

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT GLASS TILE

For the past five years [Facings of America](#) has witnessed an unprecedented increase in the use of glass tile mosaics in residential and commercial applications. As with many other high end, popular products, cheaper knock-offs have quickly flooded the market.

Unsuspecting consumers purchase these attractive-looking, cheap tiles only to become frustrated months later when they learn the investment in their home is not only worthless, but also costly. When a glass tile installation or product fails, homeowners are left with expensive tear-outs and repairs.



To the end user and many untrained contractors, the quality differences may seem subtle, but these distinctions have a major impact on the final appearance and durability of the project. I am amazed at the number of tile contractors who claim to be experts in glass tile installations, yet cannot even tell the right direction the tile should be installed! Some contractors will not admit they are unskilled and untrained at this specialty and install the tile upside down because they have never worked with “paper faced material”. They later call to complain that tiles are falling out and have glass imperfections. **So, the first rule is to ensure the person who is installing your glasstile has attended a glass tile setting seminar such as those offered by [Bisazza](#) or [Oceanside Glasstile](#) or otherwise demonstrated glass tile installation competency.** Most quality manufacturers sponsor minimum of two-day seminars to ensure a finished look that will last decades rather than months. [Facings of America](#) recently conducted two-day seminars, bringing Alex Arcaro of Bisazza to our Scottsdale showroom to teach contractors the fine art of glass tile installation.

The benefit of a “paper faced glass tile” is that it allows for an efficient method of installation and is used by quality glass tile manufacturers. When installing a paper faced material, 100% of the glass tile is bonded to the substrate which has tremendous benefits especially if it is being used in wet area applications. Consumers need to consider that many mesh backed material use poor quality glue to bond the tile to the mesh. When the mesh side is installed to the surface,



The paper face is removed, as the tile is installed, to allow minor adjustments to the field pattern

the mesh acts as a barrier between the tile and substrate. If the glue subsequently breaks down or the bond fails, the tile can then easily loosen and fall out because little of the tile surface is actually bonded to the substrate. This failure can begin almost immediately or can take up to a few years, after all installation warranties have expired. With Chinese produced glass tile, Facings of America's experience has shown the glue used to bond the tile to the mesh is lower in quality than the glue used in higher quality products produced in Europe or by Oceanside Glasstile.

Often glass tiles are translucent in appearance and any imperfection in either the setting application or the thinset is magnified. Whichever tile is being installed, the substrate must be perfectly smooth using the manufacturer's suggested setting materials and following their instructions exactly as written. Any "waves or grooves" in setting material are noticeable which is another reason a consumer needs to hire a contractor trained in glass tile installation.



Another major quality difference between glass tiles is in the quality of the glass used during production. Oceanside Glass is famous for using recycled bottles in its production and provides consumers with a guide of how much post-consumer recycled material are used in their production and can assist with LEED accreditation. Additionally, their state-of-the-art equipment for precision processing in batching, changing furnaces and cooling molten glass is revolutionary. Their craftsmen work the glass by hand to transform each tile into a piece as unique as a snowflake. Bisazza glass tile uses the highest quality ingredients and constantly works to improve the production process to result in stronger materials with more vibrant colors. Shortcuts in production and compromises with materials result in a finished product lacking perfectly squared edges, color quality, and strength. To the untrained eye, the product may look similar in display, but it is in fact extremely inferior.

Bisazza, one of the leaders in the glass tile industry, applies a bevel to each of their tiles to allow for more level and consistent surfaces during installation. According to Wes Wayland of Bisazza USA, "It gives a client the ability to clad curved surfaces, both concave and convex, and to form clean inside and outside corners with more ease and a finished look. This also gives Bisazza the ability to create mosaics on furniture, walls, ceilings, pools, even cladding of entire buildings with unique designs". Glass tile isn't JUST for the bathroom anymore. Bisazza wants consumers and designers to think outside the box and are offering prefabricated mosaic patterns and designs intended to cover large, vertical surfaces as wallpaper would and that are perfectly suited for the bedroom - living room - board room - foyer – etc. Bisazza mosaics offer the clients, designers, and architects, few, if any limitations on their visions. Almost anything can be designed and made from Bisazza glass including furniture.



Many Furniture choices are now available in glass tile

The best word of advice when considering glass tile is a consumer should always consult with an authorized distributor like Facings of America regarding its suitability for the intended use. Authorized distributors spend an enormous amount of time educating their employees and they always know who to contact for installation related questions. Please contact Facings of America for a list of installers who have completed formal training.