

Romancing Clay Metal & Stone

By Robin Ritchey



If you are looking for inspiration for your floor, kitchen backsplash, or new master bath, you will find the perfect compliment once you enter Clay Metal & Stone's newest showroom conveniently located at 1474 Market Street. From handmade glass tile mosaics, exotic slates, travertine and shellstone, to perfectly rectified porcelain tiles that look like bamboo wood or tweed fabric.

Clay Metal & Stone is the exclusive distributor for Walker & Zanger, Crossville Inc., Sonoma Tilemakers, Oceanside Glass, Casa Dolce Casa, Artistic Tile, Stone & Pewter Accents, Royal Mosa, Emil Ceramics, and is a direct importer of natural stone from Turkey, India, South America, and China.

Robin Ritchey designed the new Tallahassee showroom. Robin managed a specialty flooring showroom in the Merchandise Mart in Chicago prior to being employed by Clay Metal & Stone. "It's so exciting to be able to put my ideas to life! I have helped open two other showrooms in Chicago, but this one is truly special to me as it started with my vision," said Robin. The showroom was designed to carefully display all of Clay Metal & Stone's products in a gallery-like setting making it easy for clients to see which way they will be romanced. A large sample room was included in the design to offer a comfortable spot to bring your plans, chat with our designers about your project dreams, and bring them to life.

With every turn, you will find tile more amazing than the next. Oceanside's Glass Tile is a very popular choice

because of all the vibrant colors. It can be used on kitchen backsplashes, master bath showers, tub surrounds, and is suitable for exterior applications as well. Sonoma Tilemakers produces specialty glazed ceramic tiles and crushed glass tiles known as Tantrum.



Sara Moore is the newest addition to the Clay Metal & Stone family. Sarah recently completed her four-year bachelors degree in Interior Design at FSU. She has lots of fresh new bright ideas and is excited about working with her clients. In her five months with Clay Metal & Stone, Sarah has proven to be a great asset to the company and her clients are delighted with her designs.

David Grabhorn is the owner of Clay Metal & Stone and he has worked in tile and stone distribution for over twenty-five years. The parent company was incorporated as The Finish Line, Inc. in 1984, in Birmingham AL. Unlike the current business model, the primary focus of The Finish Line, Inc. was promoting the tile and stone products to the architectural and design community for commercial projects.

Grabhorn's original venture grew to become Clay Metal & Stone, a division of The Finish Line, Inc., with five showrooms and two warehouse location in Alabama and the Florida Panhandle. Clay Metal & Stone concentrates on the residential marketplace while The Finish Line maintains it's commercial focus.

“My goal has always been to provide a unique selection of specialty ceramic tile and natural stone products to the architectural and design communities,” Grabhorn relates. “Working with builders, developers, contractors, individuals, designers, architects, and others interested in tile and stone, our design consultants are eager to assist our customers in finding the perfect selection of products for their projects. We have products that are appropriate in beach homes, new homes and remodeling projects. Approximately 40 percent of our business comes from the residential work with commercial jobs to account for the rest. The specialty tile, glass, metal and natural stone products featured in our showrooms in the Mountain Brook, Pelham, Montgomery, Pensacola and Tallahassee have helped create the uniqueness in many of the premier homes in Alabama and the Florida panhandle.”

The Finish Line has completed projects ranging from providing all the tile and stone items in the Boardwalk Hotel in Disneyworld to over 200,000 square feet of porcelain tile flooring in the Riverchase Galleria in Hoover. It was also the name that commercial clients including Parisian, HealthSouth, AmSouth and SouthTrust(now Wachovia) Banks, O’Charley’s and Chick-Fil-A turned to for their tile and stone needs. Some local projects are now underway with FSU for their Student Success Building, Life Science building, and the Education Building.

“People have come to us with dreams of creating a Tuscan kitchen with a feel of centuries past,” Grabhorn relates. “Other times a customer is looking for a Mediterranean bath with rich colors and textures or a modern foyer utilizing

exquisite moldings in combination with soft color tones and clean lines reminiscent of early twentieth century New York architecture. We’ve also designed whimsical pool baths. Whatever the project, our staff can help create the room of their dreams.”

The success of Clay Metal & Stone led Grabhorn to expand the business from its Birmingham roots to showrooms in Montgomery, Pensacola and Tallahassee. He points out that the overwhelming majority of people who visit his locations come away with the same reaction:

“Wow! Is what I’m hearing. And that’s exactly how we want our customers to react when they examine our products. Our goal is to be the Southeast’s number one source for specialty ceramic, glass and metal tile and natural stone. We want to be the supplier of choice for these items for homeowners and commercial users as well as the company to whom architects and interior designers turn when working on special projects for their clients.”

Grabhorn’s five year business plan calls for continued expansion of Clay Metal & Stone.

“We’re currently looking at establishing the same quality showrooms for which we’re known in Alabama and Florida in new locations in New Orleans, Jackson, Memphis, Huntsville, and Destin,” he explains. “This will give us wide exposure in a number of major markets. Over the past 25 years we’ve built a reputation in the industry for quality and integrity. We intend to continue that tradition and become a regional company filling a very specialized niche in the building industry.”



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