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## Modern materials are reviving mosaics for home decor

Modern materials reviving mosaics

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Blending art, architecture and design, mosaic tile is one of the oldest forms of wall and floor covering. Using the tiny squares known as tesserae, ancient Greeks and Romans created detailed stories and intricate geometric patterns, and mosaic art embellishes ceilings, walls and floors from Byzantium to Barcelona.

Today, artists teach and share tile-working skills at places including the Chicago Mosaic School and Institute of Mosaic Art in Berkeley, Calif.

Mosaic's creative possibilities are popular among interior designers, too. At Coverings, an industry show in Chicago this spring, tile-makers' booths were mini art galleries. Designer Alena Capra, for instance, created a peacock feather out of dozens of Ceramics of Italy mosaic tiles to showcase the range of possibilities. (alencapradesigns.com)

"Mosaic tile lets you create amazing murals of just about anything. I've always loved doing mosaic murals," says Capra, of Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

Murals and feature walls done in mosaic tile can bring a "wow" factor into a space; on a smaller scale, they can add design flair to backsplashes or bathrooms. Because there isn't a lot of acreage to cover there, you can have some fun with colors and patterns.

Modern manufacturing techniques mean the range of mosaics is greater than ever. A new type of durable material even lets today's designers put glass mosaics on the floor.

Sara Baldwin, the founder of the Virginia-based design studio and manufacturer New Ravenna, notes that mosaics have inherent texture because of the way they're hand-crafted, cut and assembled.

"We've now focused on this, combining different materials in one mosaic," she says. "So you can find stone, glass, shell, gold, ceramic and even aluminum together, creating a dynamic textured surface."

Glass or stone cut into intriguing shapes can help walls and floors tell a little

story.

Flock, part of New Ravenna's Altimetry collection, places delicate glass "wings" against a creamy Calacatta marble background. Francois Grand, part of the Illusions line, stacks glass and marble shapes into a witty and startling trompe l'oeil, 3-D design. Demi Lune, a waterjet-cut mosaic in aquamarine glass, has a lovely wave motif. (newravenna.com)

Mosaic Décor's Circles design features a cascade of variously sized, small round tiles in blacks and browns, evoking a glass of fizzy cola. (mosaicdecor.com)

Kelly Wearstler's Liaison collection for Ann Sacks has mixed stone mosaics in cool shapes. (annsacks.com)

"One trend I love right now are the Mediterranean blue tiles – especially aqua as an accent color," says Capra.

Spanish maker Altoglass offers a pretty blue-and-white mosaic printed with a traditional Portuguese pattern. (www.altoglass.com)

Appiani's Memorie collection revives centuries-old mosaic patterns in rich colors. They nicely offset contemporary furnishings. (appiani.it)

Metallic mosaics introduce drama. Add bling with gold, silver or copper tiles; clad a larger area such as a bath wall, and the effect is spectacular. Tilebar's Terrapin, Alchemy and Cirque collections highlight geometric shapes in stainless steel. (tilebar.com)



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