

IN RARE FORM

There's something magical about the world of natural stone, and you'd be hard-pressed to find experts who know the industry better than the pros at Cava Surfaces.

By Lisa van de Geyn

When Tariq Darwish talks about marble, he almost sounds as if he's speaking about diamonds. This specific variety of stone and the coveted gems have loads in common. Not only are they both natural, mined and exceptionally beautiful, but perhaps what makes them so sought-after is the fact that no two diamonds — and no two marble slabs — are the same.

As the sales manager at Cava Surfaces, a company in Toronto's design district that prides itself on offering clients hand-selected stone and high-quality building materials from around the world, Darwish is an expert when it comes to premium marble, quartzite, quartz, porcelain and granite. In his four years at Cava Surfaces, he's seen first-hand how finding that perfect stone can turn a project from ordinary to beyond exceptional.

The owner, Joe Barranca, has been in the industry for more than 15 years. He and his team are passionate about providing

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clients — interior designers, architects and custom-home builders — with not only superior stone products, but unmatched customer service. They have contributed to countless commercial and residential projects, and their stones are commonly used as vanities, countertops, flooring, fireplaces, wall cladding and exterior surfaces. Five years ago, Barranca decided to make a shift. “We wanted to get into the interior design market and expand in terms of the materials we offer and our services. We wanted to get in front of designers to help them with their projects, educate them about surfaces and forge relationships with a high-end clientele. Our focus revolves around curating a diverse range of hand-picked materials, expanding beyond the typical white-and-grey marble look. We truly want to choose pieces that inspire our clientele, and we are amazed by what they create,” Darwish says. “We cater to

interior designers and homeowners who want something distinctive. Our team travels to Italy every year to visit the quarries to see what’s new in colour and to ensure we’re on top of what’s trending, and we’ve cultivated relationships with suppliers around the world who provide us with top-quality blocks of stone.”

Designers and custom builders (and sometimes even homeowners) who get in touch with Cava Surfaces can expect a seamless process. These professionals typically reach out with inspiration photos or renderings of what they’re looking for, including the surface they’re working with, the type of stone they’re interested in and the shade they’re looking for. “We have a vast selection at our Toronto showroom, but if we don’t have the specific stone or colour a client is looking for, we can certainly source it,” he says. “To make the process even more smooth and enjoyable, we have paint, cabinet and hardwood samples on-hand. We really make the shopping experience educational, fun and easy.” Once the material has been sourced, fabricators and installers handle next steps.

These days, clients are particularly interested in marble — especially high-end varieties such as arabescato and calacatta. In fact, Darwish mentions a 30,000-square-foot custom home the company is currently working on that’s being done in floor-to-ceiling marble.

“We’re working with the designer, who’s going to Italy to source the blocks direct from the quarries. The designers have selected captivating colours, encompassing elegant grey and white marbles, as well as striking purple stones with delicate golden flecks. In one of the bar areas, we have created an enchanting ambiance with black stones that are emphasized by mesmerizing orange and gold-veined stone. They’re really very creative and it’s an incredible project,” he says with enthusiasm. “Imagine pulling large cubes from the earth and finding the most beautiful rocks that end up making a huge statement in your home. There are probably stones around the world that we don’t even know about yet and haven’t tapped into. It’s a fascinating industry and I can’t wait to see where it goes.” 