

THE STRATEGY BEHIND ACADEMY TILES'S SOFT LAUNCH INTO MELBOURNE.

Tiling is the new fifth dimension in contemporary interior design. The tiling industry has certainly cultivated this perception, supplying trade and retail markets with an endless array of customisable choices and technological advancements for interior and exterior application.

Annual fairs, such as Cersaie in Bologna, Italy, which are devoted to presenting the very latest in tiling products and trends to international audiences, have enabled the industry to take tiling beyond mere surface finishing to present higher level decorative and functional solutions as well.

In tiling at least, Australia is a lucrative import destination for manufacturers, with long-established companies such as Academy Tiles supplying the local market with international brands, particularly from Europe.

Family-owned and operated, Academy Tiles has 34 years' experience in bringing creative and artistic tiles and mosaics to specifier and consumer clients. Its showrooms are a paradise of sample racks of tiles of every variety. Anthony Zeaiter says, "Our showrooms involve a library of thousands of loose samples, which

allows for hands-on mixing and matching to create individual and unique combinations."

Zeaiter represents the Gen Y component of the Academy Tiles family partnership and heads up its new trade-only showroom in Richmond, Melbourne.

With its main 'touch point' well established in Sydney (open to both trade and retail clients), the company responded to the inevitable pull down south.

"We've managed to serve our clients remotely for years now, but it was clear that a physical presence in Melbourne would be beneficial for all," Zeaiter says. "We concluded that being on the ground would obviously provide a better service and enable us to grow and strengthen our solid connections with our customers, and also provide our overseas factories with more volume."

Academy Tiles's entry into Melbourne has been quiet and considered. Research may have revealed the Richmond design precinct as being an ideal location for its showroom, but you won't find it on any major street. It is an appointment-only space situated within a line of warehouses behind Swan Street.

Zeaiter, who has driven the brand expansion and physical set-up, is quietly proud of the company's achievements down south. "To begin with, there's me and two other architectural reps. Our aim is to provide a personalised, face-to-face service with which we can focus on a particular client and their project – without the distraction of unexpected visitors," he says.

Zeaiter is breaking new ground with this satellite office, and although long hours are involved in commuting back to Sydney, managing much of the company's marketing and spearheading the new Melbourne operation, Zeaiter is driven by passion and purpose – he loves what he does.

In Melbourne, Academy Tiles's range spreads across two levels in a splay of sample palettes that will have you snapping away on your smartphone.

"We provide custom solutions in glass, ceramic, porcelain and stone, both in smaller mosaic and larger tile formats," Zeaiter says.

"Our specifiers can simply provide us with a concept, shape and dimension, and we'll assist with a specialised custom solution for as little as a few square metres."

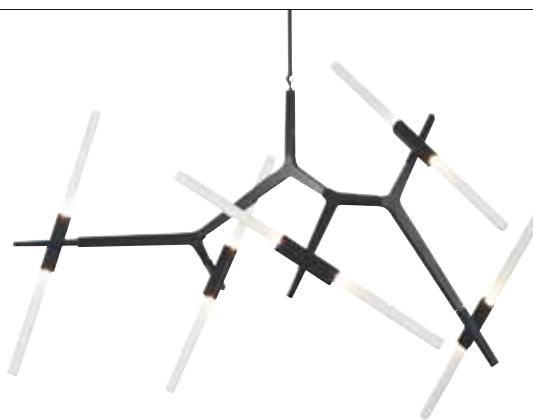
Zeaiter and his colleagues are passionate about bringing cutting-edge tiling options to Australian shores. They're regulars at the major trade fairs, such as Cersaie, and at factories in Vicenza, Treviso and Modena-Sassuolo. Last year, they also met with a number of boutique manufacturers in Nagoya, Japan.

"There, we observed a growing trend towards bright colours, textured and 3D profiles and unusually shaped formats – a direction that has been emerging over the past few years," Zeaiter says. "These trends continue to be adopted by the Australian market, at times departing from, but also complementing, the more common square and rectangular ceramics in neutral tones. Our customers love the fact that they don't have to settle for a limited tile solution available in someone's warehouse – with our support, they can literally design their own." ●

Text by Alice Blackwood

ACADEMY TILES

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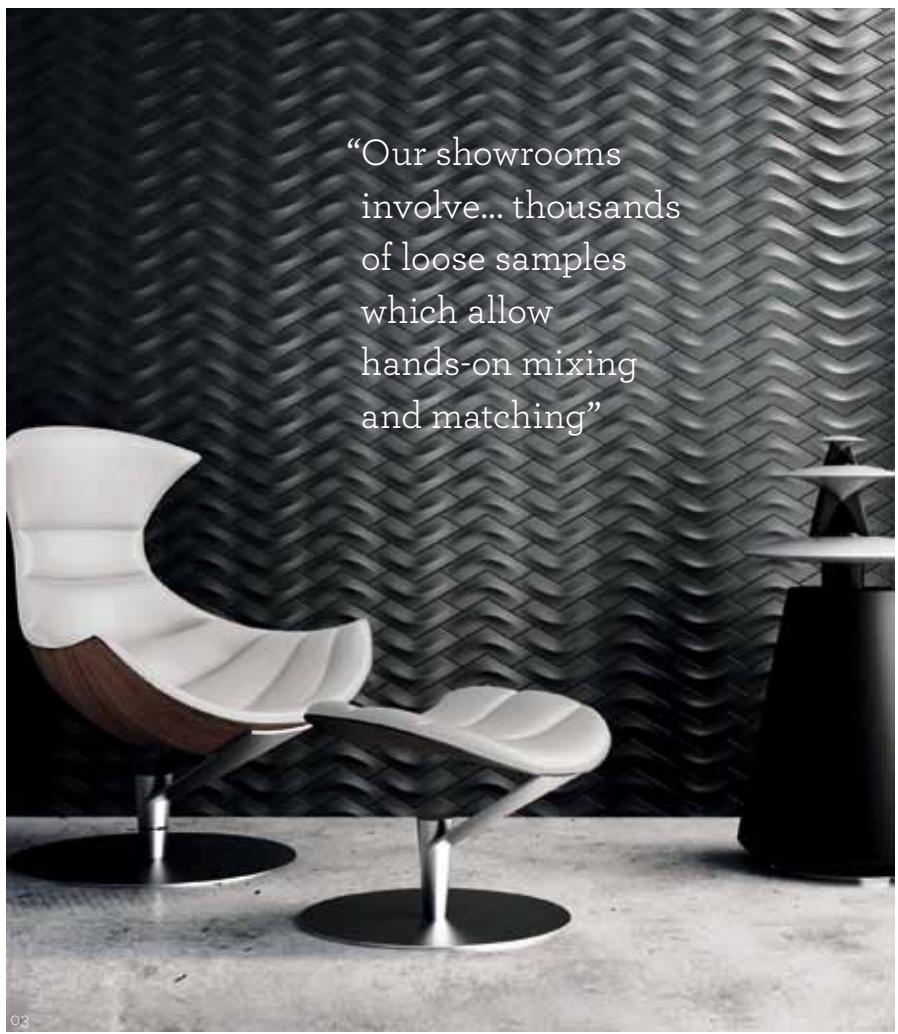
Product in focus.

Roll & Hill Lighting Collection.

Roll & Hill is a New York City-based manufacturer of high end contemporary lighting, founded by Jason Miller.

Elegance, versatility and wit are central to the brand as is exemplified by the iconic Superordinate Antler lamps, which were launched to critical and commercial success. The collection has a strong architectural resonance and brings a uniquely American perspective to the international contemporary lighting market. Roll & Hill is committed to making well designed contemporary lighting for residential and commercial interiors, which are unique, innovative and will add beauty to whatever space they occupy.

Roll & Hill is available exclusively at Space.



ACADEMY TILES WISH LIST

Anthony Zeaiter outlines Academy Tiles' newest products

01
Mutina Azulej
DESIGN | Patricia Urquiola
BRAND | Mutina

04
IRIS Metal XXL 3m x 1.5m
BRAND | Iris Ceramica

02
Handcrafted Stone Series
BRAND | Orvi Design

05
Cloud Mosaic
DESIGN | Aki Motoyama
BRAND | Brix

03
Versatile series
DESIGN | Yigit Özer
BRAND | Kutahya Seramik



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