

IN ASSOCIATION WITH STONE FEDERATION GREAT BRITAIN

Natural Stone Journal

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A research perspective

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The Original Sustainable Construction Material

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The Stone Tapestry 2025

For the fifth consecutive year, Squire & Partners had the pleasure of collaborating with the Stone Federation on a feature 'Stone Tapestry' for the annual Surface Design Show, held at the Business Design Centre in London. Working on the show's central installation over the years has enabled us to continually build on our research and findings and invite more and more collaborators to share their vast and valuable knowledge of this beautifully durable material. This has resulted in the production of innovatively crafted products that live on beyond the show, and continue to showcase our stone adventures in different, new and sometimes unexpected settings.

As an industry, we recognise that the specification and application of materials in our built environment requires revaluation. Stone has long evoked connotations of luxury use, reserved for high-end residential bathrooms and kitchens. Through our collaboration with leading stone experts on the Stone Tapestry and interior design and architecture projects of varying scales at Squire & Partners, we are breaking down this barrier, demonstrating that stone is the ultimate sustainable material, suitable and adaptable for a plethora of uses – including structure. As part of this move towards a "new Stone Age", we have been able to demonstrate that natural stone is just at home delivering large internal cladding

and flooring as it is delivering unique stone furniture and works of stone art.

The Stone Tapestry aims to inform, educate and inspire, inviting the public to explore the full potential of this durable, natural and local material. This year, our design for the centrepiece of the Surface Design Show celebrated versatility and beauty via an exploration of the wealth of tones and textures available from nature. Calling on the expertise of The Marble Collective, who marry age-old techniques with modern engineering to create post-tensioned stonework and bespoke, highly engineered and complex architectural projects, we were able to design, build and install a large-scale table and accompanying stools and objects expressed in hexagonal form. The piece was complete with musical soundscape by sound designer Tom Middleton, played through a pair of marble speakers by Mineral Sound, creating a truly multisensory experience.

The installation's repeated hexagonal form took inspiration from both nature and space: The Giant's Causeway natural rock formation located on the northeastern coast of Northern Ireland is comprised of a unique arrangement of over 40,000 interlocking basalt columns, formed by volcanic activity around 60 million years ago. These columns are mostly hexagonal in shape, although some have four, five, or even seven sides. The site is one of the most famous natural wonders in the world and has been designated a UNESCO World Heritage site. Travelling further afield and into outer

space, we were inspired by the latest pictures showing the hexagonal formation of Saturn's North Pole, and the hexagonal geometry of the James Webb telescope!



The Stone Tapestry sought to shine a light on the UK's own indigenous materials, as well exploring stones from Europe, thus demonstrating to interior designers and architects that the variety of colours and textures available close to home removes the requirement to specify materials travelling many thousands of miles across the world. Stones incorporated into the Tapestry sourced locally include the darker hued Penrhyn Heather Grey from Bangor in North Wales and Ledmore Grey from Lairg in Scotland, as well as lighter materials including two varieties of Portland stone, Clipsham Bidwell from Stamford and Sandstone from Northumberland.

These 'home-grown' materials sat alongside companions sourced from Europe, such as the onyx black Noir St Laurent from the Occitan region of southern France, which

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was contrasted against the pale Semond sourced from Burgundy. Two types of onyx and a Travertine from Turkey featured alongside Italian Calacatta and Portuguese granite. The array of shades, tones and hues arranged in one installation remind us of the huge variety we are blessed to have close access to, which should all be considered before engaging in unnecessary international transportation processes.

Access to this huge selection of materials is all thanks to the expertise of a host of expert suppliers including A F Jones Interiors, Albion Stone, ALS by Airelimestones, Britannicus Stone, Hutton Stone Co., LSI Stone, Stamford Stone Co., The Marble Collective and Welsh Slate. These companies strive to source the best that our country and Europe has to offer, to make the dreams of architects, designers and craftspeople come to life.

Continuing our ambition to demonstrate the inherent sustainable qualities of stone, we sought to mitigate material waste during the design and manufacture process of the ambitious hexagonal installation. Units for the tabletops and stools were cut from a block of stone in a logical process which ensured that offcuts were of a certain size and geometry to create tabletop accessories. Cubic 'sheets' of stone of varied thickness were cut along lines based on the hexagon's geometry, resulting in a variety of shapes, which were cut and honed into these smaller objects on a CNC machine. This included plinths, side tables, stands, trays, bowls, dishes, vases and ashtrays. Larger offcuts have been transformed



into a flower table, which celebrate and provide a use for excess material.

All the stone tabletops and stools are cut to dimensions that will allow them to be arranged in a geometrically correct system, whilst the accessories were also sized to the same system as to form units of the area within the tabletop 'mother hexagon'. Elements can be nested together in a geometrically correct system to create clusters and arrangements that are customisable according to the desired layout and location. For example, a more domestic setting may wish to showcase bowls, dishes and vases, whereas a hospitality setting may wish to showcase the larger stools and plinths in inventive arrangements.

This possibility of customisation added a playful interactive element to the

installation, which invited visitors to touch and arrange the objects, encouraging interaction and enjoyment with the material often deemed too luxurious to touch!

Pieces of this year's Stone Tapestry live on in the reception area of our offices at The Department Store, Brixton, before their next journey to another location. We have evolved designs further into a furniture range, created with and launched by Marble Collective, and hope that they will bring joy, timelessness and beauty to different settings. Previous Stone Tapestries have been showcased at Clerkenwell Design Week and in showrooms across the country, giving them a second life and demonstrating the endless opportunities inherent to this fascinating material.

Tim Gledstone
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