SET IN STONE

Selecting attractive, durable, easy-to-maintain finishes

IF YOU'RE considering an upgrade or renovation to your home or building a new one, choosing the right tile or stone for floors and countertops is an underrated but important part of the process. Like everything related to your home, doing a little homework in advance goes a long way.

TILES

"When selecting tile, homeowners should first look at where the tile is being used," says Leslie Raymond, senior associate architect at Albert Architecture.

Will it be installed in a high-traffic area? Or an area that often gets wet?

It is also important to remember that you are likely to be stuck with your choice for a long time (most people would not want to spend the money to redo something they just did).

What are some of the pros and cons of different materials? Raymond says porcelain tiles are the most durable and maintain their color and finish long-term, even in high-traffic areas. Glass tiles are also durable and easy to maintain, but edge conditions can be challenging, as the tiles can easily break or chip when cut. Glass tiles can also change color depending on the grout used. Stone tiles have a strong aesthetic appeal, but must be carefully sealed before grouting and require upkeep and re-sealing to withstand dirt and water damage.

COUNTERTOPS

For countertops, Raymond says quartz has become the go-to material. Homeowners love the durability of a man-made product that has the look of stone.

"If you were updating your kitchen countertops, I recommend you go for a timeless look that you will always love. Styles and trends come and go, but what's important is that you are happy with the color and type of material you select," says Katie Jensen, the owner and president of Triton Stone Group in New Orleans.

Jensen agrees that quartz is popular for countertops and added that engineered stone is another trendy choice.

"As a man-made product, this offers more consistency in color and veining than a natural stone choice," Jensen says.

Marble remains in demand, too. Jensen says it sometimes gets an unfair rap for being difficult to maintain.

"Marble has been around for centuries on buildings across the world," Jensen says. "As long as you like the 'aged' look of marble, it is a wonderful surface."

PROFESSIONAL HELP

All too often, homeowners try to cut a corner or two to save money but end up costing themselves more time, money and heartache in the long run. Social media sites like Instagram and Pinterest give people ideas for home design, but they also make people think they can do it all themselves. This is not the case.

"The biggest mistake people make is not hiring an interior designer," says Nomita Joshi-Gupta, principal at Spruce.

Joshi-Gupta says an interior designer will understand the practicality of specific bathroom and kitchen layouts, as well as how much certain choices will cost. She says homeowners can get beautiful tiles for anywhere from $5 to 100 per square foot Designers will also be knowledgable about the less flashy parts of the process, like choosing the right grout (yes, you can choose the wrong type of grout for a job). An interior designer can be hired on an hourly basis for about $125 an hour.

– BY FRITZ ESKER

SUSTAIN AND MAINTAIN: USING TILE AND STONE ON THE GULF COAST

Join *New Orleans Homes & Lifestyles Magazine's* editor Melanie Warner Spencer April 21, 2020, 11 a.m. to noon at Coverings 2020 for a panel with the Magazine's 2019 Design Masters. Katie Jensen, owner Triton Stone Group of New Orleans, Nomita Joshi-Gupta, principal at Nomita Joshi Interior Design + SPRUCE and Leslie Raymond, senior associate architect at Albert Architecture. will discuss best practices for tile and stone, sustainability and the use of local materials, design trends, the use of tile and stone, where and why, and include planning for flooding, heat and humidity. Sponsored by *New Orleans Homes & Lifestyles.*