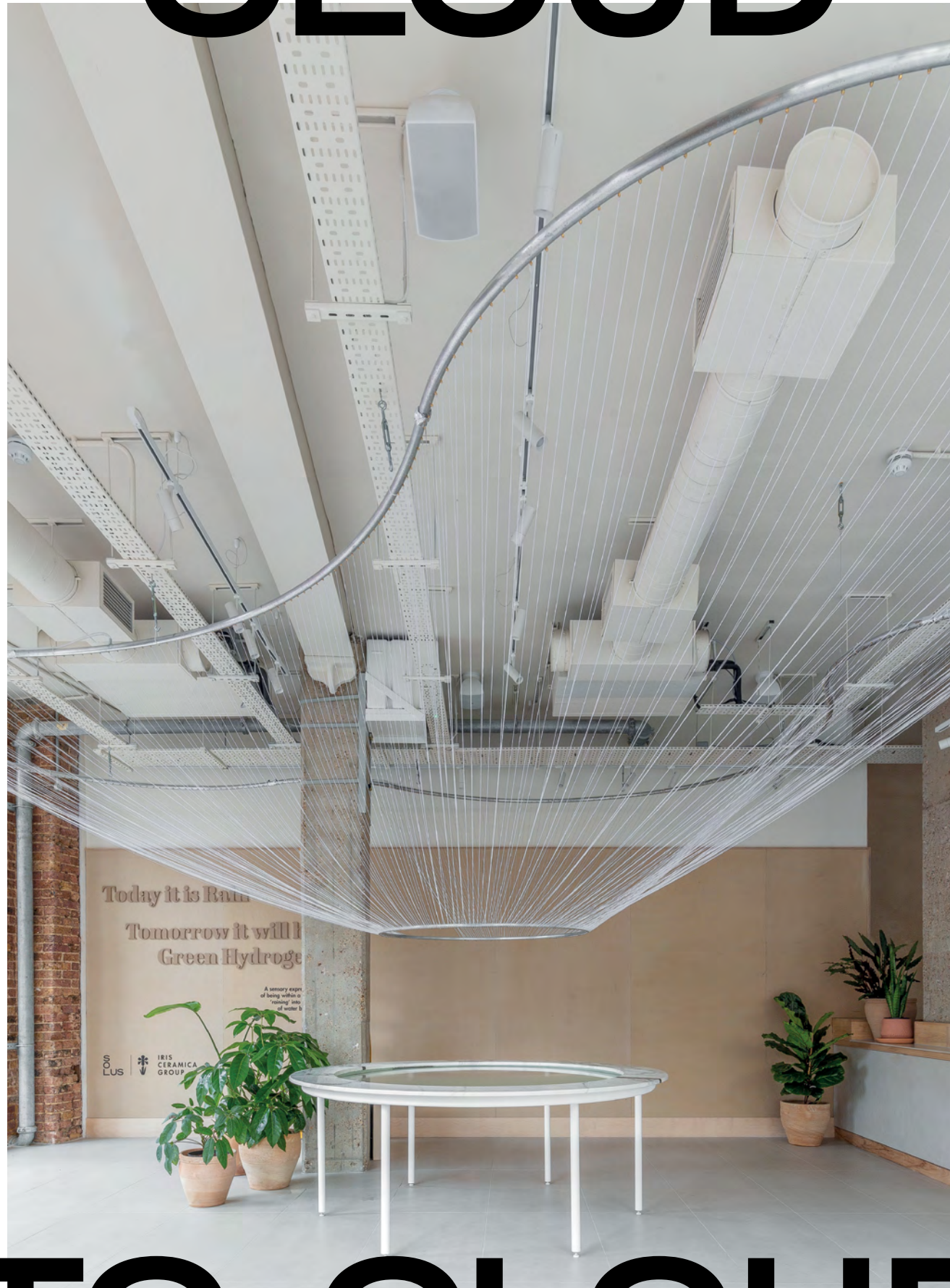
Soft lighting creates a place of repose and meditation, fostering creativity in an atmosphere far removed from the hustle and bustle of the streets above. A perfect space for a design meeting, a client walk-through, a practice research trip, or an afternoon of quiet study.

“We want the A&D community to look upon this showroom as their space, to use as they like. If you have an idea for the space, reach out. If you’d like to host an event for your clients, screen a film, give a talk, let us know. If you just want a quiet afternoon to focus, we’ll keep the coffee coming and the volume low.” Mirko Amir Francia, Showroom Manager.

Marcus Bentley, CEO of Solus says, “We’re delighted with the new showroom and the new direction it takes us in as a company. The A&D community in Clerkenwell is responsible for a significant part of our success as a business, so it feels good to give something back.”

Doors are open, drop in, and keep an eye on our upcoming events.

CLOUD



TO CLOUD



Iris Ceramica Group's H2 Factory™



We launched our new showroom during Clerkenwell Design Week with a stunning installation from our key partner Iris Ceramica Group.

Cloud to Cloud was a collaboration between Iris Ceramica Group and Architects Szczepaniak Teh. Iris Ceramica Group is spearheading the de-carbonisation of the ceramics manufacturing sector by re-engineering their production process to run off green hydrogen.

Cloud to Cloud was a captivating meditation upon hydrogen in its most commonly encountered form – water. It also emulated the water cycle, communicating a message about natural systems, circularity, and the complex beauty of something we take for granted.

Water emerged from a cloud-shaped structure connected by hundreds of strings to a glass-bottomed pool. A special property of water means it can adhere to the strings but also roll along them. The water dripped into the pool creating exquisite light ripples, or caustics that remind us of our Sun, the energetic heart of our existence and a huge ball of fusing hydrogen.

Iris Ceramica Group wanted to create an opportunity to tell the design community about their drive to decarbonise, their development of green hydrogen, and the fact that they are paving the way for new manufacturing standards. They certainly chose the right practice to collaborate with! Cloud to Cloud was a festival highlight with many hundreds of visitors dropping in to speak with creators Nicholas Szczepaniak and Wen Ying Teh.

Iris Ceramica Group CEO Federica Minozzi, joined Solus Creative Director Sam Frith, and one half of Szczepaniak Teh, Nicholas Szczepaniak on Tuesday evening during CDW to discuss Cloud to Cloud, its significance for the Italian group, and the process of collaboration.

The well-attended event was a great way to frame the conversation for the week. Federica said, "I'm delighted to be collaborating with Solus and Szczepaniak Teh on this important piece. Green hydrogen promises to decarbonise the sector. We have to make it happen."

Federica announced the development of H2 Factory™, a new

cutting-edge production plant in Castellano, Italy, that will start using green hydrogen thanks to a bespoke system. The facility, which will be powered by hydrogen from 2025, will produce '4D Ceramics' (the fourth dimension refers to sustainability), large full-body technical ceramic surfaces in 12 and 20mm thicknesses, which are particularly ideal for the luxury furnishing sector.

A 1 MW green hydrogen production system is being created for the factory. The hydrogen will be extracted from rainwater by electrolysis powered by a 1.2 MW photovoltaic system.

The hydrogen will then be used to feed the kiln, with a mix of up to 50% of natural gas. A kiln that is 100% hydrogen-powered is also being researched. The expected annual production of around 132 tonnes of green hydrogen will replace about 500,000 cubic meters of methane gas per year. The blend will significantly reduce carbon dioxide emissions, saving around 900 tonnes of CO2 per year.

The H2 Factory™ is a significant investment in sustainability for Iris Ceramica Group. It is the first hydrogen-powered ceramic factory in the world, and will reduce annual carbon dioxide emissions by 900 tonnes. The factory is also a testament to Iris Ceramica Group's commitment to innovation and its focus on developing high-end ceramic materials.

"We are looking at a new dawn for the ceramic industry and the sector as a whole. The underlying principle of our green hydrogen factory is what I define as a new industrial humanism, with a central focus on sustainability and all its factors: environmental, social and economic. The challenge is to assure significant savings of CO2 in the next two years, paving the way for the ceramic sector and the whole district, demonstrating that even an energy-intensive industry can become a virtuous 'net zero' energy transition model.

"We hope that other companies will follow our example, to the advantage of the whole community, also leading to the training of new professional expertise," declared Federica Minozzi, CEO of Iris Ceramica Group.

DESIGN, OPTIMISM



How can design drive change? How can design generate optimism? Graphic Artist Anthony Burrill, Colour Consultant Justine Fox, and Activist Architect Robert Delius discussed these questions within the context of their work at the Solus Clerkenwell recently.

The panel:



AB – Anthony Burrill creates powerful, positive messages which have a simple clarity that cut through a lot of noise. A keen collaborator across disciplines, he amplifies progressive voices and empowers creative communities.



JF – Justine Fox approaches colour as a means of transformation. Applied colour psychology thinks deeply about the interactions of colour, and the impact this has upon mental wellbeing.



RD – Robert Delius is an architect and head of sustainable design at employee-owned and certified B-Corporation, Stride Treglown. He caused ripples with a large floating sculpture, Sinking House, in front of Bath's Pulteney Bridge in the lead-up to COP26.



CB – Conleth Buckley is the panel host, editor of Quarter, and public relations person for Solus.



CHANGE



We opened the discussion by reiterating the framing question for the event.

CB – How can design drive optimism and change?

AB – We all desire change and optimism in our lives and we can achieve that with the people with whom we spend our time. The significant part of being human, for me, is within these daily social interactions. My work is about connecting my personality with everyone’s experience, with the work as a bridge between the two. I’m a naturally optimistic person – some would say annoyingly so – and it comes through in my work and, hopefully, connects with people.

RD – The MP for Brighton, Caroline Lucas has written on her social media, “A better world is possible; let’s make it happen.” I thought that was a neat way to think about how design can influence positively. The words “a better world” force us to imagine what that could be and what it is now; “is possible” is a strong expression of belief that our actions can make a difference; “let’s make it happen” emphasises the need for collaboration and the need for action rather than passivity. I think that’s the role we have as designers; the very act of making and doing is a positive thing which can inspire people.

“

I’ve always been drawn to words. I’m super-geeky about type but just as interested in how words affect people.”

JF – I remember my dad telling me when I was studying, “Justine, there’s no great mystery about design: design is about problem solving.” As designers, we’re naturally optimistic and attracted to this process. As a colour designer, I often plug into other people’s designs. I was recently collaborating with June Mineyama-Smithson who is famous for her use of vibrant colour. We began to explore if people arrive at optimism the same way, if there are universal ways to induce that kind of dopamine, and how we might work with that. We eventually went with a quite a pared down palette based upon our investigation. This sharing of ideas is as central to design as optimism.

CB – Anthony, much of your work is typographic. Why did you choose typography as a form of artistic expression?

AB – I’ve always been drawn to words. I’m super-geeky about type but just as interested in how words affect people. At school I was good at English, Art, and Geography. I think something in the process of drawing geographical diagrams (you know, glaciation, U-shaped valleys) really struck me. Figuring out how to represent complex interactions or ideas visually has always appealed.

CB – And do you have a favourite and least favourite letter?

AB – I primarily work with historic typefaces, most of which were designed over a hundred years ago. I have designed four or five typefaces using grid systems, and Q is always the one that knocks everything out. You’re doing a nice E or a nice F and it’s all working well. Then you come to Q and it’s like, for fuck’s sake! I think A and Z are nice letters, obviously I like A because it’s my first initial, and Z because it’s super-dynamic.

CB – Rob, you’ve been called an activist Architect. How do you feel about that label?

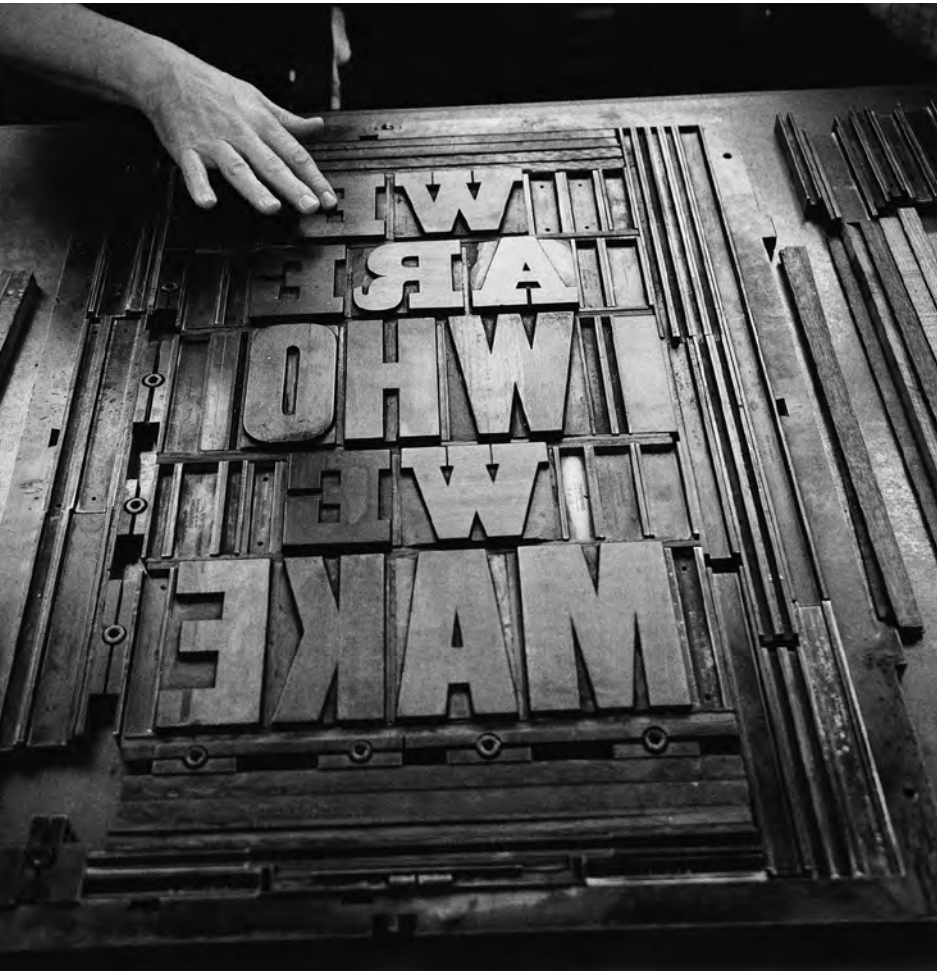
RD – I think we’re all activists. In our work we make a difference, whether that’s good or bad. In all fields of life, we’re influencing all the time even if we may not be conscious of doing so. I’m very fortunate, as an architect, that in the work we do we can have a huge influence on people’s lives in terms of creating places. Most of our work is at scale, so we can affect the shape and feel of whole neighbourhoods. We use our position to influence our clients (sometimes stealthily!) to make positive design choices.

CB – Is there a conflict between commercial interests and advocating sustainability?

RD – I think there has been but that’s changing. Commercial clients are realising that reputation is important. We’re turning away work, as a practice, that we might have taken on 10 years ago, because we don’t want to work with that client anymore or on that kind of project. Because we’re big we can have an influence on our suppliers and work with those that share our values.

CB – Justine, could you explain your work in a bit more depth?

JF – My purpose is to challenge ideas around colour. I promote discernment and thoughtfulness around the use of colour in design and particularly the built environment. Firstly, I ask, what is colour? To many, it is an aesthetic, but that’s just one aspect of it. Colour is an energetic function that is as real as gamma rays, microwaves, radio waves and x-rays, and so it is important that we consider how we work with it.



CB – How does colour consultation connect to communities and activism?

JF – Colour for activism is not a new thing. If we consider the journey of pink, we can see the significance and power of colour. Pink was a colour for little boys that switched to girls in the early part of the last century. During the Holocaust it was used as an identifying marker by fascists for homosexual men. The pink triangle, intended as a badge of shame, was then reclaimed in the 1970s by gay activists. Recently pink was adopted by women’s rights activists in the USA to protest the misogyny of Donald Trump. That it represents the colour of scar tissue is a powerful idea contained in the colour itself and perhaps partly explains its adoption by marginalised groups. If we look at the work of Adam Nathaniel Furman, who declared the New London Fabulousness, their use of colour is about visibility. Being seen in your community where you had previously not been seen. So, in many cases, colour is about identity.

CB – How do you manage the cultural implications of colour in diverse communities?

JF – There’s a distinction to be made here between colour symbolism and colour psychology. The former is a learned response that can be shaped by culture, and the latter is our universal instinctive response to colour. In terms of planning, much of our environment is coloured by historical precedents and doesn’t reflect either the communities that live there now, nor the communities that will be there in the future. I think it’s important to consider both the cultural and psychological components of colour in dialogue with a community as we build new places.

CB – Anthony, your work is predominantly black and white, is there a reason for that?

AB – I like the high contrast nature of it and it’s cheaper to print. When I was a student I did a lot of my work on a photocopier

Adams of Rye has been in operation since 1854. Burrill uses their historic woodcuts to make his prints.



– black ink on white paper – and that was the essence of the design. The day I worked out how to put coloured paper through the photocopier was a huge thing! Whenever I use colour it’s a purposeful decision and I often go for tonal relationships like red on pink or blue on light blue. Black and white for impact and strength. Colour for me is another decision to make and I’m all about getting rid of decisions, getting to the nub, the essence of what it is I’m trying to say.

CB – What kind of reactions do people have to your work?

AB – I think any artist or musician would say they’re making the work for themselves. So, it’s a message from myself to myself “Give the joy back. Work hard and be nice to people.” They’re positive affirmations and anchoring phrases. Everyone is searching for meaning in life. If you see something that connects in a way that makes sense to you, then that can be powerful. With the advent of social media, you can see if a print has landed with people. ‘Work hard and be nice to people’ was the first one that crossed over from the world of graphic design to a wider audience at that time. During lockdown I worked on, ‘You & Me & Me & You’, a piece that emphasises community, connection, and togetherness. You have to work with the world that you see in front of you, the changing world, then hopefully that work connects with people.

CB – Is that where you get your ideas from?

AB – Yeah. I was in a supermarket in Clapham at the checkout behind an older lady who was chatting with the assistant, and she said, “The secret to a happy life is to work hard and be nice to people.” It just floated in the air, and I had my butterfly net at the ready and I thought, “I’m having that!”. That was the first work I produced with Adams of Rye.

CB – Robert, I’d like to ask you about ‘Sinking House’. This was a key moment for Stride Treglown. How did you pull it off and what was the response?

RD – We were doing something called a ‘climate action relay’, which served as a build-up to COP 26. We have nine offices in the UK, and we decided that each of them would have “Owner Week” during which they would give talks and presentations, engaging with others in the construction industry.

I'm based in our Bath Studio, and I wanted to do something that went beyond just talking about the issue. There's already too much talk about it. We aimed to convey the message about the climate emergency in a different way, one that wouldn't involve the same people discussing the same themes. Instead, we wanted to reach a much wider audience. So, we reached out to a company called Format Engineers, known for their amazing installations at the Burning Man festival in the United States. They're based in Bath and were eager to collaborate.

We brainstormed what would have the most significant impact and spread the message most effectively. We decided to choose the most iconic location in Bath, in front of a beautiful old bridge, Pulteney Bridge. To make it even more noticeable, we thought about placing something in the river as well. That's when we conceived the idea of floating a red house, which symbolised an emergency. It also provided a striking contrast with the colour of the Bath stone behind it.

On top of the red house, there was a figure created by a local sculptor, Anna Gillespie, clinging to a lifeline rope. The message was a direct reference to Greta Thunberg's ‘Our house is on fire’ speech. It also drew from the context of that summer when there were severe floods in Europe, and people were literally stranded on the roofs of their homes. The rope that the figure held spelled out “COP 26”, sending a message to political leaders that this was our last chance.

The message was clear and understandable to anyone, from children to adults. It said to politicians and leaders “Our life is in your hands”. Within days of installing it, the response was overwhelming. It gained media coverage worldwide, and thousands of people in Bath came to see it. It was visually striking and unexpected, especially since it was placed in the river. We had expected opposition in getting the idea off the ground, but once we had a few key supporters, it became easier to gain more support.

It was a journey marked by relentless optimism, where every step we took was like crossing another bridge, and eventually, we surprised ourselves by making it happen.



CB – I'm probably showing my ignorance here, but I don't think of Bath as a particularly progressive city. Was it difficult winning over the council?

RD – Yeah, I think that's everyone's view of Bath, but it is quite a progressive city. I mean, it's pretty much always been Liberal Democrat, and it has quite a creative vibe to it. The vice-leader of the council is the head of climate change, so getting her on board early on had quite a lot of influence on many of her colleagues.

This perception is probably because Bath is a historic city, but it's also a design city. Due to its amazing and beautiful setting, it has always attracted artists, architects, and landscape architects. So, there's always been an appetite for design. Even when you think back to Georgian times, the idea of the Royal Crescent and the way it was designed was revolutionary for its time. It was one of the first planned cities, and including all that green space was quite cutting edge.

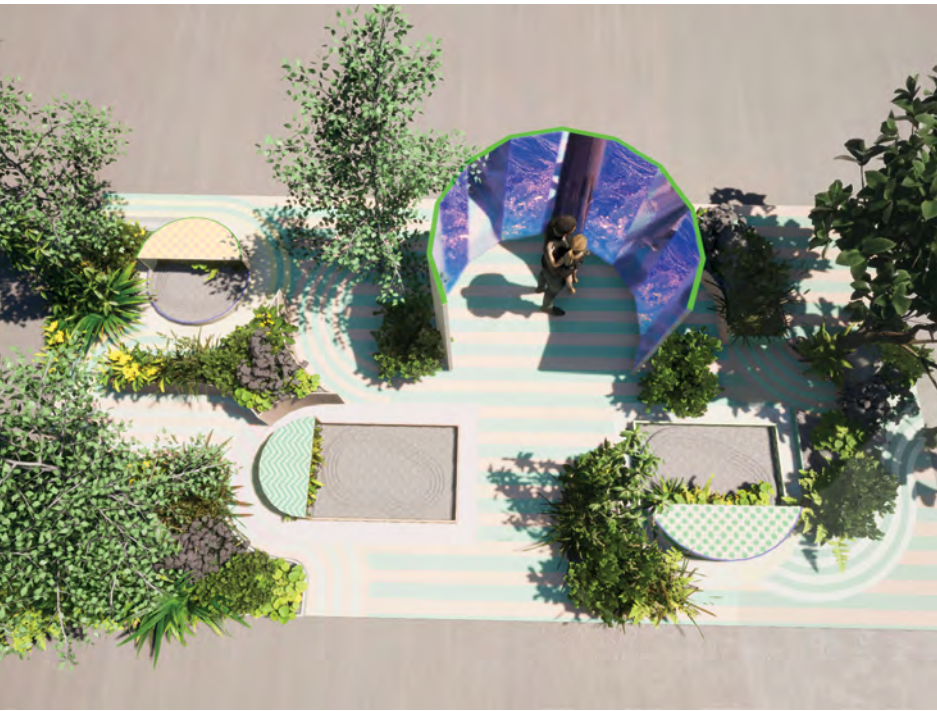
I suppose there might be just a slight feeling that there are pockets of people in Bath who still want to do something a bit radical.



On top of the red house, there was a figure created by a local sculptor, Anna Gillespie, clinging to a lifeline rope. The message was a direct reference to Greta Thunberg's ‘Our house is on fire’ speech."



Sustainability would be an easier conversation to have if it wasn't always rendered in dark, dystopian colours."



CB – Justine, could you give us an example of your work and how you use colour to transform spaces?

JF – Holdron's Green, a sustainable wellbeing garden designed by Campbell Cadey for the Peckham Festival, transformed an industrial space on a tight budget. The architects approached me to unify the space through colour, aiming for a cohesive and inviting atmosphere.

The goal was to make the space visible and versatile, accommodating socialising and quiet activities. I started with a red colour, drawing attention and creating contrast. A soft plaster pink was placed at the outer edges for a calm area, complemented by a deep terracotta. Higher-energy colours like poppy and mandarin were concentrated centrally to engage visitors and draw attention away from exits.

Each colour was carefully chosen to enhance the harmony with the planting and its natural colour cycle. The focus was on amplifying the hero of the garden—the flora. The project was shortlisted for the Pineapples Awards, recognising its positive impact on urban living and working. This accolade highlights the success of collaborative efforts in cross-disciplinary projects.

CB – Let's open questions to the floor now.

Audience question – Anthony, your involvement with the Rye word press is an interesting story that is perhaps indicative of the way that you, to use Kerry Lemon's phrase, “enact your power”. You appear to be quite generous with your time and support of creatives. Is your collaboration with Adams of Rye an example of that?

AB – Yeah, a bit. I moved down to Rye in Sussex in 2003 with my family. Rye is a kind of unique town. It's like a coastal medieval fortress and has a real kind of independent feel to it. All the businesses are locally owned, apart from Boots. It's just a fantastic little place with lots of literary and famous writer links.

When we moved down, I saw a poster for a flower festival, and the type was really nice and well laid out. At the bottom, it

said “printed by Adams, Rye.” Adams is on the High Street, a fancy goods shop, newsagents, and toy shop. Inside, there's an amazing workshop with letterpress and wood type from the turn of the century or older. They've held on to the entire collection and still use it for various things. I'm on that list of people who use it now, but you have to wait your turn. If the church needs a small A5 print, you have to wait for them to get it done first. It's like, “I'm going to hold your thousand-edition print run for the village fayre.” It's brilliant.

Audience question – In our work we have come across the idea of ‘protopia’ from Kevin Kelly, the futurist and co-founder of Wired magazine. It refers to a society that, rather than solving all its problems (as in a utopia) or falling into dire dysfunction (as in a dystopia), makes incremental progress over a long period of time – so neither wholly positive nor negative. I wonder what the panel think of that idea.

RD – We've noticed a lot of talk about regenerative design recently, which is an interesting new angle on ‘sustainability’. Which, when you really think about it, is quite a negative idea; keeping things as they are or not quite as bad, basically doing ‘less bad’. Increasingly there is more discussion about how we can have a positive impact, and that's really encouraging for me.

JF – I think sustainability would be an easier conversation to have if it wasn't always rendered in dark, dystopian colours. Regenerative futures feel like a much easier and uplifting concept to engage with. There are great opportunities open to us in change, and the manner with which we communicate that is fundamental to our success. If it were a colour communication I would like to say, “Yes, our future is not pink, fluffy clouds but nor does it need to be dark, flame-filled ravines.”

Thanks to our guests for their contributions to the conversation. We'll conclude where we started with the assertion that design is, fundamentally, an act of optimism; and, when done well and with empathy, can absolutely drive positive change.

Caenstone

A celebration of the beauty of natural stone, this porcelain stoneware collection comes from a highly regarded manufacturer that has an excellent track record on sustainability.

6 COLOURS
7 FINISHES
8 SIZES
3 MOSAICS

The unique selling point of this collection is its seven finishes which create dramatic visual effects and pleasing tactile experiences.

Available in seven finishes and six natural colours, this porcelain, limestone-effect collection is minimalist only in aesthetic. Potential applications are extended further by the range of sizes, thicknesses, and special pieces.

The technical properties of porcelain make this product an excellent choice to conform with sustainability guidance. The collection is fire-resistant and frost-resistant; it also has high flexural strength, load resistance and can withstand any climate. All these features make for long-lasting tiles that will not fade or warp over time.

These tiles are non-allergenic, odourless, and extremely easy to clean because their surfaces do not retain dirt and bacteria. Caenstone is ideal for façades as, in the presence of sunlight, a patented surface treatment triggers a reaction that reduces bacteria and air pollutants and breaks down dirt deposits. These deposits are then washed away by rainwater, thanks to the superhydrophilicity of the ceramic surface.

Caenstone comes in six pleasing natural colours and is available in a variety of sizes and mosaics.



FINISHES:
Natural R10, Natural Silk, Textured Ridge R10 (A+B),
Textured Groove R10 (A+B), Textured Aged R10 (A+B),
Textured Aged Silk and Grip R11

APPEARANCE:
Limestone

MATERIAL:
Porcelain

USAGE:
Floors and walls

SHADE VARIATION:
V3 - Moderate



CAE-Cream
2CAE104



CAE-Light
2CAE101



CAE-Grey
2CAE105



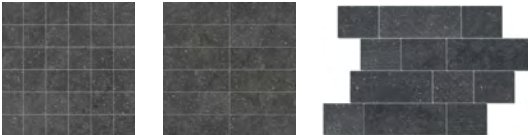
CAE-Beige
2CAE102



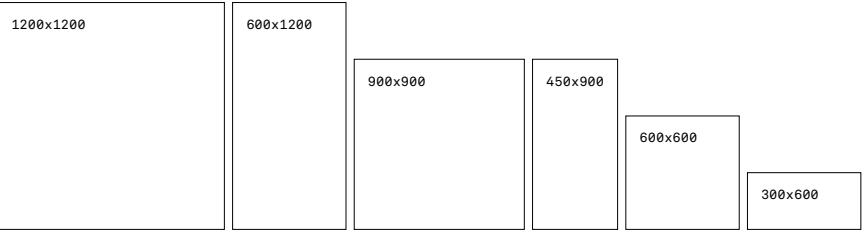
CAE-Greige
2CAE103



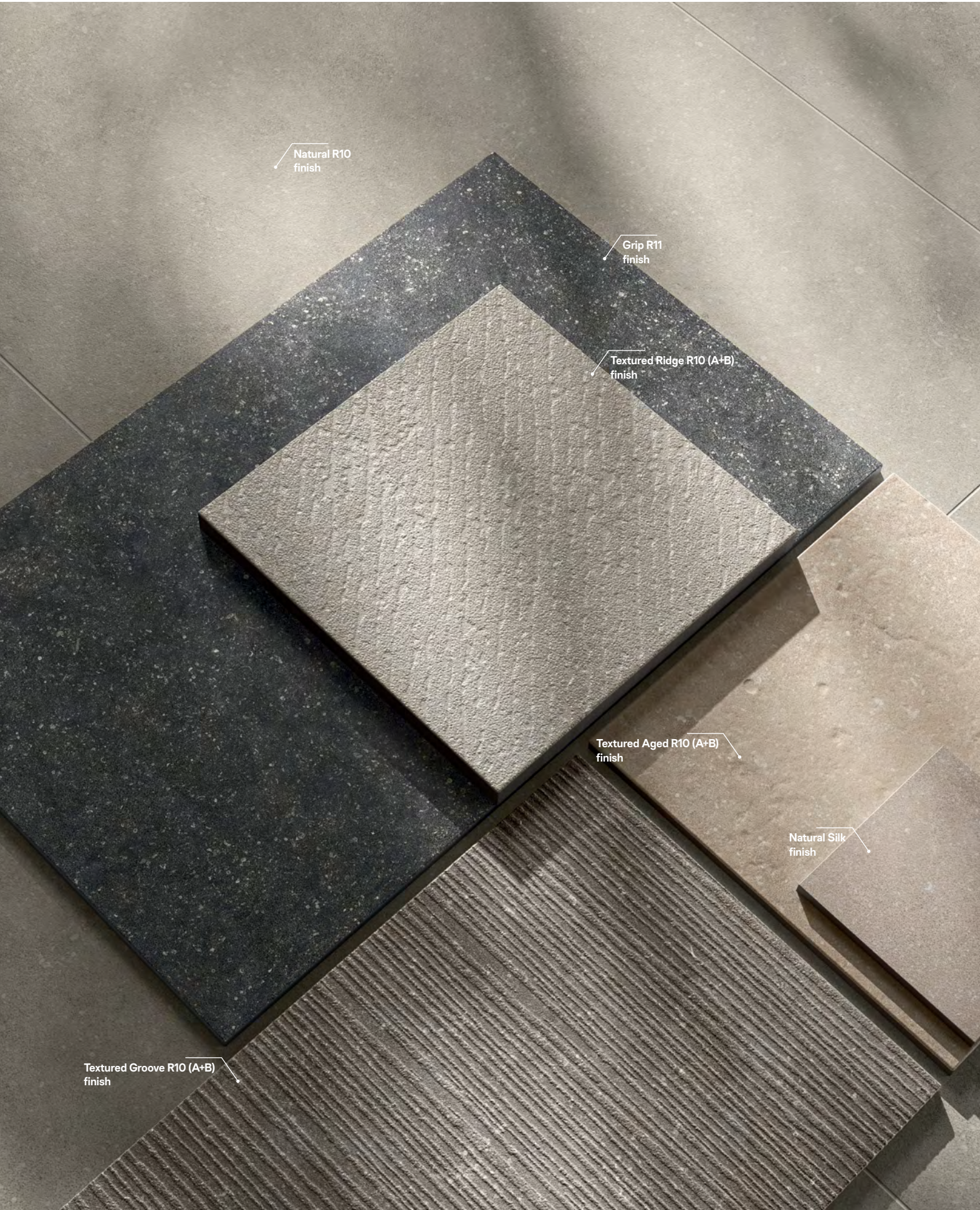
CAE-Dark
2CAE106



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



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

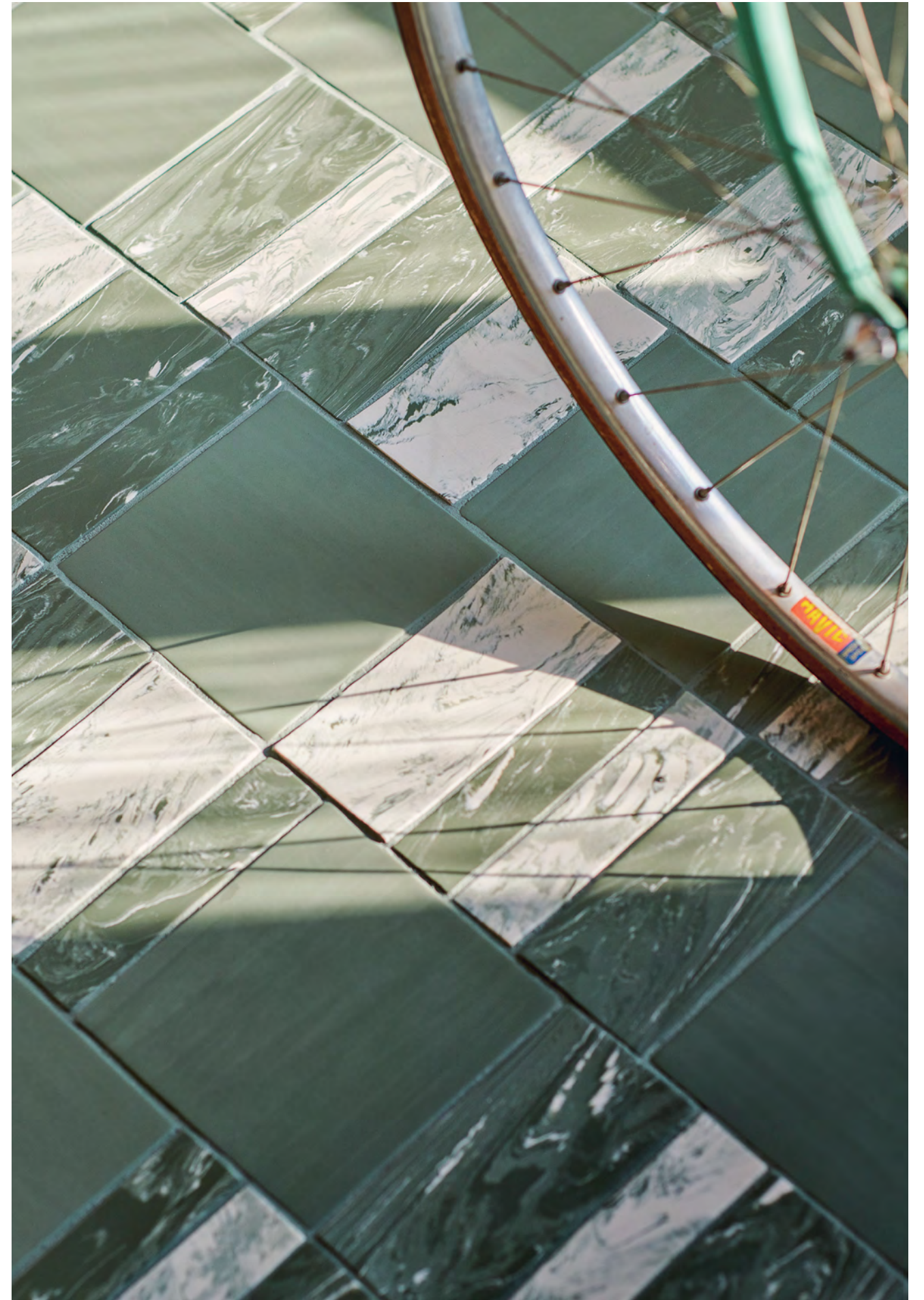


“It is a pleasure to present Caenstone with its multiple finishes that permit a variety of design options.”

Justin Jennings,
Product Manager

Firenze

Made from NeoClay™, a new ceramic material, Firenze has the properties of vitrified stoneware and the appearance of florentine marbled paper.



6 COLOURS | 1 FINISH | 4 SIZES | 1 DECOR

Floor:
2FIR102d102



Available in a variety of hues, patterns, sizes and modular systems, Firenze is versatile and original.

Warm marbling and flourishes of colour immediately catch the eye with this colour-bodied collection. Each tile is a variegated whole reminiscent of florentine marbled paper. The colours take their inspiration from fruit and spices and blend harmoniously with one another: pistachio and mint, juniper and cinnamon, horseradish and pepper.

Four sizes can be used either on their own or mixed. For a balanced composition, several different sizes in each pair of colours are suggested. The high-performance of the innovative NeoClay™ suits the Firenze collection to any environment, whether residential or commercial, floors or walls.

NeoClay™ is a handmade material extruded by artisans in Italy from noble clays. These wholly natural raw materials contain no volatile organic compounds and can be returned to the production cycle prior to consumption, and easily recycled post-consumption.

As the product is handmade, differences in calibre, flatness, surface irregularity and variation in shade are features rather than faults. We recommend placing the tiles next to one another and rotating them without spacers so that the joints form naturally. Adhesive can be applied to the back of the tile to compensate for differences in flatness.



Wall:
2FIR105d105



Different patterns can be created by combining the mono-coloured tiles with the decors.

FINISH:
Anti Slip R10

APPEARANCE:
Mono Colour

MATERIAL:
Ceramic

USAGE:
Floors and walls

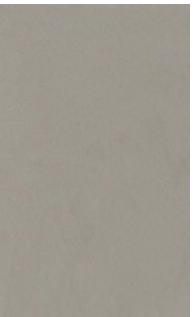
SHADE VARIATION:
V3 - Moderate



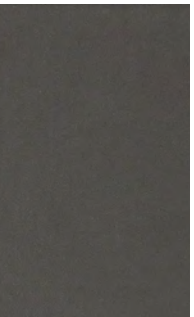
FIR-Pistachio
2FIR101



FIR-Mint
2FIR102



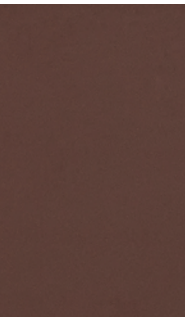
FIR-Horseradish
2FIR103



FIR-Pepper
2FIR104



FIR-Juniper
2FIR105



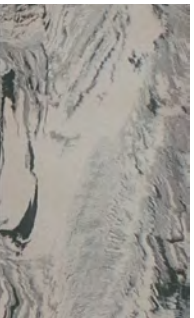
FIR-Cinnamon
2FIR106



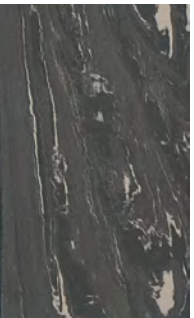
FIR-Pistachio
Decor
2FIR101d101



FIR-Mint
Decor
2FIR102d102



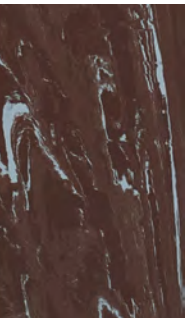
FIR-Horseradish
Decor
2FIR103d103



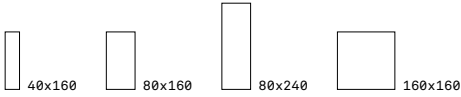
FIR-Pepper
Decor
2FIR104d104



FIR-Juniper
Decor
2FIR105d105



FIR-Cinnamon
Decor
2FIR106d106



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



“Firenze is a fabulous range made with artisanal passion and innovation. NeoClay™ is a huge breakthrough for the ceramics sector. I'm delighted to recommend this striking collection.”

Justin Jennings,
Product Manager



Slate Stone

Recreating the striations
of natural slate.

8 COLOURS
3 FINISHES
8 SIZES
1 DECOR
3 MOSAICS



This technical porcelain is available in a range of large formats. A subtle colour scheme and excellent slip resistance permit many design applications.

Slate Stone offers the designer a sophisticated palette. Available in eight subtle colours running from cream to a dark black, this collection has a timeless and natural quality.

The patterning is derived from split slates with their distinctive pale veining and soft tones, and sedimentary stones with a fine background and more distinct shifts of colour. Minimalist and gentle, Slate Stone has all the technical advantages of porcelain.

Three finishes permit a variety of applications including linking indoor and outdoor spaces, wet areas, walls, and floors. The eight sizes include slabs of 1200x2780x6mm of unprecedented technical performance. The slabs are perfect for larger areas and enhance and elevate the atmosphere of any space.

The producer is a committed sustainability leader. An EPD for this product is available upon request and Ecovadis and Declare certifications are held by the manufacturer.



600x600		300x400	
		200x300	
200x300	300x400		

Modular Decor is available in SLT-Beige, SLT-Tan and SLT-Silver, in a Grip R11 (A+B+C) finish.

FINISHES:
Natural R10 (A+B), Textured R9, Grip R11 (A+B+C)

APPEARANCE:
Slate

MATERIAL:
Porcelain

USAGE:
Floors and walls

SHADE VARIATION:
V2 - Light

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

“Slate Stone has a great technical profile with 20mm options and a great grip. Very happy to bring this range to market.”

Justin Jennings,
Product Manager



SLT-Cream
2SLT101



SLT-Beige
2SLT102



SLT-Tan
2SLT103



SLT-Silver
2SLT104



SLT-Ash
2SLT105



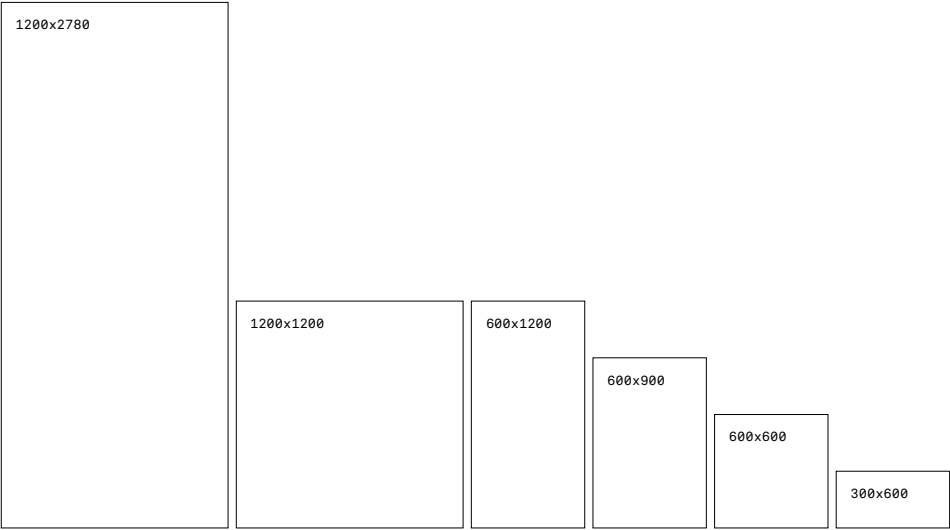
SLT-Grey
2SLT106



SLT-Dark
2SLT107



SLT-Black
2SLT108

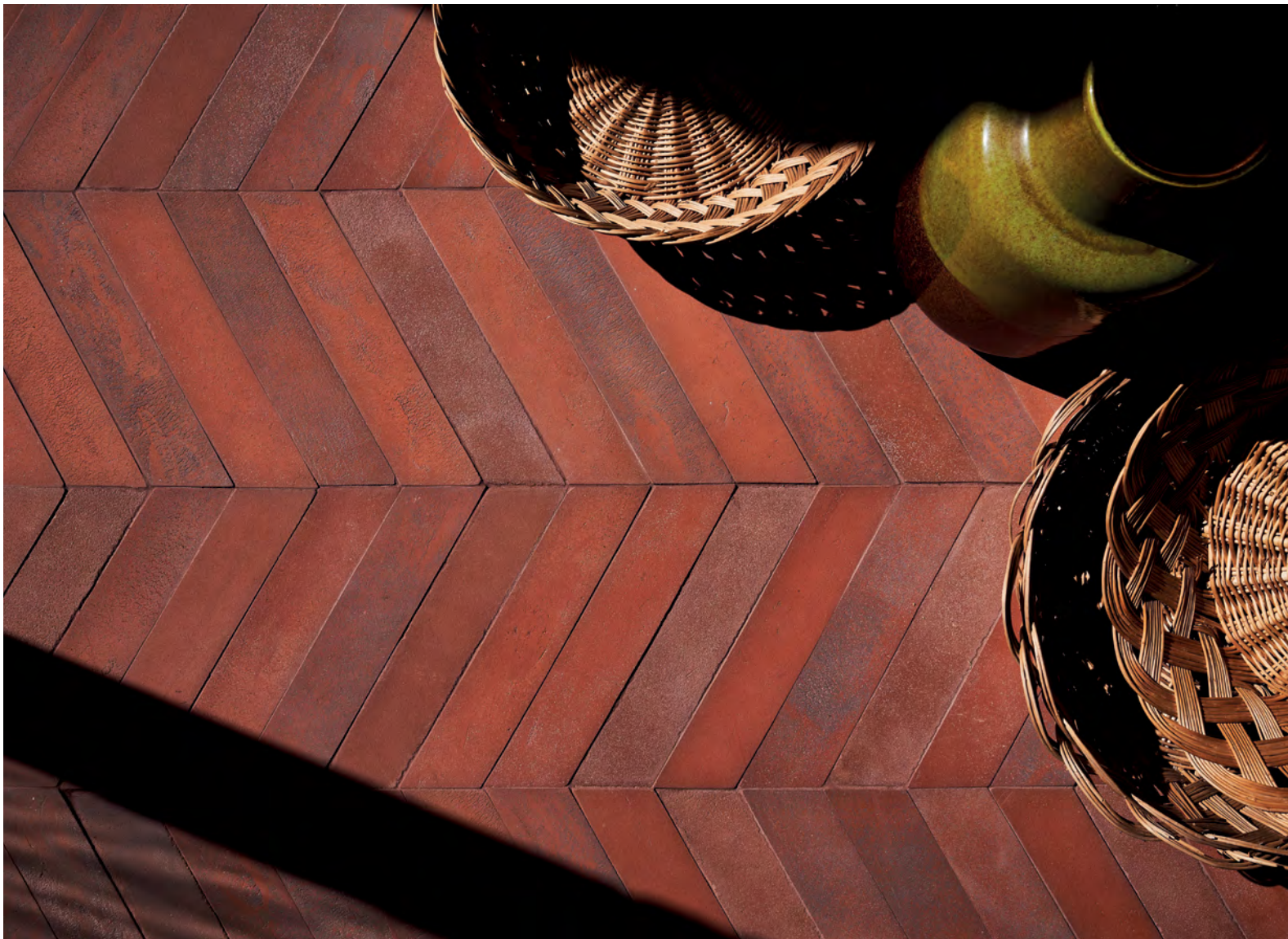


Mosaic options are also available.

Matera

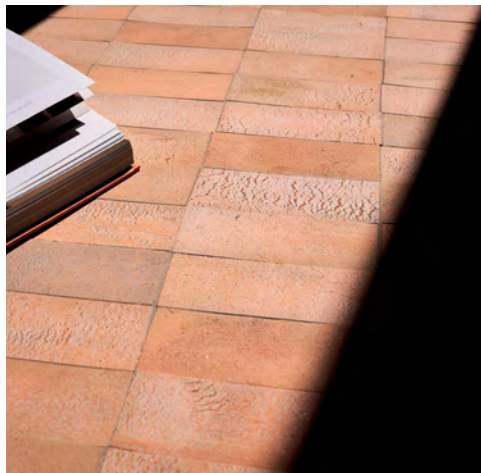
This handmade,
refractory stone
collection is produced by
skilled artisans in Italy.

8 COLOURS
1 FINISH
6 SIZES



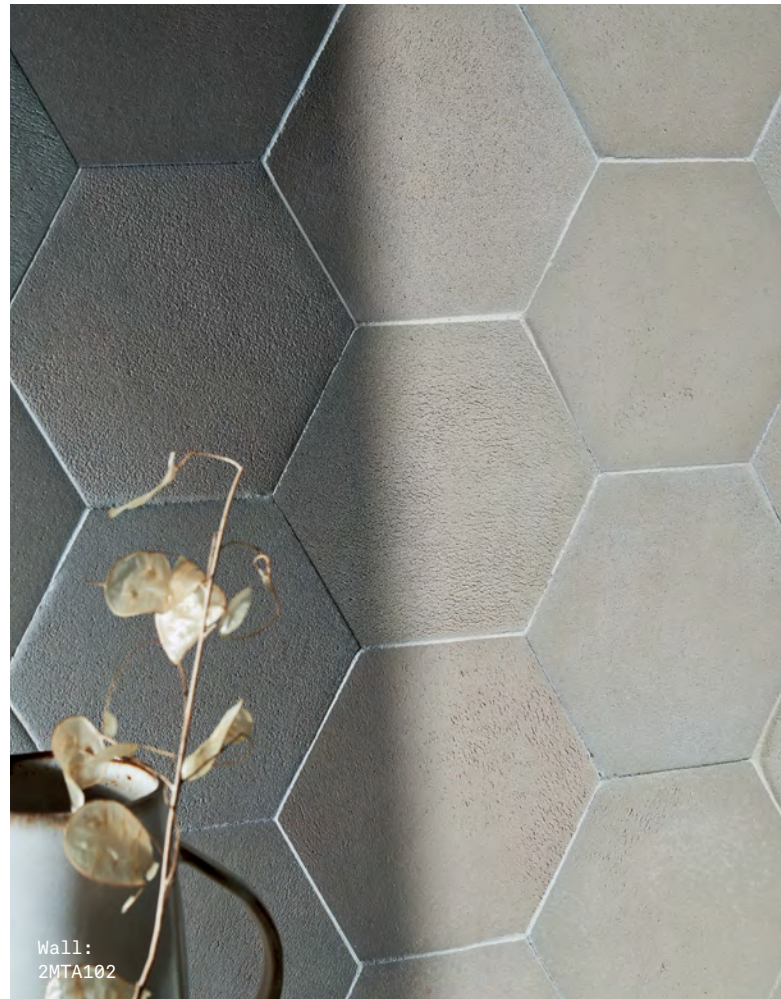
Substantial colour variation between pieces is a feature of Matera. Hexagonal, chevron, square and rectangular pieces are available in a range of natural colours.

ABOVE
Floor:
2MTA107



RIGHT
Floor:
2MTA108

The natural colour palette takes inspiration from the local landscape of Basilicata in Italy.



Wall:
2MTA102



Floor:
2MTA101

Matera is a collection of crafted ceramic products obtained from coloured refractory clays. Refractory clays are materials that can withstand a high temperature without deforming or melting, and are often used to build and furnish kilns. This means the technical properties of porosity and strength of this collection are considerable. The wet clay is stored in moulds and the addition of various colours permeate the body further, ensuring that any micro-porosities are sealed.

The colour palette is drawn from the place from which the collection takes its name, a city in the region of Basilicata in Italy – the instep of the boot. The area, which evidence suggests has been continuously occupied since the 10th millennium BC, is famous for its rock-cut urban core.

Features of the local environment – the black of the lava rock, the greens of the parietaria plant, the red of the brick and the sand of the distinctive rocks – have all influenced the design of the collection. For each colour there are six sizes and one Natural R10 finish.

FINISH:
Natural R10

APPEARANCE:
Stone

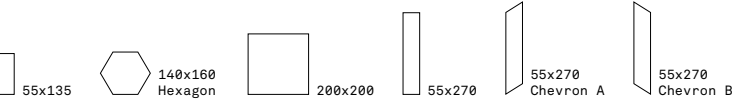
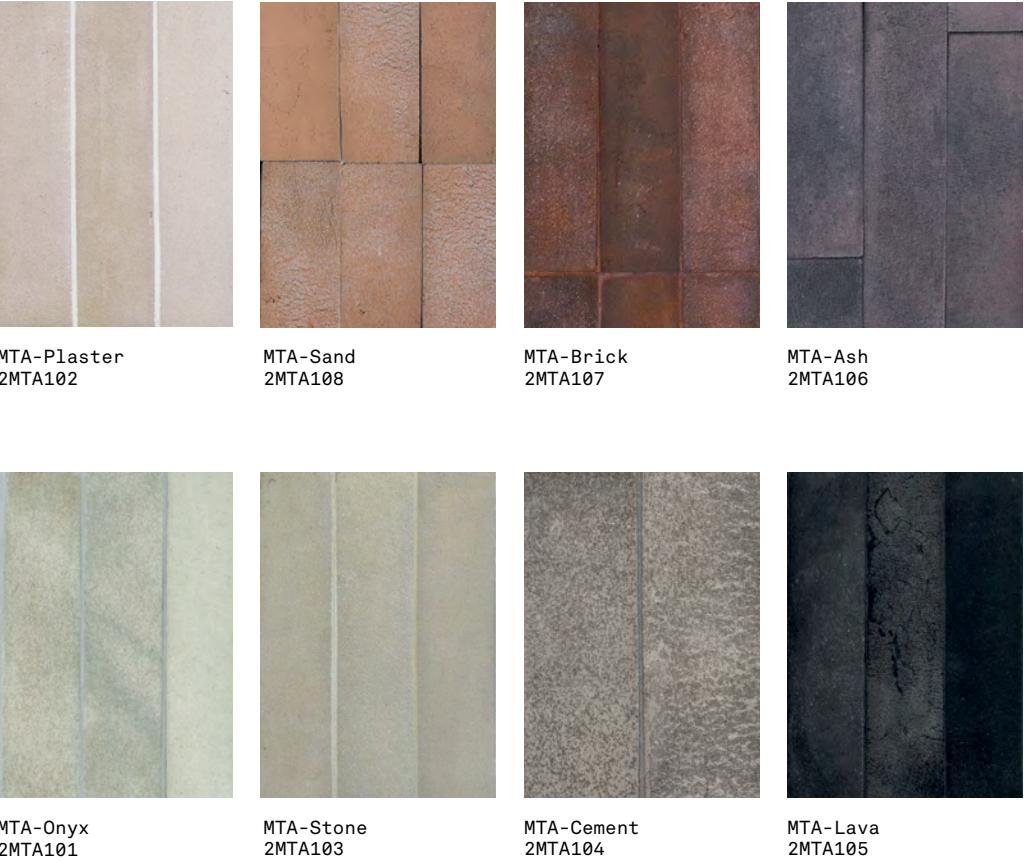
MATERIAL:
Stone

USAGE:
Floors and walls

SHADE VARIATION:
V3 - Moderate

“Matera has great technical characteristics and is aesthetically very pleasing. I'm happy to recommend this new range.”

Justin Jennings,
Product Manager



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



City

NEW RANGE

4 cities, 1 size
and 1 finish

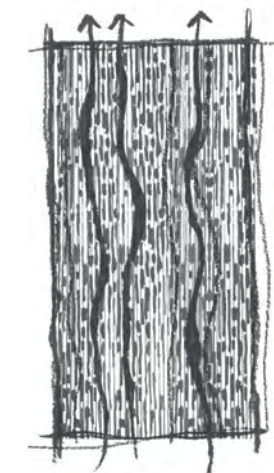


Collection

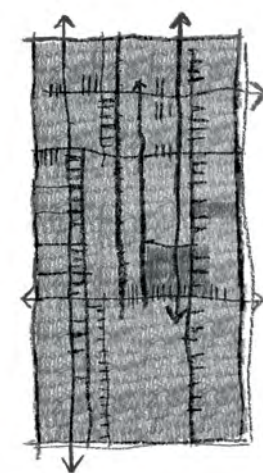
City Collection is a bold design statement with a powerful narrative, the protagonists of which are the cities of New York, London, Hong Kong, and Shanghai.



New York



London



Hong Kong



Shanghai

The designers behind the collection were inspired by cities that they know well, having worked creatively within them all.

The intention was to represent the experience of being in each place through reference to materials, urban forms and textures that might be found there, as well as expressing something of the character of the place.

The patterns evolved through an interrogation of the milieu of the different places and a subsequent simplification and abstraction that produce surfaces that are naturalistic. From distance, they read as finely grained surfaces with subtle variations in colour and texture. On closer study, it is possible to discern the geometric patterns inspired by the cityscape.

The experience of New York is delineated by its city grid. London is defined by its great parks with their huge plane trees. Hong Kong is a relentlessly vertical city with architectural forms repeating as they march into the sky. In Shanghai, one looks down upon the sloping roofs of traditional houses from the steel and glass towers of the modern city.

The collection has all the technical advantage of porcelain and is available in 600x1200x9mm.



This collection adds a subtle yet soft texture to a space.



Wall:
2CTY101
Floor:
2CTY101



Wall:
2CTY103



Floor:
2CTY104



Wall:
2CTY102
Floor:
2CTY102

FINISH:
Matt R10

APPEARANCE:
Patterned

MATERIAL:
Porcelain

USAGE:
Floors and walls

SHADE VARIATION:
V2 - Light

“City Collection is a bold and playful design adventure. I'm pleased to be able to present a range unlike anything else on the market.”

Justin Jennings,
Product Manager

CTY-New York
2CTY101

CTY-London
2CTY102

CTY-Hong Kong
2CTY103

CTY-Shanghai
2CTY104

600x1200

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

Drawing inspiration from the mesmerising interplay of water and stone, this porcelain limestone collection encapsulates the dynamic beauty of river stones.

Lake District

- 5 COLOURS
- 5 FINISHES
- 5 SIZES
- 2 MOSAICS

NEW RANGE



Floor:
2LKD102

“Lake District is a wonderful range that brings the beauty of nature into your home. The concept of water-washed stone is an amazing design idea.”

Justin Jennings,
Product Manager



Drawing inspiration from the mesmerizing interplay of water and stone, this porcelain limestone collection encapsulates the dynamic beauty of river stones. The patterns within Lake District reflect the ever-changing character of water, seamlessly shifting from tumultuous to tranquil, mirroring the way water flows, murmurs, and rushes, encapsulating both dynamism and serenity.

Water, an elemental force, holds the unique ability to regenerate and rejuvenate, establishing an eternal connection between the natural world and our inner selves. Lake District captures this perpetual conversation between our environment and perception, inviting the outside world into your interior spaces.

Emulating the erosive impact of water, Lake District boasts textured, bold, and structured designs where stone emerges from a torrent, while submerged sections are smoothed and softened, exuding an elegant delicacy. This duality in aesthetics adds depth and character to the collection.

Lake District offers a spectrum of five naturalistic colours, five versatile sizes, and five distinct finishes, including captivating chevron and muretto mosaics. This remarkable range provides unmatched versatility, allowing you to infuse a touch of timeless beauty into any space, whether it's a chic modern home or a classic, traditional setting.

**This porcelain
limestone collection
encapsulates the
dynamic beauty of
river stones.**



FINISHES:
Matt R10, Polished, Natural,
Textured R11, Grip R11 (A+B+C)

APPEARANCE:
Limestone

MATERIAL:
Porcelain

USAGE:
Floors and walls

SHADE VARIATION:
V3 - Moderate



LKD-Ice
2LKD101



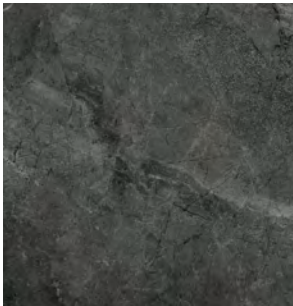
LKD-Pale
2LKD104



LKD-Ash
2LKD102



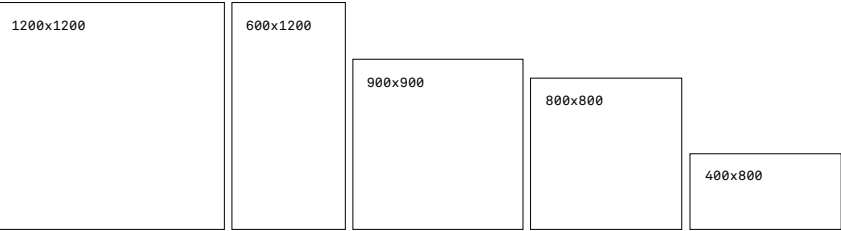
LKD-Dark
2LKD105



LKD-Coal
2LKD103



Chevron mosaics (Polished finish) and muretto mosaics (Textured finish) are available in all colours.



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



Wall:
2LKD101M001
Countertop:
2LKD101



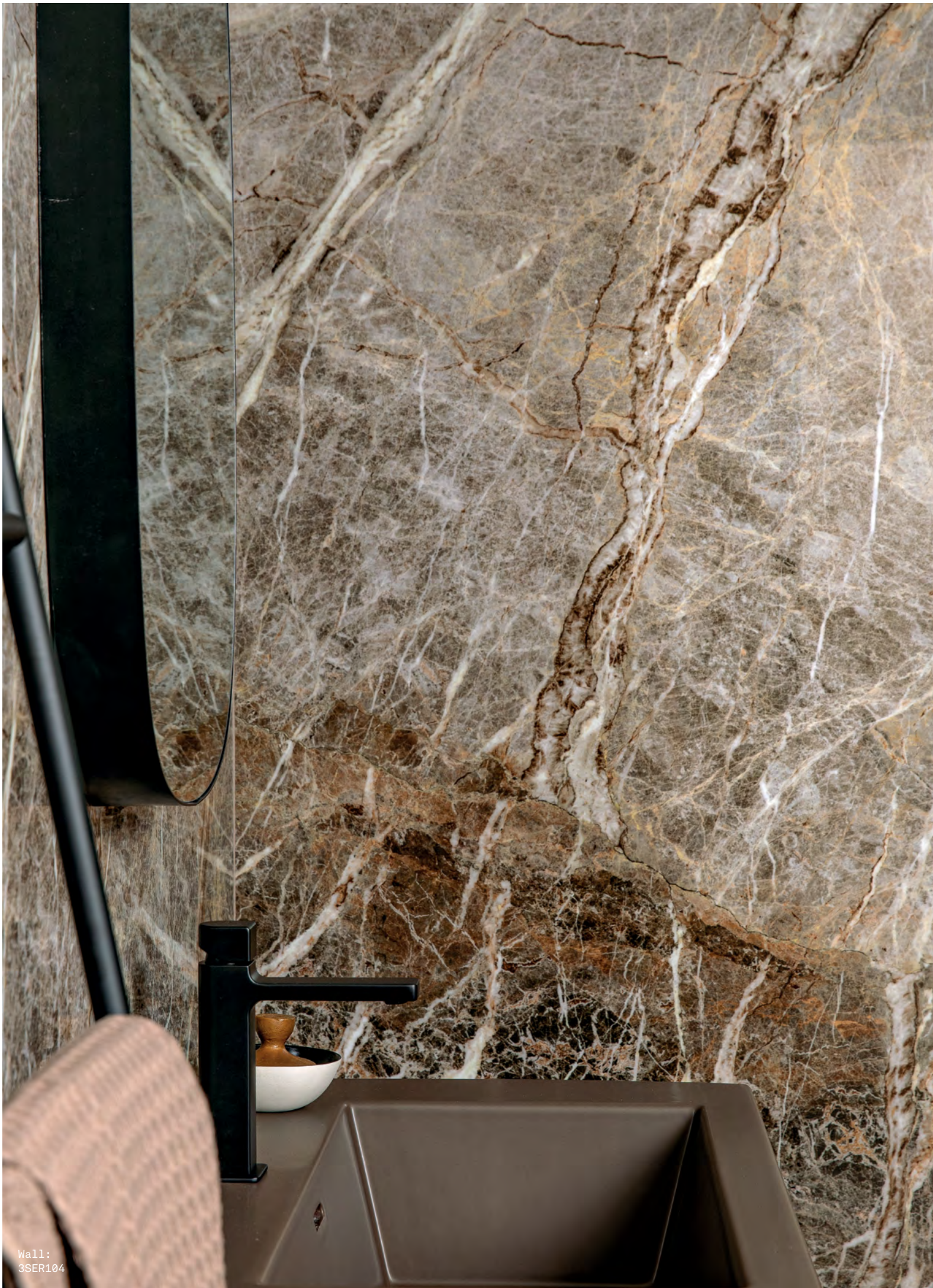
NEW RANGE

This remarkable porcelain stoneware collection is a testament to our commitment to sustainability.

Serene Stone

Wall:
3SER105

5 COLOURS
2 FINISHES
6 SIZES



Wall:
3SER104



This exquisite collection draws inspiration from the geological wonders of diverse biomes, seamlessly bringing the captivating beauty of the natural world into your living spaces.

Featuring five mesmerising marble patterns, Serene Stone exudes opulence and indulgence, elevating any environment lucky enough to showcase it.

The collection predominantly offers larger sizes, with an impressive four out of the six sizes categorised as elegant slabs. This makes Serene Stone an exceptional choice for discerning spaces such as opulent hotel lobbies, luxurious residences, and exclusive venues, where it can truly shine.

What makes this collection even more remarkable is its supplier's pioneering role in sustainability. As the first B Corp within the ceramics sector, they have set a standard of excellence and environmental responsibility. Their unwavering commitment to achieving net-zero emissions underscores their leadership and dedication to a greener future.

By choosing Serene Stone, you not only adorn your space with breathtaking elegance, but also support a supplier dedicated to a sustainable and eco-friendly approach in every step of production.



Wall:
3SER105



Wall:
3SER101

Serene Stone is produced by a B Corp-certified factory, demonstrating its commitment to sustainability, people and community.

“I’m very happy to have found this superb marble-effect porcelain. Only available in large and medium formats, the unusual marbles represented here really stand out from the crowd.”

Justin Jennings,
Product Manager



Wall:
3SER102

FINISHES:
Gloss, Natural R10 (A+B)

APPEARANCE:
Stone

MATERIAL:
Porcelain

USAGE:
Floors and walls

SHADE VARIATION:
V3 - Moderate
V4 - Heavy



SER-Pale
3SER102



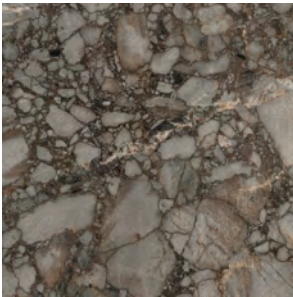
SER-Light
3SER101



SER-Warm
3SER103

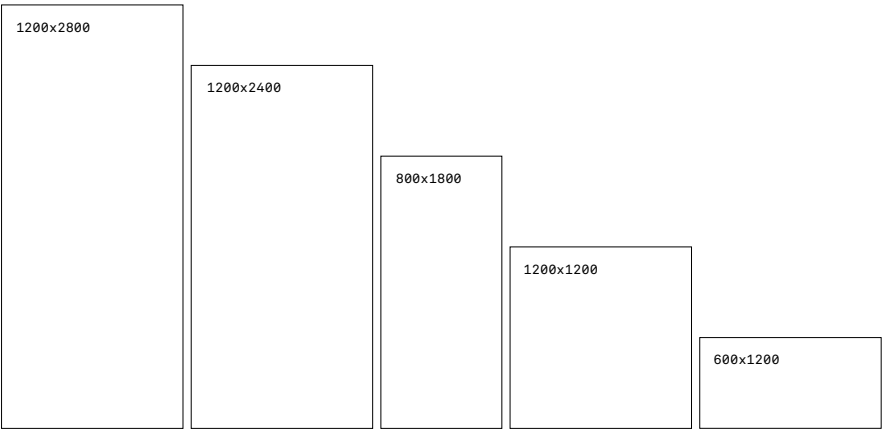


SER-Smoke
3SER104



SER-Dark
3SER105

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



A kitchen in the woods

This home extension is all about creating smart design in a sensitive and ecologically sympathetic way.



ARCHITECT:
A Small Studio

PHOTOGRAPHY:
Manuel Vásquez

LOCATION:
Dulwich, London

TYPE:
Residential refurbishment and extension

AWARD:
Urban Oasis Prize Winner in Don't Move, Improve! 2023
by New London Architecture

RANGES USED IN THIS PROJECT:
Stonework





The modernist house sits in a small oasis of protected woodland within the Dulwich Estate which is a conservation area in south London.

The family wanted to add a fourth bedroom to the house, but were unable to extend upwards due to the constraints of living in a conservation area. They also sought to relocate the kitchen – where they spent most of their family time – from the front to the rear, embracing the view of the adjacent woods. The family spends lots of time relaxing in the garden, so the new space had to easily extend into an outdoor kitchen.

It was paramount for the extension to have a light ecological impact that would avoid disturbing the garden's abundant wildlife, including foxes, squirrels, birds, and bats. The structure was designed as a simple rectangular form that subtly extends from the existing home into the forested surroundings.

Working with Solus Area Sales Manager Mark Ayliffe, architects from A Small Studio chose our Stonework range in 300x600x10.8mm, fabricated into 50x600x10.8mm pieces and step tread pieces for the kitchen floor. They had these cut into 50mm strips so that they could be laid internally while matching the external clay pavers when the sliding door was open, and the two surfaces meet.

Helena Rivera of A Small Studio told us, “The Maxton shade of Stonework matched the clay pavers perfectly. Stonework is our preferred floor in the studio for kitchen flooring. It has a great uneven colour finish that means it is not too stark and weathers well with the space. The matt finish means it is not too reflective and softens the spaces. In this instance the step tread pieces were perfect for an indoor step that the kitchen has, which could be a trip hazard if it isn't clearly visible.”



The tiles were chosen to match the existing exterior pavers of the patio, seamlessly connecting the inside to the outside.





Floor:
3LBG531



The client is delighted with the results, "Our quality of life as a family has improved because we spend so much time together cooking in the kitchen and BBQing outside....and with this new design we are much more connected to the woodlands. I like being able to view the birds using my binoculars whilst I am cooking in the kitchen - what a luxury to have this diversity in the heart of London!" Hernando Alvarez.

We asked Helena why she chose to work with Solus on this project.

"We have worked with Solus for about seven years now and it is all down to the fantastic relationship we have with Mark Ayliffe and Andrea Luckett. They both take care of us ensuring we receive samples quickly and prices efficiently. When something is out of stock, Mark immediately suggests alternatives and they are usually spot on. He knows the European market very well and can explain to suggest products with technical expertise (for example on installation or grip rating), as well as conceptually (on what might work in a space based on our other finishes). Even though we are a small practice working on small project under 500k, Mark has never made us feel unimportant or 'not worth his time', which does happen often with some of the competitor suppliers. Basically, if we find a ceramic we like, we know that Mark will usually be able to supply it via Solus."

The project has also received recognition from the A&D community in the form of an award from New London Architecture. A great result for everyone!



The extension was designed to have light ecological impact on the garden's abundant wildlife, and evens features a specifically-designed bat cave.

“

A Small Studio are a fabulous company, they're always so happy, which makes them a joy to be around. Andrea and I have worked with them for a while now.

They have a great design aesthetic and get some fantastic projects. Already looking forward to our next collaboration!"

Mark Ayliffe, Area Sales Manager
markayliffe@solusceramics.com



Floor:
3LBG531



PITCHER & PIANO

AT BRINDLEY PLACE

An iconic British
establishment
reimagined

INTERIOR DESIGN:
JM&A, York

CLIENT:
Marstons

PHOTOGRAPHY:
Ben Carpenter
Sam Kelly

RANGES USED IN THIS PROJECT:
Crest
Romany

The Pitcher & Piano was the first bar concept that focused on the female customer.



Developed by branding agency Piper in 1986, Pitcher & Piano was an attempt to understand the motivations of most young people who go out for a drink. It heralded a new breed of bars and restaurants that disrupted the old-fashioned pubs and wine bars that had dominated the market.

Marston's Brewery bought Pitcher & Piano in 1996 and recently opened a branch in Brindley Place, Birmingham's waterfront nightspot. For designers at JMDA, it was an opportunity to create something extraordinary: a chance to elevate and reimagine an iconic British establishment.

The journey began with a longstanding relationship between the design team and Marston's. Known for their expertise in pub refurbishments, the team was invited to breathe new life into the Pitcher & Piano brand, stepping beyond their usual projects and embracing the challenge to add a distinctive touch to their portfolio.

Charged with the task of appealing to a younger audience, the design team was given a clear direction: bring the brand forward. Marston's envisioned varying seating areas, abundant feature lighting, and a standout bar that would position Pitcher & Piano head and shoulders above the competition.

Solus Area Sales Manager Mark Blamires was approached by JMDA to assist with the design. "This was a fantastic project to be involved in as the requirements of the specification were so diverse. JMDA are always a pleasure to work with and I think they've done something very special here."

With a kick-off on August 30, 2022, and a remarkable finish on September 30, 2022, the project unfolded within a tight timeframe, showcasing the team's efficiency and dedication.

Holli Fletcher from JMDA talked us through the design. "The design elements of Pitcher & Piano at Brindley Place are nothing short of spectacular. Warm green hues, accents of burnt orange and coral, brass feature lighting leading to the bar and dance floor—all harmoniously come together to create a visually stunning space. The ground floor is a masterclass in design, with ribbed fixed seating, up-lit rods, and a mix of materials creating a dynamic atmosphere. The lower ground floor, with its moody hues, glass Crittal doors, and Birmingham-inspired artwork, adds a touch of exclusivity."

Externally, the site features four outdoor seating areas, two of which overlook the iconic canal at Brindley Place. Custom lit signage, a butterfly canopy, and vibrant green and coral furniture contribute to an inviting external aesthetic.



Looking along the Old Canal towards Broad Street and the Black Sabbath bridge bench.



No project is without its challenges. The site's tricky location, with no direct road access, presented logistical challenges for suppliers. However, the team turned these challenges into opportunities, maximising external space and creating an iconic setting.

The true measure of success is client satisfaction, and in this case, the client was not just satisfied but delighted. Being involved in the process from start to finish, Marston's witnessed their initial brief come to life. Pitcher & Piano at Brindley Place is now a flagship bar, a testament to the collaborative effort and creative vision of the design team.

This project holds immense significance for the design team as it adds another successful concept brand to their portfolio. Tailoring their approach to meet individual needs, the team's interior design concepts have established a series of successful brands, with Pitcher & Piano now proudly joining their ranks. The anticipation of refreshing the face of this beloved British brand across the UK in the future adds an exciting dimension to their journey.

The transformation of Pitcher & Piano at Brindley Place is not just a design success; it's a story of collaboration, creativity, and overcoming challenges. It stands as a shining example of how a vision, when brought to life with passion and precision, can redefine the identity of a brand and create an unforgettable experience for patrons. In the dynamic world of design and innovation, every project is an opportunity to create something extraordinary.



“

JMDA are an award-winning interior design practice from my native Yorkshire, so you might think I'm being a bit biased when I sing their praises. I'm not. They're fantastic. Lovely people, a great design team who are a pleasure to work with.”

Mark Blamires, Area Sales Manager
markblamires@solusceramics.com

Bar front:
5CRE101
Floor:
2AHV101
2AHV103
2AHV104
2AHV105

Solus supplies esteemed luxury car retailer H.R. Owen in ground-breaking multi-franchise dealership in Hatfield.

H.R. OWEN HATFIELD

ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN:
Louis de Soissons

PHOTOGRAPHY:
Richard Washbrooke

RANGES USED IN THIS PROJECT:
Stalwart
Porcelain Flare

Hatfield, once home to the de Havilland Aerodrome, is synonymous with aeronautic speed and power and now hosts a multi-million pound supercar destination.

We were thrilled to receive the invitation to contribute to the H.R. Owen Hatfield project, a venture announced by H.R. Owen CEO Ken Choo in 2021. This automotive haven, situated to the north of London, serves as a multi-franchise dealership representing esteemed brands such as Bentley, Ferrari, Lamborghini, Maserati, and includes a specialised Bugatti service centre.

The complex, designed by architects Louis de Soissons, features a distinctive winged roof design that recalls the site's rich aeronautical history. It comprises an eastern wing housing four showrooms and two workshops, with office spaces arranged around a shared courtyard. The west houses two further showrooms spanning three levels, accompanied by additional workshop facilities and vehicle storage.

There are technical challenges to overcome when tiling an automotive showroom: surfaces need to be spotless to better display the machines and therefore easily cleaned; they need to be strong and durable to accommodate the moving of the vehicles; more often than not, showrooms have a large footprint requiring a significant amount of flooring.

Lee Simmonds, Solus Area Sales Manager, talked us through the project, “The footprint of the site is large, and to get these 1000x3000x6mm slabs down and brick-bonded, to such a high standard was no mean feat. The reduction in grouting lines means a more expansive feeling to the space that fulfils, and I think exceeds, the original brief of polished concrete.

“Slabs are a relatively new product, and some architects are still a bit uncertain about them, so this was a great opportunity to demonstrate how reliable, safe, practical, and aesthetically pleasing they are. Porcelain has higher technical performance than both polished concrete and natural stone in this context. It has a lower carbon footprint than concrete and can be replaced more easily as it is modular. Natural stone must be sealed and does not have the same uniformity of grip, or durability that porcelain has. A porcelain tile is as good as its substrate, so we made sure to communicate that to the architects.

“The fact that we work with manufacturers that are producing 6mm slabs that you can roll cars over is exciting and I’m delighted to support architects when they specify this type of product. “I think it’s important to point out that we can give advice

The H.R. Owen Group sells, services and maintains some of the most extraordinary supercars in the world.



Floor:
3FAP103
BESPOKE



“

In Hatfield, we tiled the showrooms, but we also tiled the workshops with a 200x200mm anti-slip that very few manufacturers still produce. Our good relationships with manufacturers ensure that we are able to source the products our clients want and need.

Lee Simmonds, Area Sales Manager
leesimmonds@solusceramics.com

Floor:
 2SCT3093
 2SCT3081

and support to fulfil the aesthetics of a design brief that is associated with strictly controlled global brand guidelines, as well as on the critical technical qualities of a product, including its sustainability profile.” Lee Simmonds, Area Sales Manager.

The ambitious multi-million pound project is a testament to H.R. Owen's commitment to excellence, marking the most significant undertaking in the luxury motor retailer's 90-year history. Located on a five-acre site in Hertfordshire, formerly the site of the renowned de Havilland aircraft factory, it is a place of historical significance. De Havilland, known for its innovative contributions to aeronautics, produced iconic aircraft such as the Moth biplane, the versatile wooden Mosquito, and the ground-breaking passenger jet, the Comet. In a pleasing coincidence, Bentley, now with a dealership on the same site, once manufactured the Merlin engine that powered the legendary de Havilland Mosquito.

“When partnering with esteemed names like Rolls-Royce, Bentley, Lamborghini, or Ferrari, one isn't simply offering a service; it's a commitment to upholding the same standards of excellence that these automotive giants demand of themselves. At Solus, we take this commitment to heart, striving to ensure that our clients in the luxury automotive sector are not only satisfied, but absolutely delighted with the exceptional results we deliver.” Chris Dennis, Corporate Account Manager.

The workshops incorporate a highly technical product with excellent grip and load resistance.



10 BRINDLEY PLACE

A sustainable
transformation of modern
office space



ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN:
Associated Architects

MAIN CONTRACTOR:
Willmott Dixon

PHOTOGRAPHY:
Ben McPhee

RANGES USED IN THIS PROJECT:
Gravel
Target
Australasia

In the bustling heart of Birmingham, a landmark building has undergone a remarkable transformation.

Setting new standards for sustainability and workplace wellbeing, the 10 Brindley Place refurbishment project, covering an impressive 210,000 square feet of Category A office space, is a testament to innovation, commitment to environmental responsibility, and a vision for the future of work.

Spacemade, a forward-thinking end user that manages a network of co-working spaces across the UK, partnered with Associated Architects to bring this visionary project to life. With sustainability at the forefront of the design brief, the project aimed to refurbish the building back to its frame, rather than opting for demolition, resulting in an estimated 60% reduction in embodied carbon over a 60-year building life cycle assessment.

Key design features reduce operational carbon as well. By adopting a fabric-first approach, the building has been made more energy-efficient, employing high levels of thermal insulation and air tightness.

The external facade was transformed using a brickslip system, enhancing both the building's aesthetics and insulation. Natural solutions, including a green roof, play a role in regulating the building's temperature, while an all-electric heating, cooling, and hot water system eliminates the need for fossil fuels.

A solar PV array on the roof harnesses green energy, contributing to the building's impressive 'A' Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating and BREEAM 'Excellent' certification. Predicted to consume 65% less energy compared to offices of similar size, 10 Brindley Place is not just a workspace, but an embodiment of ecological responsibility and technological advancement.

Smart Spaces, a leading smart building platform, has woven cutting-edge technology into the fabric of 10 Brindley Place, propelling it into the ranks of the most technologically advanced office buildings in the country. The result is a high-quality, amenity-rich, and sustainable workplace that perfectly aligns with modern occupier demands.

Among the array of amenities offered are private studios, co-working spaces, meeting rooms, a coffee shop with a roastery, and a 2,000 sqft auditorium and event space. The building caters to wellbeing with a fitness studio, bouldering wall, cycle storage, electric vehicle charging, and communal landscaped roof terraces. This holistic approach to work-life integration distinguishes 10 Brindley Place as a leader in designing spaces that prioritises the needs of both the environment and its occupants.



The Brindley Place development has drawn attention to this once neglected side of the city.





Floor:
3GMS123

Multiple Solus ranges are featured in this prestigious project.

Solus Area Sales Manager, Lee Simmonds, played a pivotal role in bringing the project to fruition. Collaborating closely Associated Architects, Simmonds ensured the inclusion of Solus products that harmonised with the project's sustainable ethos.

"We prioritised occupant experience and wellbeing in our design approach, aiming to strike a balance between a contemporary look and meeting the building's technical requirements. Achieving key sustainability goals within budget constraints posed a challenge, so we collaborated closely with our factory partners to ensure the selected materials aligned with our objectives.

"For shared space lobbies and WC floors, we chose our Gravel range due to its technical attributes and warm aesthetic. In the Spacemade shared kitchen area, we aimed for a playful design feel, incorporating our Australasia mix pattern on the floor, which not only fulfilled the design vision but also met sustainability goals, as it was produced by one of the world's most eco-conscious tile manufacturers with full EPD certification. To enhance the contemporary ambiance, we used our Target range for the splashback areas.

"We were delighted to collaborate with Associated Architects on this ambitious and prestigious project." Lee Simmonds, Area Sales Manager.

Laura Wilson-Brown, UK Head of Asset Management Offices at CBRE Investment Management, commented on the achievement: "10 Brindley Place delivers a new standard of space, meeting the flight to quality demands of the modern occupier." The sentiment was echoed by Paul Stanley, Technical Director at Workman LLP's Venture team, who noted that 10 Brindley Place represents best practices in refurbishing and retrofitting large office spaces, leading the way towards a more environmentally conscious future.

The 10 Brindley Place refurbishment is more than a physical transformation; it's a statement about the commitment to sustainability, technological innovation, and occupant wellbeing. This Birmingham landmark now stands not only as a remarkable workspace, but as a shining example of what can be achieved when sustainability, design, and function converge.

“

As one of the biggest and best practices in the UK, Associated Architects are a valued client. We do our utmost to ensure that they're satisfied with the service we provide.

They're great company to work with, as are Willmott Dixon, who built the project.

Lee Simmonds, Area Sales Manager
leesimmonds@solusceramics.com



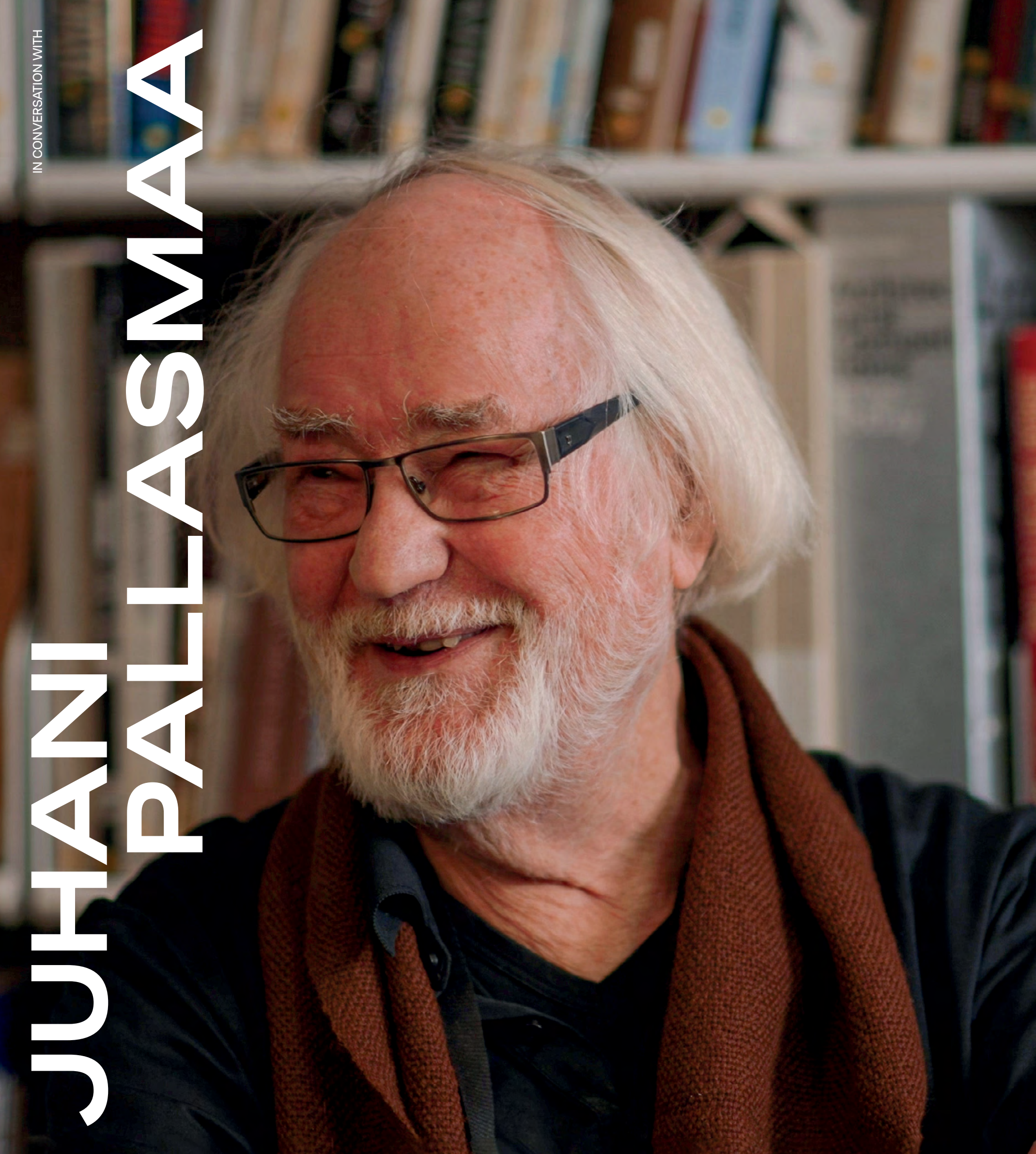
Wall:
5PPA109



Floor:
Australasia
Mix Pattern F

210,000
square feet of
Cat A office
space

JUHANI PALLASMAA



Late last year, we were invited to the home of one of Finland's most distinguished architects and architectural thinkers, Juhani Pallasmaa. A prolific author, Juhani Pallasmaa is perhaps best known for his seminal work 'The Eyes of the Skin', a polemic on the dominance of the visual modality, that is required reading on many architecture courses around the world.

On a dark and snowy December afternoon, Juhani welcomed us into his studio library, plied us with Rioja and walnuts, and we discussed art, phenomenology, literature, and architecture. As you read the following, you should imagine Juhani as a warm and amused speaker, laughing easily and frequently but occasionally pulling focus with great seriousness and conviction.

Could you tell us about your youth and upbringing, your personal history and how your early experiences have informed your career and writing?

The most important thing for me in my youth was that I spent the war years at my grandfather's small farm in central Finland in a normal, rather poor farming situation. Since I was the only child of the family at that time, I followed the family members in their daily work, but I had also huge amounts of time to spend by myself, so I spent a lot of time in the fields, by the river and in the forest; and that is where my interest in animal architecture started. I'm increasingly aware of the importance of certain situations and experiences in my early childhood that have been formative; for instance, my interest in books is clearly related to the fact that during the war the attic of the humble house of my grandfather was my art gallery and library. My biggest treasure was a book of wallpaper samples. There was no radio, nothing, during the war, so the wallpapers were just an endless joy. I remember still how I ran up the stairs to the attic to look at wallpapers and books. They were visual nourishment for a very curious young boy.

Presumably, these were kind of abstractions or were they quite figurative?

Some of them were figurative but something that you could put your imagination into. I think that, if you like, my skill of seeing the essence of things and reading through abstraction derives from my wallpaper patterns (laughs).

When did it become clear that literacy would play such a significant role in your life?

Much later. Much later. My mentality is completely a farm boy's mentality to the degree that when I'm addressed as a phenomenologist I say "Yes, a farm boy's phenomenology!" (laughs) Because phenomenology is the art of looking, unbiased looking, and that's what I learned in my childhood. I could watch, for instance, a swallow's nest from six inches distance when I was in the barn. There was a knot hole in the log and the swallow had just constructed his nest there on the other side. I still remember wondering, "Why do the swallows shake their heads when they come with a piece of wet clay from the riverbank before sticking the clay?" I couldn't understand it! Until I went to practice at the



Editor Conleth Buckley visited Juhani at his studio in Helsinki which was entirely walled with bookshelves. “Books develop fundamental narratives of causality and open epic views into the continuum of culture and human life.” Juhani Pallasmaa

construction site, and I saw the concrete guys using the vibrator. I realised this is the same thing. The birds knew that they must get rid of the extra water and air because otherwise the construction would not be strong enough.

You have written about animal architecture and its “immanent wisdom”. What do you mean by that?

Well, it is immanent wisdom; it is wisdom itself! It is testified wisdom because the process of evolution cuts away any unsuccessful ideas, and that is exactly the difference between animal architects and human architects. We are building prototypes all the time. Prototypes that are really never tested. Our culture believes in newness. Nature doesn't believe in newness. It believes in tested cases and tested qualities.

Has animal architecture informed your work in any practical ways?

No. Not really. I don't believe too much in biomimetic architecture or design. It's not the form or whatever structure that is important; it is its role in continuum of evolution and in the continuum of the life of the species. It is exactly this continuum that we lack. “We try to invent”, as Mies van der Rohe said, “new architecture every Monday morning.” (laughs)

When did you realise that you wanted to be an architect?

I realised that there was such a thing as architecture as a kid. My grandfather's house was on a low hillside; on one side of the yard was a sauna and on the other a long cow shed. There was an axis, which one could experience with an echo... there was a special echo, and standing there, listening to that echo really got my imagination going. I realised that there is a thought in how these buildings have been placed. And so, I realised something, I think, rather fundamental in architecture when I was six years old. I didn't know how to call it, but I sensed it - the positioning of the buildings in relation to each other in a meaningful way. And that is architecture – positioning things in meaningful ways – that's architecture. For me, architecture is choreography, which is another way of saying “placing things in a meaningful way”.

As an Educator, you appear to be concerned with the character of the Architect. Why is that important?

This is the very foundation of any creative person, the sense of self. Which also of course means, self in relation to the world. And that introduces the ethical dimension right there. It's almost useless to start to teach architecture as a technical discipline or as an aesthetic discipline without first setting a fire in the heart of the young person. The success of education relies exactly on that. Without that internal fire the greatest teacher cannot make a skilful architect. We are all self-made in this sense and it is this process that a good teacher initiates and supports. I think an incorrect goal of education is to evoke egos. I'm suggesting the total opposite - the loss of the ego.

You’ve written about how tertiary Education should ideally be a synthesis of ethics and culture, leading to wisdom. Why is wisdom important in Architecture?

Wisdom is the highest level of human qualities. Wisdom cannot be objectified. It's a completely unfocused capacity to understand. To understand what? Just to understand! (laughs) And it is becoming very rare in today's world. Other things that are becoming rare are individuals with wide visions. Because we are a culture that believes in specialization and expertise. One of my favourite writers, the Russian Nobel Prize Laureate Joseph Brodsky, writes that “A writer does not collect expertise, he collects uncertainties.” That's what a good architect also does.

You have an abiding interest in the history and culture of Italy. Why is that?

I am not a historian at all. My reading in History is a personal reading from certain points of view. Simply, there is so much in Italian history that has been important for me, from the Proto-Renaissance painters through Renaissance. Whenever I begin a new architectural design project, I don't go to the section in my library with architectural journals to look at works by other architects on the same kind of task. I take one of these books on early Italian painting. Fra Angelico, for instance, is a supreme

stimulus for architectural thought, a pure architectural thought. It's no surprise that Alvar Aalto in his youth was very much inspired by Giotto and Fra Angelico. The entirety of early Renaissance painting, as well as icon paintings through history, have a kind of a child-like naiveté where buildings are presented as human beings. They have human proportions, and it is just so endearing! It is a conversation between buildings and human beings that we see in these paintings. Today we understand nothing of this. We used the word wisdom a bit earlier. This is the wisdom of not separating things. Our culture, in its very essence, is a culture of separation. Because that's the process by which investigation is made. I think art is trying to do the opposite movement - putting things back together.

How does your love of poetry inform your architectural sensibilities?

Poetry is my example for artistic work when I teach students. The poet sees something general and significant and historical and prehistorical in an image, and then gives it a new life.

As a writer, you have quite a rigorous process. Does the chisel shape the sculptor?

I usually write because I have been commissioned to write (smiles). The process starts with somehow thinking about what I have been asked to do. And then I forget what I have been asked to do. And then things happen, begin to somehow appear, or just come through my pencil. I never have a preconception for any of my essays. I mean as an entity, never. It's like a sculptor's moulding work. Piece by piece and then the pieces take form, and they suggest other pieces and that's how it goes in my work. I guess that would be true for any artist. Salman Rushdie has a wonderful line where he speaks about the creative work “It is a point where the writer permits the world to flow into him and him to flow into the world.” I think it's a beautiful and precise description.

What advice do you give to young architects just starting out?

I always advise my students to keep away from professionalism. It's the professionalist attitude that kills your pure intentions. It also kills your ethical sense. I'm old enough to say this to any architect's association and I have written that we architects are to blame for this catastrophic situation of Architecture in the world. We have become just a service profession for finance people and developers.

Because of the loss of ethics?

Exactly! The loss of self-identity, self-respect. Architect's associations around the world have been repeating the same mistake. They try to defend the architect's profession. No, they should defend architecture! Architecture as a form of art.

Most people’s experience of architecture is quite passive. Architecture is imposed upon them. How do we address that?

Well, I would first say that I disagree with your premise. People are perhaps consciously uninterested in architecture and consciously unable to verbalize what it means, but in the existential life, architecture has a significant unconscious task and perpetual function. What would an ordinary person in the street know of History without the city and its layers that the person lives in? Architecture is an art form that penetrates human life. It does not have to be intellectually or theoretically understood. It can just be faced and enjoyed.

Or, also, in the negative cases people can become ill. There was a famous study in the late 60s in America of slum residents who were taken away from their housing areas because they were being rebuilt. The sorrow of the lost home was equivalent to the sorrow of a lost relative. That was the result of a psychological study. That just shows how deep our tie with specific settings and particularly the home. Home is a place for the naked human being. Only there do you feel safe enough and protected enough to be naked. I don't believe architects think about nakedness much nowadays. All these things must be thought and felt. Otherwise, how could they come through in a design task?

A detail from Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma, Helsinki.



Our culture is getting too smart in forgetting our mental history – the history of the mind. Sigmund Freud published ‘On the Interpretation of Dreams’ in 1899. It was a door to the century of modernity. And early modernity was, of course, very interested in the subconscious and dreams. In today's world, forgotten! Architecture is just surface, nothing else.

How important are our senses in our understanding of architecture?
Well, as you know, I have studied and written quite a lot on vision. Particularly the alteration of vision, or the first the change in the hierarchy of the senses in the 17th century. Until then we had been hearing, smelling, and touching creatures, but we turned into visual creatures. And this is even more accelerated today when everything is becoming increasingly visual.

I see this as a not only a sad thing in the way architects and artists tend to think, but a real threat to humankind. I'm here again thinking of evolution. We did not evolve as people who would watch images all day. Our eyes are not good for high levels of light. We are creatures of shadow. In the African Savannah, early people did not move in the daytime, they slept, and they hunted in the evening and early morning in dim light. Our eye is still more sharp when the illumination is low. This is just an example of how much harm we might be doing to ourselves with all these inventions.

One of the foundational problems today is that we do not see ourselves in the process of evolution. Do you know what these triangles are, here in the corner of the eye? These are vestigial eyelids. They are called Plica Semilunaris, and they are the points where the horizontally moving extra eyelids were fixed when we were lizards (laughs). Evolutionary history is right in our gaze, but we don't we don't care!

How do you retain your intellectual curiosity?
I think curiosity is a very important talent. Children have curiosity but they lose it and that is because of bad education. Education should promote and strengthen the sense of curiosity. I think the most important of human capacities is imagination. Without imagination we would not even have an ethical sense. We need to be able to imagine what consequences or alternative choices we have otherwise, there is no ethical choice. But curiosity is the instinct that brings us next to the interesting things. I would dare to say that my life has been guided by the farm boy's curiosity. I'm still the farm boy who was standing by the river with brown water, running through my grandfather's farm. I knew each fish in the river, and I had given them names, so when my grandmother asked me, “Juhani, could you go on catch three fishes for a fish soup?” I said, “Which ones shall I catch?” (laughs)

You have said, “Art is the only trustworthy area of human culture.” Why do you think this is?
In principle, art, genuine art, is an area which expresses the human being, Humanity, most purely. Science, for instance, by very definition, takes things apart. Art presents and projects the human in its very essence. One of my close friends in school days was the famous Finnish modernist composer, Paavo Heininen. He said to me once, “All arts say the same thing. This is how it feels to be a human being.” I think it's a very fine definition for art.

Why is art so important to the human experience?
The real quality of art is in its relation to its authenticity. In the case of the child, very soon the children's drawings will pick up themes from the adult world. For instance, the house gets a chimney, four windows, and a door, not because the child sees this house or even lives in this house, but because this is how a house is represented. Instead of teaching children adult values and qualities, it would be better to protect their imagination as long as possible. That's also what I'm trying to do in my teaching of architecture students. I try to somehow evoke and protect their personal imaginations instead of surrendering to the standardised image of what architecture is.

“

I confront the city with my body; my legs measure the length of the arcade and the width of the square; my gaze unconsciously projects my body onto the facade of the cathedral, where it roams over the mouldings and contours, sensing the size of recesses and projections; my body weight meets the mass of the cathedral door, and my hand grasps the door pull as I enter the dark void behind. I experience myself in the city, and the city exists through my embodied experience. The city and my body supplement and define each other. I dwell in the city and the city dwells in me.”

Juhani Pallasmaa, The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses



You can watch the full interview on our website.

Juhani Pallasmaa's previous positions include: Rector of the Institute of Industrial Arts, Helsinki; Director of the Museum of Finnish Architecture, Helsinki; Professor and Dean of the Faculty of Architecture, Helsinki University of Technology; Raymond E. Maritz Visiting Professor of Architecture, Washington University in St. Louis; Plym Distinguished Professor, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign; and scholar in residence at Frank Lloyd Wright's Taliesin. He has published over two dozen books, 300 essays, and is translated in 30 languages.



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