



Five Questions

Dawn Carroll, design stone consultant with stone supplier and fabricator Cumar Marble and Granite, discusses trends and developments in the natural stone market.

1 What is a design stone consultant?

I work with architects, designers, and homeowners to help bring their stone-related design ideas and visions to reality. It's a lot of fun helping to capture the dreams that are presented to me and figuring out a way to make something beautiful out of a product that's 400 million years old. I've been consulting on stone design and fabrication for more than a decade, and work for a seventh-generation stone artist who finds unique stones from all over the world and uses Old World craftsmanship and modern technology to help clients realize their design aspirations.

2 How is the stone business changing?

The requests are getting more and more intricate. The first statement I often hear is, "Show me something that I haven't seen before." That's a challenge. A designer may have a particular color palette in mind or bring in a sample of stone that is very rare or hard to get. We will scour the planet for it. For a project we are working on right now, we are looking for a stone with a very specific shade of grayish powder-blue. Our clients are always pushing us to the limit, asking for something different.

3 Do you see any current trends?

Texture is the new rock star in the stone world. There is a real thirst for

textured stones. These are stones that have been pounded, scraped, burned, or brushed—all procedures we can do here—and are more durable. There is also a desire for exotic stones like amethyst or onyx. We just got some new onyx that is parrot green with a whispery vein of tangerine that goes through it. It is so unusual; it is a piece of art. Quartzites are very popular. They are stunning, and combine the look of soothing marble with the durability of granite; quartzite is the stone of the day and what everyone is looking for. People want something their friends don't have.

4 What is an example of "something their friends don't have"?

We offer what we call our Couture collection—beautiful handmade slabs of stone, like tiger's eye, lapis, mother of pearl, the agates, and more, that are meticulously pieced together like a puzzle so you can enjoy a full slab of them. They are becoming collectible pieces; people buy them and use them as feature pieces or as furniture. We are also seeing full slabs of some of the semiprecious materials coming out of the earth. We had such a beautiful piece of amazonite that we framed it as a magnificent piece of art.

5 What often surprises your clients?

People are often amazed at the varieties of color available. Recently, homeowners came in with their architect and fell in love with this beautiful piece of charcoal-black marble that had perfectly preserved, moon-white lobster-tail fossils within it. It came from a fossil bed in Morocco. They are designing their powder room around it. What often happens is that the stone picks you and ends up being the focal point of a room design. We have an unbelievable collection of outrageous colors and combinations of stones here. There are not many artists that can do what Mother Nature does. Stone may be millions of years old, but it is alive. Sometimes it is as if the stone is coming out of the earth and saying, "What do you see that I could become?"

I love it when someone says to me, "I am bored with stone." I tell them, "Come here, and I promise you won't be bored!"

INTERVIEW BY ROBERT KIENER

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