



Tile With Style

Setting Ceramic Tile, by Michael Byrne: Taunton Press, Newtown, Conn.; 1987; 230 pages, \$17.95, paperback

At age 8, Michael Byrne, began his odyssey to the role of tile setter when his mother showed him some photos of the Spanish architect Antonio Gaudi's weird and wonderful Sagrada Familia church in Barcelona. Years later, motivated by the mosaic work he had done as an art student, Byrne steered a course to California, "the Mecca of tilesetters." There he apprenticed himself, spending 16 years studying and practicing his trade. A resident of Vermont, he now shares his knowledge of the craft through writing and videos.

Setting Ceramic Tile is Byrne's effort to set down his accumulated knowledge. Divided into two sections with five chapters it gives an overview of the basic principles: materials, tools and safety, surface preparation, layout, and setting. Six chapters of case studies show practical applications and special problems. An extensive and useful resource guide and detailed glossary close the book.

A sampling of the subjects in Section I include tile types from vitreous to impervious, selecting tile, testing samples, costs (the insulating tiles used on the belly of the space shuttle Challenger cost \$1,500 apiece—installed!), and sizing (for which no uniform standards exist). Also included are trim types, sealing pavers, pre-grouted sheets and specialty tools for pros and do-it-yourselfers. Safety is discussed from ground fault circuit interrupters to the possible hazards of toluene in mastics or asbestos in foreign tiles. Thin-set and thick-set techniques are compared, along with useful tips such as how to prolong the life of an opened can of mastic. Charts and tables provide quick reference on questions like what type mastic to use for given substrates, moisture conditions, or grout coverage. You'll learn how to check and adjust your carpenter's square, pros and cons of various waterproofing, curing, and isolation membranes. *Setting Ceramic Tile* also gives practical advice on related topics is given such as how to remove and install plumbing fixtures. Cross referencing is excellent throughout the text. Besides step-by-step instructions and photos on how to set tile on floors, walls and countertops, other chapters discuss the importance of layout (a frequently skipped step, according to Byrne), tolerance limits, and detailing edges.

Photos (color and B&W), drawings, and text are all clear and eminently understandable, but the color photos are lavish and often exquisite. Photos of such mundane subjects as troweled grout and peeling paint are often works of art themselves, to say nothing of the classy tiles displayed.

The final case study section supplements the earlier material, which alone provides satisfactory instruction. The studies lent a note of reality by dealing with actual problems encountered in shower stalls or black tiles set in white grout. The final

chapter elaborates on exotics like built-in chopping blocks, mosaics, tiles, patios, fountains, swimming pools, and everyday repairs.

My only quarrels with the book are the glare from the glossy paper, the lack of color photos of the finished product in case studies, and a personal desire for more than a history of tile technology. One other limitation of the book is Byrne's conscious omission of the recently introduced ready-to-use thinset mastics, which I hope he'll address in a future magazine article.

Michael Byrne seems to represent the best we have to offer in the building trades—someone who cares about his work and about quality, and who cares enough to share his knowledge with people beyond his own clientele. I picked up enough general knowledge and tricks of the trade to save me from disaster when I tackle an upcoming bathroom tiling project. Taunton Press has done an excellent job of presenting and illustrating Byrne's thoughts. They have produced a book that is an excellent example of fine technical writing. I recommend *Setting Ceramic Tile* to amateur and professional tilesetters, architects, general contractors and anyone who has even a small interest in how to do things right. A real bargain.

—Paul Hanke

Interiors

Interior Design Illustrated, by Francis D. K. Ching: Van Nostrand Reinhold, New York, N.Y.; 1987; 314 pages; \$22.95, paperback.

As architect Frank Ching points out, most of us spend the majority of our time indoors. This is Ching's attempt to introduce us to interior design—its characteristics and our choices in selection and arrangement of architectural and furniture components. His emphasis is on basic principles and how the relationship of individual elements affects function, structure and esthetics. The format is Ching's usual handwritten and drawn style—similar to his previous *Architecture: Space, Form & Order* which I reviewed in a previous issue.

While the book's content is good, the author's black and white drawings don't serve him as well as photos and color would have. This drawback might be overlooked, but not when he addresses the question of color itself!

Section I deals with space and how it is defined by points, lines, planes, structure, "introverted" and "extroverted" spaces, volumetric heights, spatial transitions (openings, wall thicknesses, windows, stairs) and expanding space.

Section II treats the interior design process—including drawing plans, isometrics and perspectives as well as human dimensions, ergonomics, and activities and functional relationships.

The bulk of the book is Section III, which covers topics such as form, color, and texture, and interior design principles such as balance, harmony, rhythm, and emphasis.

Section IV provides an in-depth look at floors, walls, ceilings, windows, doors, stairs, fireplaces, furniture, storage, lighting and accessories. Section V follows with treatment of environmental systems. Codes and standards are given too little attention—meriting only 1½ pages as a seeming afterthought.

My recommendations for a basic book to read on interior design would definitely be *Inside Today's Home* by Sarah Faulkner. However, Ching's book provides a good supplement to Faulkner's visual and non-technical perspective.

—Paul Hanke

Coming Home

American Vernacular Interior Architecture: 1870-1940, by Jan Jennings and Herbert Gottfried; Van Nostrand Reinhold, New York, N.Y.; 1988; 424 pages; \$39.95, paperback.

A companion volume to the authors' previous *American Vernacular Design*, which focused on the exterior form of buildings in the 1870 to 1940 period *American Vernacular Interior Architecture* takes us indoors. This volume concentrates on characteristic elements of four prominent styles of the time. Examples (illustrated with simple black and white line drawings) come exclusively from the industrial, mass produced vernacular, rather than from "high style" architects or the "folk" vernacular.

The elements and forms characterizing these interiors were built primarily from pattern books by

skillful use of off-the-shelf components (millwork, hardware, windows etc.) purchased through trade catalogs. A frequent "weather vane" is the Sears, Roebuck catalog—which Jennings and Gottfried argue had a great "democratizing" impact on the household environment. If Sears sold it, you know a component was secure in the vernacular environment.

As the authors progress through their compendium of windows, trim sets, ceiling types, stairwork and support systems, they attempt to identify the items from which vernacular architecture was created. Learning how they were assembled for different visual effects, helps establish an overall design picture of the period. One section sets forth the Ornamental, Classical, Artistic, and Colonial aesthetics—with examples of each. The final section draws upon the authors' previous work on building types—showing typical exterior elevations and (quite distorted) isometrics, this time supplemented by floorplans. Several variations on each theme are presented, and examples of rowhouses, churches, commercial buildings, and even the nostalgic corner drugstore are included.

Besides presenting an exposition of the industrial and aesthetic chronology of the period, the text gives a glimpse of cultural geography—as various "reform" movements helped guide America from one age to the next. You learn what defines certain architectural elements such as a "cottage" window as asymmetric, with meeting rails located above center, how technological innovations influenced products, e.g. development of the ductile tungsten filament, and how certain combinations of elements and motifs created identifiable styles. You'll also gain insight into how we got where we are today and an appreciation of good old American ingenuity. This book should be of interest to scholars, architects, builders, historians and lay people alike.

—Paul Hanke

Free & Cheap

Lighting Resources: The National Lighting Bureau (NLB) is a good source of info on lighting basics, and publishes several free or cheap publications, including such titles as *Lighting Energy Management*, *Performing a Lighting System Audit*, and *Lighting and Security*. For specifics, get a free publications directory by writing the National Lighting Bureau, 2101 L Street, N.W./Suite 300, Washington, D.C. 20037.

From Soup to Nuts: Georgia-Pacific has released an eight-booklet series geared to DIYs that can be a source of ideas for anyone doing remodeling. *The Deck Guide*, for example, is a 44-page color booklet that shows how to add a deck, arbor, porch, or gazebo. Step-by-step instructions are included, plus new ideas for building fences and outdoor furniture. Other titles include *Molding Makes it More*, *More Beautiful Basements*, *Easy Living Spaces* (on storage), *The Paneling Guide*, *Reroofing & Residing Your Home*, *The Shaker Sewing Center*, and *The Wallworks Guide*. The entire collection, plus a \$3 rebate coupon for Georgia-Pacific building products, costs \$10, but individual titles are available for \$3 each. For more detailed information on the series, or to order, write: Great Possibilities Library, Georgia-Pacific Corporation, Dept. GPL-1, P.O. Box 2808, Norcross, GA 30091.

Fire Codes: The Concrete and Masonry Industry Fire Safety Committee's *Fire Protection Planning Report* (No. 16) gives a summary of model code requirements for concrete and masonry fire walls and area separation walls. Drawings show wall-roof connections and restraining conditions required to meet code. Three versions—BOCA (SR291), Standard (SR292), or Uniform (SR293) of the report are available at \$40 each. To receive contact Order Processing, Portland Cement Association, 5420 Old Orchard Road, Skokie, IL 60077; 312/966-6200.

Interior Remodeling Guides: Written for remodelers, six free instructional guides have been released by US Gypsum detailing product remedies and benefits when: creating a new room in a basement, attic, or other open, unfinished space (guide WB-1751); refinishing walls with Sheetrock panels around unfinished window and door opening (WB-1755); refinishing walls with Sheetrock panels over USG Z-Furring Channels and Thermafiber Fire Safety FS-15 Blankets around unfinished window and door openings (WB-1756); refinishing walls with Sheetrock panels over USG Metal Furring Channels around unfinished window or door openings (WB-1757); patching an existing wall of masonry, drywall, or plaster (WB1761); and creating a new room or area where a wall is desired to provide a customized decorating approach (WB-1766). Each guide lists materials, application tips, references, and other technical information for that particular situation. To order, specify guide(s) of interest and contact US Gypsum, Dept. #122-ZZ, 101 S. Wacker Drive, Chicago, IL 60606.