

# Creating Lustrous Effects with Glass Tile

by Jennifer Adams

Bright, shimmering glass tiles are available in the Karma collection by Trend. Ideal for wall and floor applications, the tiles measure 3/4-by-1 1/2 inches. Their reflective qualities provide a dazzling effect.



**W**ith homeowners becoming more adventuresome in their design picks these days, the popularity of non-traditional tile products is substantially on the rise. In particular, there is a significant increase in demand for glass tile. Today's homeowners are seeking more pizzazz in their personal space, and the shimmering effects that can be achieved with glass meets this design objective.

Among the most common glass tile formats seen today are mosaics. Whether iridescent or just clear glass, these mosaic pieces are ideal for dressing up interior as well as exterior spaces. For residential interiors, glass mosaics are being employed for applications such as shower walls, tub surrounds and kitchen backsplashes. They are also being used to clad entire walls—creating a vibrant accent in spaces such as bedrooms, living rooms and foyers.

On a smaller scale, glass mosaics are also being used to create borders and decorative trim in interior designs. The tiny reflective pieces of glass sparkle against fields of solid-colored ceramic tile or stone. Mosaic tile lines offer consumers a way to add a punch of excitement to maybe an otherwise neutral materials palette.

Stepping outside the home, glass mosaic tiles are being used to line the interior of pools as well as to clad the fronts of built-in barbecues and patio bars. Once again, these glass tiles have the ability to create a lively festive design—especially in environments that are designated for fun and relaxation.

And the technical composition of glass is also ideal for outdoor settings. The tiles are made to withstand freeze/thaw cycles as well as harsh participation. In addition, the reflective quality of the material works well in the sun. When natural light hits at a certain angle, the tiles sparkle brilliantly.

Dramatic effects can also be obtained with glass mosaics in commercial applications, such as trendy restaurants, boutique hotels and luxurious spas. The sheen of the tiny glass pieces creates a sleek, chic

look as well as personifying a high-end feel. Designers are utilizing these tiles for various applications, including walls and floors. Decorative borders and insets are also a more subtle way to use glass mosaics—providing a distinctive yet understated look of elegance.

### **Adding texture**

But the format of glass tile extends well beyond mosaics. "I use all sizes of glass tile," said Gaye Weatherly of Weatherly Tile & Stone, Inc. of Portsmouth, RI, who is a designer as well as a tile distributor. "I do a lot of 4-by-4- and 12-by-12-inch glass tile, and I have glass in 24-by-24 inches. I like to [design] walls of glass. It comes in such a multitude of textures."

Weatherly went on to explain that she has always had a passion for glass tile. "I have only been in the business for five years, but I happen to like it," she said. "I always research things that are out there. I try to have what nobody else has. I bring in lines that I can bring in exclusively myself. I'm out of the box. I love introducing people to new ideas and show them that you can do things on a budget."

Recently, the designer completed two baths for the Waterfront Show House at Carnegie Abbey in Portsmouth, RI, and utilized glass tile extensively throughout the designs of both rooms. "This was a show house, so we really went over the top," said Weatherly. "It's really outrageous."

The show house, which is part of an exclusive golf course community, sits on Narragansett Bay, and Weatherly used the glass tile to symbolize the home's surrounding environment. "I wanted the color of the ocean to be reflective on the walls," she said. The designer employed a selection of mosaics and decorative trim and accent pieces to add luster and elegance in the spaces.

In the master bath, which Weatherly named "Sand and Sea," a wall of Sakonnet Blue iridescent glass tile is distinguished by the depth and intricate variety of the tile's handmade color patterning, according to

the designer. Moreover, the shower area is framed by handmade, cast-glass rope border tile in Sakonnet Storm, and matching bull's eye accent tiles are strategically placed on the iridescent glass shower wall.

According to Weatherly, the bath is tucked away in one of the master suites. "I wanted to knock the socks off people when they turn the corner, and it really does," she said.

Weatherly named the second space that she designed "Ocean Zen," which serves the home's second floor guest room and overlooks the bay. Since natural daylight reflects off the water and casts blue-tinged light inside, colors and materials were selected to enhance this effect, according to the designer.

Shower walls in this space are tiled in Waterfall, a new rainbow-patterned glass tile that is exclusive to Weatherly Tile & Stone, Inc. The adjacent wall is tiled floor-to-ceiling, also with the blue-green Waterfall tile. These tiny glass strip mosaics are set in vertical and horizontal patterns. To further dramatize the shower area, decorative glass tile pieces—reflecting the look of waves—were set against the rainbow-patterned glass tile. The handmade trim tile, in Whitecaps pattern, frames the interior view with an iridescent pearlized glass.

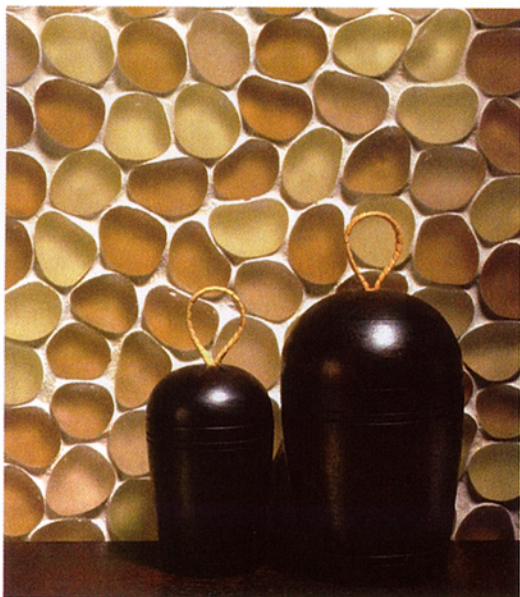
In total, Weatherly designed the baths in three days. "I knew what I was going to do," she explained. While some of the tile was mesh-mounted, all of the liners and individual accent pieces were set by hand.

### **Providing a natural feel**

The use of decorative glass pieces, however, is not limited to high-end applications. Homeowners can use these eye-catching design elements in a more modest way, while still creating a dazzling effect.

"One glass line that we have is "Glass Windows," said Kristin Powers, owner of Trikeenan with her husband Stephen. "The nice thing about our line is that it is decorative. [Consumers] can take a small amount and put it in field tile. A special decorative end gives a unique look. It changes up the texture and quality on the surface."





Trikeenan introduced Glass Windows in 2003, and has been manufacturing ceramic tile since 1990. "I have definitely seen an increase in the popularity of the glass look," said Powers. "People like the translucent and reflective quality. It's more sophisticated and high-end looking."

Additionally, Glass Windows is made from recycled glass, which many consumers find appealing, according to Powers. "People like to buy 'green,'" she said. "Also, I think people are looking for things that feel more natural to them. They like the movement in colors, surface and texture. It makes them feel more comfortable."

According to Powers, consumers are using Trikeenan's decorative line for borders and decorative panels. "With our line, each piece marries next to another," she explained. "It creates something like a stained glass tile. We can create an entire expanse and extend glass into field tile, but it is more decorative."

Powers explained that the Glass Windows line is unique because it is recycled glass placed in ceramic cavities. This allows the pieces to be installed as ceramic tile — making for a simpler installation.

"My husband and I do all of our own design work," said Powers. "Intuitively, we design on the cutting edge. We listen to people and see what they are gravitating towards. Do they want more contemporary or more down to earth? Are we designing for cities or a second home in the country?"

**Top Left:** Glass tiles are available in various shapes and sizes, making for interesting and exciting designs. Original Style offers its Sumatra Glass Pebbles collection, which can add a decorative touch to any living space.

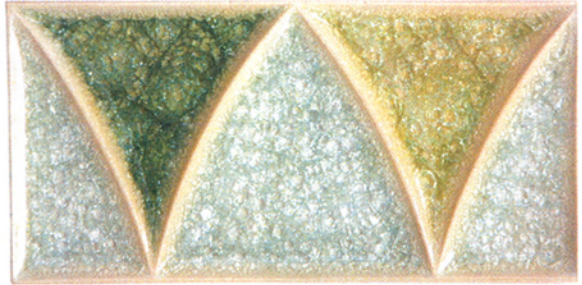
**Bottom left:** Subtle touches, including mixing different-sized mosaic glass tiles together, creates eye-catching results in a room.  
**Tile Manufacturer:** Original Style

**Top Right:** In recent years, the popularity of glass tile has been on the rise. Collections such as "Frammenti & Reflessi," which is available from Una Terra, are being used to add depth and color to interior spaces.

**Bottom Middle:** In the guest bath that Weatherly designed, shower walls are tiled in Waterfall, a new rainbow-patterned glass tile that is exclusive to Weatherly Tile & Stone, Inc. The adjacent wall is tiled floor-to-ceiling, also with the blue-green Waterfall tile. These tiny glass strip mosaics are set in vertical and horizontal patterns. To further dramatize the shower area, decorative glass tile pieces — reflecting the look of waves — were set against the rainbow-patterned glass tile. The handmade trim tile, in Whitecaps pattern, frames the interior view with an iridescent pearlized glass.

**Bottom Right:** Glass mosaics are also being used to create borders and decorative trim in interior designs. The tiny reflective pieces of glass sparkle against fields of solid-colored ceramic tile or stone.  
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Moreover, the designers make a point not to follow current trends. “Our lines don’t follow certain trends because then they become out of date,” said Powers. “We want our lines to be used for many years. We design products that are comfortable for living with for a long time. Our designs initiate from classic and traditional [looks], but then have a twist with a contemporary feel. They are totally personal.”

### Mixing materials

And while glass tile creates luminous and dramatic effects on its own, the material can also provide an elegant look when combined with other mediums such as ceramic, porcelain, stone or wood. In both residential and commercial applications, glass tile accents set against these other materials can create a harmonious design.

For the design of the men and women’s locker rooms at the Ethereal Day Spa & Salon in Parsippany, NJ, colorful glass tile and marble were used in conjunction with each other for the showers and vanity areas. The glass mosaics were employed as borders, bringing subtle color and a classy look to the spaces.

In the men’s locker room, a border consisting of varying shades of green glass mosaics forms a decorative element in the room. Additionally, the Iridium Mosaics Calicantus I glass tile — supplied by Hastings Tile of New York, NY — creates the vanity backsplash. The color of the glass complements the soft green and pink hues found in the 8-by-8-

**Top Left:** Iridium Mosaics Marigold 3 glass tile — supplied by Hastings Tile of New York, NY — forms the border and backsplash of the vanity in the women’s locker room at the spa.

**Bottom Left:** While glass tile creates luminous and dramatic effects on its own, the material can also provide an elegant look when combined with other mediums such as ceramic, porcelain, stone or wood. For the design of the men’s locker rooms at the Ethereal Day Spa & Salon in Parsippany, NJ, colorful glass tile and marble were used in conjunction with each other for the showers and vanity areas.

**Top Right:** The “Glass Windows” collection by Trikeenan offers consumers an option to use glass tile products in a decorative way. When combined with a field of ceramic, the glass detail pieces provide texture and character in a design.

**Bottom Right:** For the design of a master bath in the Waterfront Show House at Carnegie Abbey in Portsmouth, RI, designer Gaye Weatherly of Weatherly Tile & Stone, Inc. created a wall of Sakonnet Blue iridescent glass tile that is distinguished by the depth and intricate variety of the tile’s handmade color patterning. Moreover, the shower area is framed by handmade, cast-glass rope border tile in Sakonnet Storm, and matching bull’s eye accent tiles are strategically placed on the iridescent glass shower wall.



inch Aegina marble tile, which clad the shower walls.

The women's locker room in the spa follows a similar design, although the color of the glass mosaics is altered. Iridium Mosaics Marigold 3 glass tile — also supplied by Hastings Tile — forms the border and backsplash, while tumbled Sunstone marble in 8-by-8-inch

tiles was employed for the shower walls.

When designing the spa, architect Chris Kofitsas of New World Design Builders of Clifton, NJ, strategically placed high-end materials in areas that would enhance the overall spa environment. In spaces such as the locker rooms, the glass was used as a detail for applications that were most visible to patrons, he said.



**Above: According to Kristin Powers, owner of Trikeenan, consumers are using the company's decorative line for borders and decorative panels. "With our line, each piece marries next to another," she explained. "It creates something like a stained glass tile. We can create an entire expanse and extend glass into field tile, but it is more decorative."**

### **A promising outlook**

With the apparent interest in glass tile skyrocketing in recent years, it can only be anticipated that the demand for this material will continue to blossom over time. With a number of leading glass tile manufacturers in operation today, the amount of tile collections available to designers and homeowners is abundant — making for limitless design possibilities.

Regardless of budget or design style, there is a glass product line out there for everyone. Glass tiles offer the perfect option for those looking to add some spice to a design — whether a personal or commercial space. Accessorizing with glass is an elegant and chic way to create vibrancy and luster in a home or public setting. **TILE**