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Thin Porcelain Tile Brings Restaurant Vision to Life

New Advanced Certification for Tile Installers

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Don’t Miss *Total Solutions Plus* in Savannah!

“Momma always said life was like a box of chocolates ... you never know what you’re gonna get.” Well, when Forrest Gump uttered those words sitting on a bench at Chippewa Square in Savannah Georgia, he may have been right about the chocolates.

This year, *Total Solutions Plus* will be taking place in Savannah beginning on October 24th and there certainly will be no guessing as to what is planned to happen. But perhaps there may be a few surprises and a whole lot of fun.

Definitely venturing out in the Historic District and along the river, we’re going to have access to great food and historic venues to see. Dare I bring up shopping … WOW. Those that attended the TCAA convention held in Savannah previously will not forget that, along with the great time and positive experiences.

This year’s *Total Solutions Plus* is gearing up to be every bit as exciting and educational. This is the time to get together with fellow contractors and suppliers to broaden our skills and education. Of course, the social aspect is a predominant part of the convention as we, as contractors and manufacturers, have a much more relaxed and comfortable forum to discuss the issues facing us all and learn a few more things.

As this is coming in as the 25th convention that I will be attending as a member of TCAA, I can’t help but look back at all I have learned while attending, the places I have seen and the friendships that I have made. Watching each other’s kids growing up, appreciating and speaking to the
various generations that have attended and the sorrow of seeing some of our members pass on, just brings to mind the family we have become.

Sure social media, webinars and emails have made it possible to keep in contact with one another but it is definitely not the same as the face to face meeting and a hand shake. How many times do we tell our personnel to go out and have a face to face? Surely not as much as we used to but look back at how influential it was going out and having that contact.

The year is half over and October 24th will be upon us sooner than we would like to think. Please make your plans now to attend and share in the opportunities we have in being a part of such a worthwhile organization and industry.

See you in Savannah!

Ron Schwartz
TCAA President
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Thin Porcelain Tile Brings Fast-Casual Restaurant Vision to Life

Located in Chicago’s upscale Lincoln Park neighborhood, the Standard Market Grill project was a 5,000sf interior build-out of existing space attached to a multi-story residential building. Keeping with the owner’s vision of creating a fast-casual concept reflecting product offerings of fresh, made-from-scratch ingredients and sustainable food sources, the architect was challenged to use as much of the existing space as possible to save on cost while creating the natural, raw feeling reflected in the menu.

To meet that challenge, the design incorporated the use of reclaimed materials with an emphasis on sustainability. The existing concrete slab was polished and a vaulted ceiling, uncovered during demolition in the dining room area, was finished with reclaimed barn wood. Industrial light fixtures wrapped with wire mesh created oversized, anchored the community tables and helped draw attention into the space from the street. A short project schedule of 20 weeks required constant communication among the architect, general contractor and subcontractors to achieve the desired outcome in time for the restaurant’s urban Chicago debut.
Ready Tile Co., LLC was hired to handle the tile portion of the project that included installation of ceramic and porcelain tile in restrooms and back of house service areas plus installation of 3,115 sf of Crossville Tile Laminam Blends Series Thin-Porcelain tile at interior and exterior applications. Laminam tiles measuring 39”x39” were installed at the main exterior corner of the building, around all exterior windows and on all interior columns. Because of the fast track nature of the project, the Ready Tile team had just 17 working days to complete installation of all the tile work.

Large format thin tiles require application to surfaces that are true, flat, plum and level, Ready Tile’s first task was to prepare the surfaces to receive the large, thin tiles and ensure that all in- and out-corners were a true 90 degrees. MAPEI Aqua Defense was used to waterproof the exterior walls and all out-corners and returns were trimmed with Schluter

A fresh interior design to match the fresh, made-from-scratch food
Installation of Thin-Porcelain tile on the exterior

Jolly. Interior columns received the Thin-Porcelain tile with a Schluter Indec at all out-corner details and all Thin-Porcelain tile (interior and exterior) was installed using Mapei’s Kerabond-Keralastic and Ultracolor Grouts.

The size and fragility of Thin-Porcelain tile requires proper handling at all stages of the installation. The job site provided a designated measuring and cutting area where Ready Tile fabricated its own work tables and ‘A’ frames to prepare tiles for installation. The crated materials were moved to the prep area with a forklift and pallet jacks. Once uncrated, the tiles were moved to the prep tables and then to the installation areas using the Raimondi suction cup rail system.

Working in teams, installers applied thin set mortar (Mapei Kerabond/Keralastic) to the substrate with a ¼” x ¼” notch trowel while the tiles were back buttered with thin set mortar using Euro notch or Shark tooth trowels. The prepared tiles were then lifted into place using the Raimondi system and the Mechanical Edge Leveling System (MLT) was placed at every eight inches on all edges of the tile. Once the tiles were in place, the installation team vibrated each piece, center to edges, using a foam padded articulating sander to move any trapped air out from behind tile. The installers then clicked in the edge leveling system into the final flush all around position for cure before applying grout.

This project was not Ready Tile’s first experience with installing Thin-Porcelain tile; the company had previously completed a successful installation of 1200sf of full size 39”x110” tile at the ADP Headquarters in Hoffman Estates, IL. Ready Tile’s project managers and foreman attended a demonstration at MAPEI’s West Chicago facility.
to prepare for working with Thin-Porcelain tile and the installation team practiced handling, transporting, cutting and installing the material on mock-ups at Ready Tile’s facility.

Adequate space to move, prep and install thin porcelain tile is always a consideration, as is the cost of tiles lost to breakage or incorrect cutting. In this case, Ready Tile’s team of six tile setters and three finishers working on the thin porcelain portion of the installation were able to access the space needed for appropriate handling of the materials. And, according to Ready Tile President Mike Malizzio, Sr., careful handling and following the rule of “measure three times, cut once” helped ensure success.

The Standard Market Grill project received a 2014 Design Excellence award from the Chicago chapter of the American Institute of Architects. Ready Tile is located in Bartlett, IL and was incorporated in 2005. The company earned TCAA Trowel of Excellence™ certification in 2015. For more information on the Standard Market Grill project or the company, contact Mike Malizzio at mike@readytilellc.com

Standard Market Grill
444 W. Fullerton Ave.
Chicago Illinois

Architect: Joseph Vajda, Aria Group Architects, Inc.
General Contractor: Paul Bergin, Novak Construction
Materials Distributors: Mid-America Tile (MAPEI products)
Virginia Tile (Crossville Laminam Blend Tile)
We Are In “Good Hands”

Across the United States and Canada this spring, regional apprentice contests are being held at IUBAC/IMI training centers to determine finalists for the International Apprentice Contest to be held in conjunction with the BAC Convention in Baltimore this September.

In the past, I have had the honor and the unenviable task of judging the ceramic tile portion of the contest. I say honor because it was incredible to witness such high standards of skill and quality the apprentices showed in their work. I say unenviable because judging such high quality work was extremely difficult. All of the work was so well done it was very hard for me to separate one contestant from another.

Also, in conjunction with the convention will be the final work of the BAC Apprenticeship and Training Task Force. The committee, which includes both labor and management, will be meeting again at the end of June. The Task Force expects to issue its recommendations on achieving greater standardization throughout the training system at the convention.

I am hearing from all areas of the country that we are starting to face a shortage of craftworkers. TCAA has known this time would be coming (even if it seemed awfully slow in getting here) and that is why TCAA has been part of this Task Force for over a year now. In fact, our company just took on two new finishers with the expectation that they become apprentice tile setters. I know that the training of new people can be slow and a little frustrating when you need work done now. But rest assured, from the work I have seen accomplished by IMI/IUBAC trained apprentices, we are in good hands!

If you are in need of tile setters, work with your local training centers. They also have information from the IMI and the IUBAC regarding “travelers” who might be available. Communication is the key.
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By
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Director of Industry Development & Tech. Service, International Masonry Institute

Lupe Ortiz  
NTCI Apprenticeship Coordinator

The certification for Thin Porcelain Tile (TPT) installation made its debut at the Coverings international trade show held in Orlando, Florida in April 2015. Thin Porcelain Tiles presently range in sizes generally 1 M x 3 M (39-3/8” x 118-1/8”) and 1.5 M x 3 M (59” x 118-1/4”). Custom sizes: 1M x 1M, 1.5 M x 1.5 M are spectacular and impressive to architects and designers, but practical considerations in installing this material continue to challenge tile contractors. Tile Contractors Association of America (TCAA), International Union of Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers (BAC), and International Masonry Institute (IMI) are at the forefront of solving these challenges through their involvement in the Advanced Certifications for Tile Installers (ACT) program.

ANSI A137.3
One major factor limiting the use of TPT until now is the absence of an ANSI standard for this material and the resulting reluctance of some designers to specify a material that had no standard. The accredited standards committee, with representation from TCAA, BAC and IMI, has been working since 2013 to develop a standard and, at the April 2015 meeting, the committee circulated a first draft of the new ANSI A137.3 American National Standard Specifications for Thin Porcelain Tile and Thin Porcelain Tile Panels. The standard defines “thin porcelain tiles” as units up to 1 square meter, and “thin porcelain tile panels” as units greater than 1 square meter. The draft standard has a well-defined purpose and scope but much of the actual data such as methods of manufacture, test methods, and performance criteria remain to be debated, discussed, and agreed on. The committee acknowledges the importance of installation issues and is considering the input of the ACT work group in the development of this new standard.
Best-Practice Certification
With respect to the TPT ACT certification, the ACT advisory group acknowledges that without the benefit of tile industry accepted ANSI standards and methods, the ACT program has developed the TPT curriculum to educate the installer with currently available best practices and to provide a mechanism to certify his or her skills and knowledge of the TPT products which is derived from manufacturers’ recommendations and adaptation of other ANSI standards for items like proper substrate prep, mortar coverage, grout joint variation and lippage. The decision to move forward with ACT certification came about with input from TCAA contractors, BAC leadership, and IMI tile instructors, as a strategic tactic to claim this work for our trade.

Material Handling
Even before installation, a tile contractor is faced with many challenges just handling a material of such great size. Transporting it from the shop to the jobsite to the area of work requires special equipment and plenty of room to maneuver. Consider the limited elevator ceiling heights and confined work areas of some projects, and physical constraints immediately become apparent. Having an adequate crew is critical. Fortunately for the ACT installers, the ACT certification not only focuses on the handling of these big tiles but on the installation main critical points such as proper substrate prep, layout, and installation process which addresses the most critical points in the evaluation.

Mortar coverage and cure time
The proper application of mortar is critical to the success of a TPT installation. Thinset mortar with an extended open time is usually appropriate, as the process of applying the mortar to 10, 30 or 50 square feet of wall or floor and back buttering an equal area of tile can take some time. The mortar at the center of the tile, far from any grout joints, is likely to take a very long time to cure. For this reason the ACT advisory board has specified tiles no larger than 1m x 1m for the ACT certification, and is considering formalizing a statement cautioning designers on sizes greater than 1m x 1m. Such a position statement by labor would be similar in nature to the position statement issued two years ago cautioning designers not to use TPT thinner than 6mm in flooring applications due to the absence of standards on minimum breaking strength and resistance to impact loads.

Because TPT is not only large but also very thin (3+ mm – 6mm), the installers must apply mortar to full coverage to avoid potential breakage due to point loads after the
installation is complete. “Full coverage” is defined in ANSI to mean 80% minimum coverage for interior non-wet areas, and 95% coverage for exterior and interior wet areas. What is expected out of the ACT Installers? Again, without the benefit of tile industry accepted standards, the installers are held to 60%-70% mortar coverage on walls and 95% or greater on floors with the goal of 100% coverage, especially on all outside edges walls and floors.

The quality of the substrate can greatly affect the mortar coverage. For example, a floated mud wall provides greater flatness and stiffness than cement backer board on studs. Also, the absorptive qualities of the mud bed will help speed up the setting or curing time of the thin-set mortar. The ACT advisory group has communicated these findings to the ANSI accredited standards committee currently developing the new ANSI A137.3, American National Standard Specifications for Thin Porcelain Tile and Thin Porcelain Tile Panels. Because of our unique insights as the installers in the industry, TCAA, BAC, and IMI are playing a vital role in the development of this important standard.

**ACT Certifications**

It is the goal of the ACT advisory group to make ACT certifications as accessible as possible. The 2015 TCNA Handbook recognizes by name all the installers certified to date in each of the five initial ACT certifications. IMI and International Masonry Training and Education Foundation (IMTEF) are currently delivering certifications at training centers in all major markets, and they offer the certifications several times each year at the John J. Flynn International Training Center in Bowie, Maryland. For more information on scheduling ACT certifications for your key installers call Terry Hays Deputy Director, BAC/IMI International Training Center at 301-291-2120 or via email at thays@imiweb.org.
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KrisStone, LLC
Roselle Park, New Jersey
Michael Kriss, President
Trowel of Excellence Certified ™ 2010

KrisStone, LLC, a commercial union ceramic tile, terrazzo and stone company, was established in 2001 by Michael Kriss and operates in the Tri-state New York Area. Michael came to the United States in 1988 from the former USSR and holds a Civil Engineer Degree from Odessa State Academy of Civil Engineering and Architecture. He began working as an estimator for an established commercial tile, stone and terrazzo
company. During his 10-year tenure, he rose to become a Project Manager, a Senior Project Manager and was named Partner in Charge of Operations in 1999. During this time, Michael was in charge of different size projects from shopping mall renovations to major stone lobbies and hotels throughout the Tri-State New York area. In 2001, he bought the company and renamed it KrisStone, LLC.

Since the beginning, KrisStone, LLC has continued the tradition of completing various size projects with pride and emphasis on quality. The company offers a broad line of services from lump sum bidding to budget value engineering and design input. To ensure quality, KrisStone employs only skilled union craftsmen for field operations and handles all layout drawings, connection designs and details in-house utilizing experienced CAD operators.

Bergen Town Center Mall

Hyatt Regency Hotel – Stone Lobby Flooring, Steps and Reception Desk (fabrication and installation by KrisStone, LLC, architect – Stonehill & Taylor, GC – Structure Tone, Inc)
A number of KrisStone’s projects have received recognition in industry publications, including the Jefferson Valley Mall Renovation and Fortunoff Department Store, featured in Tile Letter, and renovation of the Bergen Mall, featured in Stone World. Most recently, KrisStone completed renovation of the Short Hills Mall in New Jersey; a 48-story high end condominium in Jersey City, NJ; Parx Casino in Pennsylvania; Green Acres Mall in Valley Stream, NY; and Jersey Gardens Mall in Elizabeth, NJ. The company is currently engaged on a number of terrazzo, ceramic tile and stone projects, all continuing the tradition of quality union craftsmanship. KrisStone achieved Trowel of Excellence certification in 2010.

For more information on KrisStone, visit www.krisstone.com or call (908) 620-9700.
Large format tile has become a popular choice for wall and commercial floor installations. Because it requires fewer grout lines, large format tile visually expands rooms and produces a neater, modern appearance. Building owners and designers, now more than ever, are demanding these aesthetic benefits. Meanwhile, technological advances have enabled manufacturers to produce larger – and thinner – porcelain tiles, some with facial dimensions as large as 5’ (1.5 m) x 10’ (3 m). Thicknesses are reduced compared to traditional tile, ranging from 1/8” (3 mm) to 9/32” (7 mm).
These larger and thinner tiles can be challenging to handle and install. Here are some key factors to consider when installing large thin tile panels:

Handling – Large format tiles often arrive in oversized crates, which require specific handling equipment. To prevent damage from occurring during forklift operation, specific fork sizes must be used. For example, to handle a crate of 3’ x 10’ tiles from the side, 44” long forks are recommended. To handle the same crate from the narrow end requires forks that are at least 84” long. Lifting multiple crates with longer forks may require forklifts with a greater lift capacity.

Tools and equipment – Specialized tools and equipment are currently available for the installation of large porcelain panels. Innovative trowels with unique notch configurations can help increase the consistency of the mortar coverage on the back of the tile. As with any size tile installation, full and complete coverage provides a strong bond and minimizes the likelihood of damage from impact or heavy loads.

To assist in the handling and setting of individual tiles, frames and handles with suction cups can be purchased or rented from tile distributors. Since mis-cuts of large panels can result in costly waste, the use of a rail cutting system is highly recommended.

Installation materials – Since not all setting materials are appropriate for installing large porcelain panels, setting material manufacturers have specific large tile product recommendations. Whether you are installing 1/8” (3 mm) thick tiles that have a resin/mesh backing or 7/32” (5.6 mm) tiles with a porcelain bonding surface, the greater bond strength and resistance to impact of latex/polymer modified port-
land cement mortars are required. The “tack time” of a mortar is another consideration. When troweling mortar onto a substrate, it is important that the mortar surface remains in a wet, tacky state and doesn’t skin over before the tile is set. Tack time is especially important when troweling out the area to set a 30-plus square foot tile.

Setting material manufacturers must also evaluate grout requirements for reduced thickness porcelain panels. Strong durable grouts are required for these installations for two reasons: 1.) Grout joint depth is limited by the reduced thickness of the tile and 2.) Reduced thickness tiles have a rectified corner edge, which may be susceptible to impact damage in some circumstances. Grouts with premium strength qualities address these conditions.

Substrate preparation – First, check with the tile manufacturer to make sure your substrate type is acceptable. For example, some large thin tile manufacturers limit floor installations to concrete substrates. While a clean, sound substrate is critical to any tile installation, large porcelain panels have the added criteria of substrate flatness. The maximum allowable variation in the substrate for tiles with all edges shorter than 15” is ¼” in a 10’ span. There should be no more than 1/16” variation in a 10’ span when measured from the high points on the surface. For tiles with at least one edge 15” in length, the maximum variations are ¼” in 10’ and 1/16” in 24”. For floor installations, a self-leveling underlayment can help meet these substrate requirements.

Staffing the job properly – Having the right size crew is critical. The largest of these tiles must be handled by at least two people. Back-buttering is typically required, with the mortar being applied to the substrate and the back of the tile by two people simultaneously. To keep pace with the installation, at least one individual will be required to mix and maintain the flow of mortar. Taking this into consideration, even the smallest installations require at least a four-person crew.
Finally, there are additional recommendations that manufacturers can provide, so the best approach is to consult your tile and setting material manufacturer before you begin the installation. That way, you’ll be better prepared for the challenges you may face and have the knowledge to take on large tile installations with confidence.

To learn more about large format tiles and utilizing them for wall and commercial floor installations, we encourage you to visit our website: www.hbfuller-cp.com.
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Total Solutions Plus is a partnership of the tile/stone industry’s largest organizations: Tile Contractors’ Association of America, Tile Council of North America, National Tile Contractors Association and Ceramic Tile Distributors Association. Now in its fourth year, Total Solutions Plus is the tile/stone industry’s premier conference for manufacturers, distributors and installation contractors.

Total Solutions Plus continues to break records for attendance each year. And here’s why:

**Education**

Total Solutions Plus brings together the best and brightest industry, technical and management experts to help you grow your business. Here’s just a sampling of the high caliber educational sessions you’ll find at this year’s Total Solutions Plus:
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• How Qualified Labor Can Add to Your Bottom Line
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• Motivating and Retaining Key and Quality Employees
• Installation Roundtable: The Good, The Bad and The Ugly
• Demystifying Social Media
• Creating a Successful In-House Training Program

Inspiration
Total Solutions Plus 2015 hits it out of the park with a line-up of keynote speakers serving up inspiration, motivation and lots of laughter.

Leisure Activities
From golfing to fishing to biking to sampling the culinary delights Savannah has to offer, there’s something for everyone at this year’s Total Solutions Plus. You work hard and Total Solutions Plus is the perfect getaway that combines work and play.

Networking
Relationships are among the most important assets a contractor can have. The information you take home is valuable; the relationships you build are priceless. And Total Solutions Plus offers ample opportunities to build those relationships with fun and relaxing social functions and open, engaging business conversations.

If you’re a tile/stone installation contractor, this is the one industry event you don’t want to miss. But don’t just take our word for it. Here’s what just a few attendees had to say about last year’s Total Solutions Plus;

Tommy Conner and John Trendell

Al Grazzini weighs in during Specification Smackdown
I have been in the tile business for 39 years and this event has the most worthwhile programming of any event I attend each year.

This was my first TSP meeting and I found it very educational as well as the networking opportunities were invaluable. I liked the fact that all of the distributors, contractors and manufacturers had their guards down and everyone could share valuable information amongst one another without feeling guarded and fake about what they were telling you. One of the best seminars I have ever been to in my 25 year career!

Just looking forward to future meetings and delighted to be a part of the industry hierarchy. The opportunity of networking and meeting others in the industry with similar challenges is very valuable.

Make 2015 the year that you learn why Total Solutions Plus is the conference of choice for tile/stone contractors. Register now for Total Solutions Plus 2015! Visit http://www.ctdahome.org/tsp/2015 for details and registration or call TCAA at (800) 655-8453 for more information. ◆
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Website: www.deanzatile.com

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Aurora, IL  60502-9682
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Website: www.ctcac.org/dti_illinois_inc.php

GM Sloan Mosaic & Tile Co.
Dan Kotel
101 Terrace Dr.
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Ph: (847) 949-1010
Website: www.ctcac.org/gm_sloan_mosaic_tile_co.php

Ready Tile Co., LLC.
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Website: www.readytilecompany.com

Trowstrud Mosaic & Tile Co., Inc.
Brad Trowstrud
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Wood Dale, IL  60191
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Venice Terrazzo & Tile Co.
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Ph: (815) 964-6824

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Brighton, MI  48116
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Website: www.artisanstileinc.com

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