

Rock on

STORY JUDY OSTERGAARD PHOTOGRAPHER DAN MAGREE

Top of the charts for all home surfaces is stone – it's undergoing a revival! Stone's durability, individuality and natural age make it perfect for modern living

For centuries, stone has been used in the home, both inside and out – from floors and walls to tables, benches, seats and paving. It's a material that lasts and lasts. Buildings made of stone hundreds of years ago are still standing today. It's a natural geological material, quarried from the earth rather than made by man, so no two pieces are exactly alike. This individuality is part of what makes stone so attractive.

Architect Anthony Gionfriddo, who has specified that stone be used in many of his residential designs, says, "Many home owners tend to seek a natural finishing material, such as stone, due to its durability and low maintenance requirement. The imperfect colour tones and textures also sit well with people's desire to bring the outside into the home."

Anthony says natural stone is expensive to lay if traditional methods are used. "Modern manufactured stone panels and veneers are a relatively cost-effective alternative, but, due to the limited range available locally, they can lead to 'sameness'. It's important to determine the type and extent of stone to be used as early as possible, as it can impact on the structural ▶

Choose your stone

1 Bateig Azul Blue limestone, 600x400mm, \$137/m², Aeria Country Floors. 2 Black Titan flamed basalt, 600x300mm, \$119/m², Sareen Stone. 3 Rustic cross-cut travertine, 400x400mm, \$64/m², Pazotti. 4 Himalayan tumbled natural sandstone, 100x100x10mm, \$110/m², Homestone. 5 Ariah Park Beige polished granite, from \$250/m², Melocco Stone. 6 Giotto marble composite, 400x400x12mm, \$126/m², Quarella Australia. 7 Arctic Green slate, 300x600mm, \$57/m², Amber Tiles. 8 Carrara honed marble, 305x305x10mm, \$130/m², Sareen Stone. For stockists see Buyer's Guide.

The water feature at one end of Matt Hill's beautifully situated pool is made using Gramplan split rock



Matt's fireplace is built with carefully pieced limestone

The concrete floor is easy to clean and maintain, and can cope with sand tracked in on shoes or bare feet

MATT HILL'S HOME

"Each piece has... a whole world of life before ever being touched by human hands"

Matt Hill owner/builder



When building his own house in Victoria's Blairgowrie, shown on these pages, Matt Hill relied on the beauty of the region's stone. Anthony Gionfriddo's design and the combination of glass, steel and stone so

impressed the judges of the 2005 Victorian Master Builders Awards that Matt's design and construction company, Concept Design and Construction, won best custom-designed home between \$600,000 and \$1 million.

Matt appreciates stone for its inherent strength and enduring quality. "Each piece has a history, a whole world of life before ever being touched by human hands. When it's quarried from the earth, it's the first time it has been exposed to the world."

Stone is used in his house, both inside and out, and in the paving and landscaping. In the living and dining area and kitchen, it has been used in the fireplace, kitchen benches and splashback, as well as a feature of the polished concrete floor.

The fireplace, built with locally found limestone, is one of the key features of the living area. "Each stone has been hand-shaped," Matt explains. "The mason chipped away at every piece so they all fit together in a way that looks like a dry-stone wall."

For the benches and splashback in the kitchen, Matt selected Calcutta Gold marble in the largest pieces he could get, cut from the same slab so they are pattern-matched. The wall bench and splashback are also covered in matching marble. "If a client asks for a marble kitchen, I say I can't guarantee it won't stain or scratch. Marble work surfaces are all about care and maintenance to keep them looking good."

The terrace and all the garden paths are paved with smooth sawn bluestone tiles, and both the water features are made using Grampian split rock from Eco Concepts.

Concept Design and Construction, Richmond, Vic; (03) 9428 2924.

9 QUARTZITE

10 QUARTZ WALLING

11 POLISHED MOSAIC MARBLE

12 QUARTZ COMPOSITE



The bathroom walls and floor are lined with Spanish Isernia limestone tiles

“A natural finishing material imparts a sense of quality and luxuriousness to a building”

Anthony Gionfriddo architect



This island bench is covered with honed white marble

Choose your stone

9 **Sofala Gold quartzite**, 400x400mm, \$75/m², Amber Tiles.

10 **Chiselled Sand 3D quartz stacked walling**, off-white/beige, 600x150mm, \$120/m², Homestone. 11 **Bardiglio polished mosaic marble**, 15x15mm, \$149/m², Academy Tiles. 12 **Gris Serene quartz composite**, 400x400mm, \$139/m² plus GST, Quarella Australia. For stockists see Buyer's Guide.

◀ engineering of a wall, its footings and window and door design details and in a wall's overall dimensions.”

In the kitchen, the variation in natural stone means most stone tops will have a distinctive look and feel, although that's less true of many granites. There is a move away from highly polished stone to a honed, more textural finish that brings out the natural qualities. If you want a more uniform appearance in keeping with other hard-edged materials in a design, stone composites will deliver the effect.

“Currently, composite stone is popular for kitchen benchtops because it gives a consistent colour and finish that's hard to achieve with most natural stones,” says Anthony. “This is especially true of whites. Composites are easier for stonemasons to work with and are more resistant to acid and microbial attack, resulting in harder-wearing and cleaner surfaces. White marbles are also popular, so it depends on which look you want.”

Anthony also recommends stone outdoors: “It can moderate against the cleanness of modern building materials and help ground a building into a garden setting.”

During a recent overseas trip, landscape designer Rick Eckersley noted new trends. “The latest look is handmade terracotta tiles laid on floors – but it's not the Tuscan look of the early 1990s. It's combined with stark walls and modern furniture, giving an organic yet time-worn aspect. Sealed with linseed oil and a light waxing, it's easy to maintain and develops a patina.

“Gloss stone finishes have just about run out of speed. Now it's stone with honed, flamed, brushed and hammer finishes. In London and Florence, I also saw terracotta louvres and exterior wall cladding in ribbed and undulating patterns. Hopefully they will be available here soon.” ▶

Anthony Gionfriddo Architect; (03) 9329 3910. Rick Eckersley, Eckersley Stafford Design, Richmond; (03) 9421 5537.

13 POLISHED GRANITE

14 GRANITE

15 SLATE

16 SANDSTONE



The stonework of the fireplace also serves as a feature in Matt's bedroom



Choose your stone

- 13 Steel Grey polished granite, from \$350/m², Melocco Stone.
- 14 Salt & Pepper granite, 300x600mm, \$99/m², Amber Tiles.
- 15 Ebony slate, 300x600mm, \$59/m², Classic Ceramics.
- 16 Himalayan sandstone, 400x400mm, \$65/m², Amber Tiles.

Stone homewares

- 1 A159 Lotus plate L 157-M, marble, 230x230x40mm, \$70, Bayswiss.
- 2 4B28 soapstone dish from Kenya, \$12.95 each, Oxfam Community Aid Abroad Shop.
- 3 Funky sculpture, tuff stone/volcanic stone, from \$75 (small), Terrastone.
- 4 Callowie basin, pearl white, \$890, Creations In Stone; and Intamix Borma 7001D tap with body extension, \$611, both Accent Tapware. **H&G**

