



Slate tiles from the mountains of India create a natural promenade at the entrance of the new Forest Fair Mall in Ohio.

Architects for this mall project chose slate to provide an atmosphere with the character of "a conventional street".

Bringing "outdoors" inside with green slate tiles



This August the owner of the Forest Fair Mall in Cincinnati, OH, reopened an area of the mall which was revamped to house entertainment-oriented tenants including nightclubs and restaurants. Formerly a vacated Bonwit Teller department store, the space was transformed by

D'Agostino Izzo Quirk Architects of Somerville, MA, in association with Michael Schuster & Associates in Cincinnati by selecting unique design elements such as green slate tiles that evoke an "outdoors atmosphere inside."

"The whole entrance piece is treated as a street," said Scott Butler, project architect for D'Agostino Izzo Quirk. "The criteria for the storefronts was to imitate building facades. The lighting is dramatic and gives the area almost a stage-set quality, and the slate paving maintains the mood. We didn't want a shopping center feeling but an atmosphere that was more like a conventional street, which the character of slate provided. And, as with most of our work, we also wanted to use what we consider to be real materials."

Mr. Butler and his colleague Lisa Graham, project architect/designer for Michael Schuster & Assoc., described the slate's natural variety in coloration as an asset to the floor design. Called Tree Green, the slate was quarried in the mountains of India and supplied by Southland Stone USA Inc. of Anaheim, CA, a division of MS International, Inc., a stone quarrier and importer.

"Most green slates are a uniform color," explained Ravi Johar of Southland Stone. "This slate has a luster like quartzite and a medium green color tending toward gold."

Mr. Johar said the slate was supplied in 12-x12-x1/2-inch (30.5x30.5x1.3 cm) gauged tiles. Approximately 20,000 square feet (1,900 sq.m.) of the material was specified by Eugene Walsh, vice president of sales, and Elaine Crowley, vice president of operations, for Shep Brown & Associates in Woburn, MA, the supply coordinator.

"This is really one of the first large commercial areas where they are using rustic slate in this quantity," said Mr. Johar. "It works well with the rustic design concept and the blend of natural materials like wood and flagstone."

The architects said the slate tiles also serve as a contrast to other design materials such as dark green polished agglomerate that was installed as a border at the flooring perimeter and in periodic horizontal bands to divide the field of slate tiles.

While the quartzite-like quality of the slate is expected to reflect the lighting, its more natural appearance serves as an aesthetic counterpoint to the agglomerate's high polish, which in reflection looks "almost like a wet surface."

The slate tiles also help distinguish the entertainment focus of the new



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arcade area from the retail areas of the mall, according to Ms. Graham.

"An entertainment facility is unique to the mall building type, so we wanted to create a unique atmosphere," she said. "The rough texture and color of the slate is a nice contrast to the rest of the mall which features a white man-made stone product with accents."

PCS Project and Construction Services Inc. of Cincinnati was the contract administrator for the project, and Mike Carnevale Tile and Terrazzo Co. of Cincinnati was the installer.

The tiles were installed on a concrete substrate with a latex modified thinset. Fastsetting and self-leveling materials were used in certain areas of the

installation. The setting materials were supplied by Summitville Tiles Inc. of Summitville, OH.

Mr. Johar said that the use of slate tiles in this area of the mall has generated interest in its proposed use throughout the entire mall which comprises approximately 1 million square feet (93,000 sq.m).