The New Affordable Elegance

By Jennifer Molk

WHEN YOU HEAR DESIGNERS TOSS AROUND WORDS like "tumbled travertine," or "gold mosaic tiles," or "chiseled," and "honed and filled," you might think you belong in Tuscany, jet-setting on a hefty bankroll.

But yesterday's perceived lavish lifestyle is today's new affordable elegance, thanks to Stone-Mart in Tampa. Stone-Mart is among only a few natural stone suppliers in the nation to both import and distribute, and holds one of the largest on-hand inventories in the United States, with over three million square feet of stock.

What truly sets Stone-Mart apart though are their low prices combined with high-end quality.

"People have a preconceived notion that travertine and even granite has to be only for the high end user," says Eric Barthelemy, director of sales for Stone-Mart, "and they have a misconception about the expense involved. We want to show that natural stone, and travertine and marble especially, are for everyone."

While Stone-Mart can offer natural stone from Italy and Spain, they specialize in Turkish stone.

Turkey is one of the leading countries in the world, behind China, India and Italy, for having a significant amount of natural stone reserves, thereby having a better supply right now than there is demand.

Stone-Mart imports directly from Turkey into their state-of-the-art showroom in Tampa, where they then distribute nationwide.

"It's unusual in our market to be an importer and a distributor to all users and all facets of customers," Eric explains. "The homeowner in Texas can buy the same travertine as the commercial builder who's building an entire community in Florida."





Another reason for choosing natural stone for your next project is that there is a dollar-for-dollar return on your investment.

"When it gets down to it," Eric points out, "it holds its value. It's not just a perceived value. So when you invest in natural stone flooring, wall tiles, exterior pavers, or a pool deck—when you actually do spend your hard-earned money and you re-invest it into your home—it is actually worth what you put into it."

What truly sets Stone-Mart apart are their low prices combined with high-end quality.

Another great feature of natural stone is its individual character. "With each and every build," Eric says, "it is a one-of-a-kind unique and individual build that you can't get in a manmade product. You, me and the next guy can all buy Leonardo brushed and chiseled travertine, but because it's a natural stone, there's not another like it in the world."

While colors might tend to look similar in the same materials, no two slabs of natural stone will be exactly the same.

"So being able to have something in your home that's one of a kind is a huge appeal to most people," Eric says. "It's what we like to call a signature build. There's nothing better than natural beauty and nature's elegance."

And it's affordable!

For a stunning display of Stone-Mart's Turkish stone, visit www.stone-mart.com and call (813) 885-6900. ❑