



Final Touch

UNIQUE | CUSTOM TILES

Tile Tale

Hand-painted and limited-edition tiles add color and personality.

Customization is virtually a standard requirement in any upscale space. One way to achieve it is to incorporate hand-painted tiles into the room. Artist Bettina Elsner has been satisfying personal requests for hand-painted tiles for more than three decades through Bettina Elsner Artistic Tiles, based in Largo, Fla.

"The roots of my style are set in my European background and education, but the development and refinement of my style over time have been the result of my 35-plus years experience, as well as my extensive travel and exposure to culturally diverse artistic styles from around the world," she says.

The pigments and glazes that Elsner uses in hand-painting ceramic tile melt and fuse with the tile surface during kiln firing, making them permanent. Hand-painting on stone tile is done with



acrylic paint, which is sealed under multiple layers of clear protective coatings.

The process for designing a personalized tile is straightforward. Elsner requires the dimensions, the material choice, and the design theme, which can come from any source — from fabric samples or sketches to a mere idea. The customer is shown her vision in a proposal accompanied by a pencil sketch, although color sketches are also available. The design phase usually takes two to four weeks, with another three to six weeks for hand-painting, depending on the size and difficulty of the project.

Elsner also produces limited-edition stone tile murals and accent tiles using reproductions of the studio artists' original designs through her Studiotiles division. Here, a low-temperature Petrographic FlashFire process is used that transfers and cures the design to the tile's surface, be it glass, ceramic, or stone. Because this process involves reproducing an original hand-painted design, pricing is usually 50% to 70% below the cost of original hand-painting, but the look is very close to a hand-painted piece. Studiotiles designs are available for delivery within a week.

Elsner operates both Bettina Elsner Artistic Tiles (www.elsnertile.com) and the Studiotiles (www.studiotiles.com) division with fewer than 10 employees.

"We present a very personalized approach to our clients," Elsner says, "and strive very hard to offer them more choices and better solutions for their decorative tile needs."
—W.J.



Elsner requires the dimensions, the material choice, and the design theme, which can come from any source. The tiles (top) were hand-made to size by Elsner to fit the top of the client's antique table and then hand-painted to match the client's supplied fabric. The Tropical Palm 1 mural (above) is a Studiotiles limited edition designed by Elsner.

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—Bettina Elsner



The one-of-a-kind Venice scene (above) was hand-painted by Elsner under glaze in the Majolica method and kiln-fired. The swimming pool tiles (right) have frost-resistant bodies that have been glazed, hand-painted, and kiln-fired.

