

INSTALLATION + MAINTENANCE – CUSTOM ORDER

popham design encaustic cement tiles are handcrafted in Marrakech. 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. It would be contradictory to want an artisanal product and then demand a perfectly uniform look. A chalky residue appears on the raw, uninstalled tiles and is a result of the production process. Some light shadowing will remain after installation and cleaning, and is an inherent part of the tile. Tiles retain moisture from the manufacture process and will dry to their correct color a few days after installation. The final installed patina differs from the raw state of the tiles, and it is important to follow the steps below to ensure this result is achieved. Exterior applications may experience some fading over time due to UV exposure and this is more pronounced in the blue and green colors. Cement tile installation is not difficult, but it does require care. Installation of a cement tile floor should be the final step in a renovation project.

PLANNING THE LAYOUT Before installing the tiles, batch mix them from multiple boxes to achieve a layout with pleasing color variation.

PRELIMINARY CLEANING AND SEALING It is essential that the surface of the tile is level, clean, and perfectly dry. 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.

LAYING TILES Work in small areas of just 3-4 feet at a time so that the tiles can be cleaned properly as they are installed.

Patterns look best with small grout joints (about 1 mm), although a grout joint of 3mm is recommended for tiles laid over radiant heat.

Cement tiles should be installed with thin-set mortar, using a double-adhesive process, whereby the mortar is applied to a clean, level substrate as well as to the back of the tile using a trowel or wire brush.

If setting the tiles on a concrete slab on grade, provide a moisture barrier, and if not on grade, be certain the concrete substrate is fully cured to prevent efflorescence from showing on the tile after installation.

Submerge the tiles in clean water before they are laid to remove any dust from the back of the tile.

During installation, tiles should be gently pressed into place by hand; never strike the tiles with a hammer (even a rubber hammer) as this will cause cracking.

Be sure to clean off any of the mortar from the face of the tiles as you work using a sponge and clean water. If the mortar is left on the tiles, it may adhere to the surface, causing white stains.

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GROUTING TILES Tiles should be allowed to set for 24 hours before applying grout to the joints with a trowel or sponge.

A non-pigmented, flexible, cementitious grout like those available from Laticrete is recommended.

Carefully clean the surface of the tile as they are grouted to keep the grout from setting in the tiles' porous surface. (Even with a pre-sealed tile, it is important to clean the tiles during the various phases of the install.)

If any cement residue remains on the face of the tile, a Scotch-Brite pad or fine-grained sandpaper can be used to gently remove the residue. Much care should be taken if doing this as it is easy to damage the seal on the tiles and actual surface of the tile. If the tiles are being cleaned properly as you work, you should not have this issue.

SECONDARY CLEANING AND SEALING Once the tiles have been grouted and properly cleaned, leave them until completely dry.

Apply 1-2 coats of sealant, allowing it to dry a minimum of 3 hours between coats. Once dry, finish with either Fila Satin or Fila Matt. Please see the Resources list below for recommended sealers. The sealant will oil and waterproof the tile. Please make sure the tile is completely clean otherwise you will be sealing in any stains.

Please make sure you contact the manufacturer as they can give you full directions on the best way to apply their products and dilution levels for encaustic tiles.

MAINTENANCE One of the attributes of cement tiles is that they improve with age and wear and cleaning. The tiles should be regularly washed with mild soap and water.

Never use bleach or acidic products to clean the tiles.

Depending on the level of luster you desire, additional coats of sealant or wax can be applied as the tiles' finish become duller. When the sealants are rubbed into the tiles and polished, a lovely lustrous patina can be achieved. The type of sealant or wax, as well as the number of coats, will impact the look of the tiles, which naturally have a matte finish. Depending on the traffic on the floor, the sealant should be re-applied once every 5 years.

RESOURCES Fila | filasolutions.com
Lithofin | lithofin.com
Miracle Sealants | miraclesealants.com
Aqua Mix | ptsaquamix.com
Laticrete | laticrete.com