

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**WHAT YOU SHOULD EXPECT FROM A
HANDMADE CONCRETE TILE?**

popham design encaustic concrete tiles are meticulously hand crafted in Marrakech by our skilled artisans. We're not kidding when we say that our tiles are handmade, each and every one, individually; a labor of love that takes three to five minutes per tile. Like the best handmade products, our tiles are perfectly imperfect. One of the appealing aspects is the fact that no two tiles are ever the same. Our tiles are made from cement, marble, pigments and our special "sauce," a few additives for strength and durability. Given the ingredients and the hand made production, there are a few things you should expect: subtle color and line variation, mild differences in dimensions and thickness, small bumps, and occasional chipped or irregular edges. These subtle variations and irregularities are a natural aspect of our handmade product, lending an authentic charm to every installation. When considered tile by tile, the variations can be alarming, but a tile installation is the sum of its parts. When dispersed across a floor or wall, the variations result in depth and movement. Also, concrete tiles improve with time and wear, acquiring an exceptional patina and singular texture.

WHAT IS THE MINIMUM ORDER?

We have a 5-box minimum order. Depending on the size of the tiles, this is roughly equivalent to approx. 3.5 m2.

WHAT IS YOUR LEAD TIME?

Our production lead time is one month. Cement tiles are not fired like a ceramic tile. They gain strength by curing over a period of several weeks. Transport times depend on destination.

DO YOU HAVE ANY TILES IN STOCK?

While we are perhaps best known for the customization possibilities we offer we do have an edited selection of stock available in our warehouses in Paris and Los Angeles. Please see our stock list for "quick ship" options.

**CAN I ORDER CUSTOM COLORS?
WHAT IS THE COST / PROCEDURE?**

Yes, we are happy to produce custom colors, although there are limitations to what we can achieve in concrete. What we recommend is that you submit a Pantone Uncoated color code to us. We will determine the feasibility of replicating the color. If we feel it is feasible, we will create color samples for your approval. The cost for a custom color is \$100 / color.

**CAN I ORDER A CUSTOM PATTERN?
WHAT IS THE COST / PROCEDURE?**

As with custom colors, we are happy to produce custom patterns for clients if our time and popham design production schedule permits. For a custom pattern, we require a 100% to-scale rendering of the pattern. Once we receive the rendering, we will advise if the pattern is possible and if not, make recommendations about possible modifications. Keep in mind that line widths should not be less than 3mm. Once the rendering is approved, we will have a brass pattern mold made and produce several strike-offs for approval. There is a fee of \$150 / mold.

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- CAN THE TILES BE INSTALLED OUTDOORS?** Exterior applications are a bit more complicated. There are several considerations. First and foremost is that the tiles may experience some cracking if installed in an environment with freeze/thaw conditions. If moisture enters the tiles and is frozen (thereby expanding), it can cause micro-cracking of the tile. To prevent this from happening, an experienced installer must do the following: create a moisture barrier in the substrate onto which the tiles are installed, and seal the face of the tiles and joints to prevent any water absorption. A second consideration for outdoor installations is sun exposure. The tile color may diminish with UV exposure, especially with the blue and green pigments. We recommend that tiles installed outdoors be sealed with Fila Hydrorep.
- CAN THEY BE INSTALLED IN A SHOWER?** Yes, cement tiles work very well in showers with several caveats. If installed on a shower floor, care must be taken that they are cleaned only with mild soap and the occasional scrub with a Scotch-Brite pad. Acidic or harsh chemical cleaners, which are sometimes used to clean soap buildup from a shower floor can damage the tiles. Also, cement tiles are slippery when wet (although ours are approved even for commercial installations). You might want to consider treating the tiles on a shower floor with a slip resistant sealer.
- CAN THEY BE INSTALLED AS A KITCHEN BACKSPLASH?** Yes, cement tiles make for lovely kitchen backsplashes. As with any installation however, they should be well sealed to prevent staining from grease and other kitchen "mishaps".
- CAN CEMENT TILES BE USED WITH RADIANT HEAT FLOORS?** Yes, cement tiles have excellent thermal mass and are sublime with a radiant heat floor. When installing over radiant heat, we recommend a larger grout joint (3-4mm) versus the small grout joint (1mm) we normally recommend. Also, the grout material should be flexible. This will allow for some natural expansion/contraction of the heated floor without cracking the tiles.
- WHAT ARE THE SIZES OF YOUR TILES?** We offer many shapes and sizes. While the most standard shapes are the 20cm x20cm square tile and 23cm x 20cm hexagonal tile, we have a number of other options. Please consult the OUR SHAPES document for a full list.
- CAN THE TILES BE CUT AND HOW?** Cement tiles cut very cleanly and easily with a wet saw. You can even use the saw to cut mitered edges for corner installations.
- CAN I ORDER A SAMPLE AND WHAT IS THE COST AND TURNAROUND TIME?** We are very happy to provide custom samples. It takes us 10 days to produce custom samples. We then ship them via FEDEX. Samples cost more than the tiles that comprise a normal order as they require more labor from our team and additional supplies in addition to the cost of FEDEX. Cost to send a sample tile varies market to market. Please send an email to contact@pophamdesign.com to find out the cost where you are located.
- HOW ARE THEY INSTALLED?** Our tiles are produced in our Marrakech atelier using a technique that dates back to the mid 1800s. You can see a video showing how the tiles are individually handmade by our team of talented tile artisans on our website.

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Each cement tile is unique. Laying them is not difficult, but does requires particular care. Cement tiles should be installed by a professional installer who has experience with cement tiles. When properly installed, cement tiles will look better and better with age and wear. An installer should cut the tiles only with a wet saw. The laying of the tiles should be the last phase of a construction or renovation project. Please consult our [INSTALLATION GUIDELINES](#) for specific step-by-step advice.

ARE THEY FIRED? No, cement tiles gain strength through a process of curing. This is a chemical process whereby concrete (cement + aggregates) interacts with water. The curing process takes several weeks for our tiles to achieve their desired strength. During this stage of the production, the tiles are kept in heat- and humidity-controlled curing rooms.

DO THEY NEED TO BE TREATED? AND HOW? Yes, cement tiles are porous in their natural, raw state. They should be treated with a penetrating sealant wherever they are installed. The sealant will protect the tile from staining. Further sealing and finishing is a question of personal taste and installation location. Regarding the former, there are wax sealants – chemical or natural – that give the finished tiles a subtle satin finish. Other sealants retain the matte finish of the tiles. In wet rooms, as kitchen backsplashes, and in certain exterior installations, the tiles may require additional or specific sealants. Most sealants are applied with a sponge and allowed to absorb and dry. Sealant manufacturers’ instructions should be followed by a professional installer.

CAN YOU RECOMMEND A HIGH-QUALITY SEALANT? Cement tiles are naturally porous and should be sealed with a penetrating sealant to protect them from staining in any installation scenario. The finish of the installed tiles can vary depending on the type of sealant used. Some sealants will preserve the natural matte finish of the tiles in their raw state. Some sealants – either chemical or natural waxes – can be polished to a subtle satin finish. Several options include: Filafob, Fila Hydrorep (for exteriors), Miracle Sealant’s H2O+, and Aqua Mix Sealer’s Choice Gold.

CAN I USE A PIGMENTED GROUT WITH THE TILES? No, unfortunately. We recommend only a white or gray (cement) grout. As cement tiles are porous, a pigmented grout risks staining the tiles, even if the face of the tile has been sealed, as the grout can seep in through the sides of the tiles.

HAVE THE TILES BEEN TESTED FOR HARDNESS, SLIP, ETC.? Yes, an independent laboratory in California has tested our tiles. Test results are available on demand. They meet standards for commercial as well as residential installations.

HELP! MY TILES HAVE BEEN STAINED. WHAT CAN I DO TO CLEAN THEM? Don’t panic. If your concrete tiles have been sealed, most stains can be removed by some good old elbow grease. Scrub the tiles with a fine-grained (400+ grit) sandpaper with mild soap and water. Be sure to flush the tiles with lots of clean water thereafter so that no soap remains. For tougher stains, Fila makes a soap formulated for concrete called Fila PS87. In cases of deep staining we recommend using a stand-up rotational polishing machine fitted with diamond pads.

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**WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN
CEMENT TILES MADE IN MOROCCO AND
THOSE PRODUCED IN VIETNAM?**

popham design encaustic concrete tiles are handcrafted in Marrakech by our team of talented artisans, respecting a tradition that is over 150 years old. The beauty of the handmade process results in subtle variations in color and pattern. These variations, when considered tile by tile can be displeasing, but when the entire installation is considered, the effect is nuanced and rich with character and depth. It would be contradictory to want an artisanal product and then demand a perfectly uniform look. By contrast, the cement tiles in Vietnam have a very machined appearance and when installed result in a homogenous, flat look.