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İZNIK FOUNDATION

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ABOUT IZNIK

THE HISTORY OF IZNIK CERAMICS

The Ottoman word for ceramics, “Çini” (translated as 'from China') was used to describe the tiles and tableware containing %85 of quartz mineral, covered with a hard white coating, exceptional colors and transparent glaze, fired at around 930 °C in special ovens.

Iznik Ceramics, containing abstract geometric, natural and floral patterns, were inspired by Eastern and Islamic themes but were also embellished by the artisan's own virtuosity.

The patterns of the tiles based on mathematical formula were codified over the years into a set of designs that have both symbolic and spiritual significance. The tiles were decorated by the designs of master artisans “Nakkash”, that were brought from throughout the empire to Istanbul and Iznik to carry out this art.

The town of Iznik located in Western Turkey on Iznik Lake has been the center of ceramic knowledge and production for almost 800 years. During the Ottoman period from the 15th to 18th century Iznik's artisans provided the tile and panel masterpieces that adorned the classic examples of Ottoman architecture throughout the Empire including the Topkapi Palace and grand mosques of Istanbul.

The interior and exterior of the rooms of Topkapi Palace are often richly decorated with Iznik tiles. Base colours of the tiles are often different shades of blue, with floral or geometric decorative patterns. Tiles helped keep the rooms cool during hot summers and were relatively easy to maintain.

After the conquest of Constantinople in 1453, the Ottoman sultans started a huge building program. In these buildings, especially those commissioned by Süleyman, his wife Hürrem and his Grand Vizier Rüstem Pasha, large quantities of tiles were used. The Sultan Ahmed Mosque in Istanbul (the “Blue Mosque”) alone contains 20,000 tiles. The mosque is popularly known as the Blue Mosque for the blue tiles adorning the walls of its interior.

The Rüstem Pasha mosque is famous for its large quantities of exquisite Iznik tiles, set in a very wide variety of beautiful floral and geometric designs, which cover not only the façade of the porch but also the mihrab, minbar, walls, columns and on the façade of the porch outside. These tiles exhibit the use of a tomato-red color characteristic of the early Iznik period (1555–1620), and no other mosque in Istanbul makes such a lavish use of these tiles.

The town of Iznik, a center of civilizations since ancient Greco-Roman times, was in the 16th century home to the golden age of the imperial Ottoman ceramic workshops. In the late 16th century this ancient art stopped with no records of know how.

ABOUT THE IZNIK FOUNDATION

The Iznik Foundation was founded by Prof. Dr. Işıl Akbaygil in 1993 with the principal aim to rediscover, after a period of 3 centuries, the lost Islamic art of making 'Iznik Ceramics' and also revive the historical value of the town of İznik.

The rebirth of Iznik Quartz Tiles by the Iznik Foundation

Iznik Foundation Research Initiatives

Iznik ceramic tiles had not been produced for 300 years with no historic documentation that could provide details to the techniques used in the process. Under Akbaygil's direction, the Foundation conducted years of research and numerous detailed experiments successfully discovering the secret of quartz tiles to eventually start production of tiles in 1995 using the traditional methods of the 16th century in the workshops of the Foundation in Iznik.

The primary source for research were the extant tiles that give evidence of the extremely difficult production methods of the original Ottoman workshops that when carried out successfully resulted in extra white undercoating, very hard glaze, and under-glaze decorations.

The Iznik Foundation resurrected the original qualities of Iznik Quartz Tiles through the tireless research of the 45-member team of the Foundation's Ceramic Research Center and the Tiles and Ceramic Corporation along with the efforts of Istanbul University, Mimar Sinan University, TÜBİTAK (Research Institute of Turkey) and Princeton University.

Today the Iznik Foundation continues its research and development in its industry leading laboratories in Iznik. The Foundation's know-how and advances in technology combine to produce Iznik Ceramic Quartz Tiles that are produced in more precise ways than the historic Ottoman tiles. The Foundation's advanced testing methods, ovens and climate controlled environmental conditions ensure that Iznik Quartz Tiles could last up to a 1000 years.

The Iznik Foundation now in its 18th year continues its efforts to bring the unique qualities of Iznik Ceramic Quartz Tiles to a global audience. Through the work of the teams at Iznik Foundation Ceramic Research Center workshop and laboratory in Iznik and the management center and showroom in Istanbul, the Iznik Foundation and the Iznik Tile Corporation is now recognized internationally as the leader of this ancient art in the modern world.

Today, Iznik Quartz Tiles and custom made panel and mural designs can be found throughout the globe in important private and public contexts. In bringing the timeless qualities of this material into contemporary settings our hope has always been to improve modern life with the special aesthetic and ecological properties of this unique building material.

The Production Process

One of the most important aspects of the Iznik Foundation Tiles is to be a collective art. In the ancient times, the designs used to be made in Topkapı Palace, in İstanbul and the application and the production were made in the ateliers in Iznik.

Today Iznik Foundation functions in the same manner with administration in İstanbul and production in Iznik. The “Iznik Design Department” in İstanbul prepares concepts and designs appropriate to the location where architectural projects are involved. New “evani” forms, shapes are also developed by the design department with the purpose of bringing Iznik art to daily use.

The R&D labs in Iznik prepare colors for the products and carries on research to provide the best results for tile orders from different regions, countries and climates. The colors are produced by the R&D department specifically, imported colors or chemical colors are not utilized.

“Iznik Workshop” Iznik Quartz Tiles are produced by using contemporary technology with traditional techniques in the Workshops in Iznik. Each individual handmade single tile is produced in seventy days. Each stage of the production is handled by master artisans trained in specific processes.

THE PROPERTIES – UNIQUENESS OF IZNIK FOUNDATION TILES

An Iznik Quartz Tile is a hand-made piece of hard wearing ceramic tile comprised primarily of processed quartz stone decorated with an abstract design based on the abstract patterns of Islamic thought.

Semi Valuable Material:

Both the core material “quartz” and the gems used in the colors gives value to Iznik Foundation Tiles. The patterns originated from ancient and the contemporary art also increases the value of the Iznik Foundation Tiles.

Durability:

Iznik Foundation Tiles are comprised of 85% of quartz stone giving the tile a very hard glaze and under-glaze that results in unique properties. Iznik Foundation Tiles are extremely durable, they will last a 1,000 years.

They are resistant to change in temperature or humidity and non-glare. The use of special glaze strengthens the tiles to endure all exterior intrusions like dust, freezing, humidity, rain and also highly reduces the negative impact of chemicals that might occur in specific climatic conditions for example salt (sodium hydroxide, NaOH) present in seaside locations

Unique Colors:

Made from crystal quartz, Iznik Foundation Tiles are colored with a crystal-based glaze utilizing the Iznik Foundation's in-house developed organic colored metal oxide pigments. The colors of Iznik Foundation Tiles reflect the shades of semi-valuable gems, for example, coral red, malachite or turquoise green, and the dark blue of lapis lazuli.

Advanced Patterns:

The patterns and decoration method are initially based on the memory of the old, classical artistic styles but at the time, reinterpreted and recreated.

The patterns of Iznik Foundation Tiles are currently being used in traditional and contemporary contexts in a wide array of designs from established patterns originating from Islamic mathematics and decorative arts to the contemporary designs of Zaha Hadid and Ettore Sottsass.

The designs used on the quartz wall tiles while both allegorical and symbolic also reflect the flora and fauna of Turkey and the Near East. The geometrical designs used in the placement of the tiles are cosmological in concept as they reflect the relationship between man and the sky and the universe. In terms of form and design they can be used as a distinctive architectural element or in monochromatic tiles as fields of subtle background color adding spatial depth. Iznik Foundation Tiles designs harmonize with the architecture of the structure they grace and are exquisitely beautiful yet discrete in appearance complementing well with other natural building materials such as wood.

Architectural value:

Iznik Foundation Tiles are a versatile and flexible building material because of their sophisticated geometric patterns can scale to any size to create one-of-a-kind original architectural and decorative spaces.

The Iznik Foundation produces custom-made panels and murals based on but not limited to the styles found in the tiles. These panels can range from walls of simple monochromatic square tiles to complex mosaics and decorative wall panels. Designed by the leading designers and artists and developed by artisans to create one-of-a-kind authentic designs with shapes and colors made to required specifications. Panels produced by hand by skilled artisans for any exterior or interior surface can be integrated into any architectural setting.

Hand Made:

Iznik Foundation Tiles are hand made by artisans and artists that is part of a tradition that dates back 800 years. Because each piece is unique, they also add significant value to any space.

Ecological:

Iznik Foundation Tiles absorb harmful radiation, collecting static electricity and electromagnetic waves to provide healthy ecological living spaces.

Due to the very high percentage of quartz in the tile; static electricity build up in the human body is not possible. Using quartz tiles in interiors, especially in offices and bedrooms makes people feel more relaxed and liberated of negative energy. In environments where electronic devices such as televisions, computers, office equipments, air conditioners are installed even one whole wall of tiles will help to create better life quality.

The components (basic materials, glaze and colors) as well as the production methods are all environmentally friendly.

IZNIK FOUNDATION TILES AND THEIR DIFFERENCE FROM INDUSTRIAL TILES

Iznik Foundation tiles and pottery are the product of meticulous handwork; beginning from the selection of flawless quality of the basic material – quartz.

Technically the tiles are humidity absorbent due to the porous character of the biscuit; static electricity absorbent due to the quartz body; excellent insulation elements, allows perfect maintenance due to the glasslike quartz glaze. Compared with other tiles the surface has a satiny finish. While other tiles need to be installed with grouting, Iznik Foundation tiles are installed without any visible grouting therefore avoiding mildew or bacteria growth. The designs are always very aesthetic and in proportion to the human body.

Technical Qualities

Iznik Foundation is the sole producer of the original 16th Century traditional İznik tiles, with the know-how of the basic material that has brought İznik Foundation to its rightful position today.

The most distinctive aspect of the Iznik Foundation is the use of quartz. The special type of artistic quartz wall tile production by İznik Foundation is referred to as “chini”; giving it an identity other than the standard industrial tile or any other handmade tile from white or red paste.

The metal oxide colours used in the under-glaze is produced in the R&D department of İznik Foundation; suitable for each project. The colours of the intricate patterns are protected by a glassy coating (1,5 mm in thickness) against all natural conditions, acid rain, UV etc.

The glaze is a metaphoric word: “Sır” in Turkish language meaning “secret” indicating that the formula has never been registered by ancient masters nor has been decoded. İznik Foundation has approached the subject scientifically and collaborated with various institutions while experimenting until the formula was discovered with success. It is this glassy coating that gives the depth to the colours and the motifs while shielding the tile.

These totally handmade tiles are fired for the second time after the application of the glaze exceeding 930 degrees C. for min. 12 hours. This allows the first layer of liquid quartz coating; the colours and the glaze to unite with each other and to create the robust tile to endure all exterior intrusions like dust, freezing, humidity, rain.

The basic paste of the tile is a selection of clear, clean quartz stones at %85 and combining it with betonite and flux to form the paste well compressed under high pressure and fired at high temperatures.

All above mentioned particularities form the difference of İznik Foundation quartz tiles and industrial tiles giving the “chini” tile its importance in using it as an architectural material for exterior wall coverings while adding a characteristic to the edifice.

THE USE OF IZNIK FOUNDATION TILES IN MODERN ARCHITECTURE

Both indoors and outdoors “chini tiles have been used with success up to the scale where facades of buildings have been covered with tiles. Custom made for each project individually; they have been used in hamams, hotels, restaurants, underground & subway stations, pool areas, walls of private homes & offices. Designs can be created to suit the location in size & concept that the client has in mind.

References

ISTANBUL metro stations 1999
EXPO Hannover 2000
Ashkabad Mosque /Turkmenistan 2000
Mortimer House / Residence of the Saudi Royal Family – London UK 2000
Thames Water – UK 2001
Turkish Embassy Berlin Germany 2003
Turkish Embassy Islamabad Pakistan 2004
GTECH – USA 2004
Conference on Iznik Foundation tiles, Beirut Lebanon 2004
Exhibition with Peter Hristoff at “School of Visual Arts” New York USA 2004
Blue Palm Court in Burjuman Shopping Mall Dubai UAE 2005
Memorial – British Consulate Istanbul 2005
Aghia Sophia Exhibition “Infinite Iteration as a Problem of Surface” Çiniçiçin- Istanbul 2005
EXPO Chiang Mai, Thailand 2006
Al Rawdha Royal Palace Mosque - Bahrain 2006
Hariri Mosque (Mohammed Al Amin Mosque) Beirut Lebanon 2006
Exhibition in the Parlaiment Building Mexico City Mexico 2006
Naval Academy façade –Istanbul 2007
Zaha Hadid Private Residence London UK 2001
Sheikh Zayed Mosque Abu Dhabi UAE 2007
Hall of Justice – Bakirkoy Istanbul 2007
Hamam St. Petersburg Russia 2008
Naval Base Gölcük 2009
Four Seasons Hotel –Bosphorous Istanbul 2009
HERMES Paris – Christmas display windows exhibition 2009
Al Wazzan Mosque Kuwait 2009
HERMES Exhibition at “Le Monde Arabe” Paris 2010
Royal Spa – Dubai Royal Palace UAE 2010
Ottoman Villas Dubai UAE Palm Deira 2010
Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies Oxford UK 2010
Al Thani Mosque Doha Qatar 2010
Ottoman Clocktower Mexico City Mexico 2010
Halls of Justice Kartal & Caglayan 2011

Publication of Books:

- Iznik Çini Fırınları Kazıları, 1995
- Iznik Kilns Excavations, 1995
- IZNIK (International Exhibition's Catalogue), 1989
- Iznik during the War of Independence, 1999
- Iznik Throughout the History (Papers of the International Iznik Seminar), 2000

Exhibitions:

- Iznik Ceramics International Exhibition, Istanbul, 1989
- Iznik Ceramics Exhibition, UNESCO Building, Paris 1992
- Iznik Ceramics Exhibition, Musee du Chateau de la Bagatelle, Paris 1992
- Iznik: Legendary Ceramics from Turkey, an Art Reborn, Visual Arts Gallery, New York, 2005
- For Tiles, Infinite Iteration as a Problem of Surface, Aya Sofya Museum, Istanbul, 2005
- For Tiles, Japanese Archeological Institute, Kaman, 2005
- Iznik Ceramics, Municipality Building, Mexico City, 2005
- Iznik Ceramics, Parliament of Mexico, Mexico City, 2005

Seminars:

- Regular seminars and workshops for young people,
- Certification programmes for tile making,
- 1st International Iznik Symposium, 2000

The Foundation contributed to the construction of the following tile covered monuments:

- Peace Garden, Montreal, Canada
- The Friendship Monument, Tokyo, Japan

- *Sister Cities Dubai and Istanbul Monument, Dubai, UAE*
- *Memorial, British General Consulate, Istanbul, Turkey*

The Foundation is planning the following projects:

- *'From Glazed Brick to Iznik Tiles': A book on the characteristics and the utilization of the ceramics in the Islamic architecture throughout the History of the Islamic civilization.*
- *'From Glazed Brick to Iznik Tiles': A documentary film on the same subject.*
- *A 'Tiles and Ceramics Museum' in Istanbul*

ABOUT IZNIK

İznik (which derives from the former Greek name Νίκαια, Nicaea) is a city in Turkey which is primarily known as the site of the First and Second Councils of Nicaea, the first and seventh Ecumenical councils in the early history of the Christian church, the Nicene Creed, and as the capital city of the Empire of Nicaea. It served as the interim capital city of the Byzantine Empire between 1204 and 1261, following the Fourth Crusade in 1204, until the recapture of Constantinople by the Byzantines in 1261.

In 1331, the city was conquered and incorporated into the Ottoman Empire by Orhan I. Many of its public buildings were destroyed, and the materials were used by the Ottomans in erecting their mosques and other edifices. With the fall of Constantinople in 1453, the town lost a great degree of its importance, but later became a major center with the creation of a local faïence pottery-making industry in the 17th century (known as the İznik Çini, *Çin* meaning *China* in – Chinese porcelain stood in great favour with the Sultans.) İznik tiles were used to decorate many of the mosques in Istanbul designed by Mimar Sinan.