

The Living Language of Natural Stone in Contemporary Design

“More than surface or structure, natural stone carries deep geological memory and sensory richness, making it a naturally beautiful ally for biophilic designers seeking longevity, nature connection and human wellbeing.”

Pistone Marmi



Natural stones play a central and increasingly conscious role in contemporary architecture and interior design. Marble, quartzite, granite, travertine, and onyx are not simply materials used to create surfaces, coverings, and furnishing elements: they are **living materials**, bearers

of a millennial geological history and endowed with a strong sensory charge. Their choice is not only based on aesthetic or technical criteria, but reflects a design vision that focuses on **durability**, the **relationship with nature**, and the **well-being** of the people who inhabit the spaces.

Marble – eternal elegance

Marble is a metamorphic rock formed from the transformation of limestone under high pressure and temperature, a process that defines its compactness, brightness, and ability to be finely polished. Appreciated for centuries in architecture and decorative arts, it continues to be a benchmark material in contemporary design for its timeless elegance and the uniqueness of its natural veins, which can never be replicated.

Available in a **wide and refined range of colours** – from bright whites to greys, greens, reds, yellows, and blacks – marble is quarried in major international basins such as Italy, Turkey, Greece, India, and Iran.

From a perceptual point of view, this noble material is often associated with **harmony** and a sense of **stability**. Its smooth surfaces, fluid veins, and light reflection create a perception of order and visual control.

- **Light-coloured marbles** (white, ivory, light grey) promote calm, concentration, and open-mindedness.
- **Darker or more intense marbles** convey authority, introspection, and depth.

When choosing this material for a project, it is essential to consider the **context of use, finish, and type of veining**. From an aesthetic point of view, marble offers a wide variety of designs: marked and dynamic veining for dramatic surfaces, or more uniform veining for minimalist and orderly environments.

Although sensitive to acidic agents, when correctly selected and treated, it guarantees durability and value over time. More than just a colour choice, marble is a design tool: it interacts with light, furnishings, and functions, defining the identity of the space. Among the most famous and widely used varieties are Calacatta, Statuario, Bianco Carrara, Nero Marquina, Bardiglio, Botticino, and Nero Portoro.

**Quartzite – strength and character**

Quartzite is a metamorphic rock formed from the transformation of quartz-rich sandstone subjected to intense pressure and heat over millions of years. Composed of over 90% quartz, it combines exceptional strength with a highly refined aesthetic, characterized by stratification, transparency, and deep colours.

Quarried mainly in South America, but also in North America, India, and Africa, quartzite comes in a wide range of colours, from whites and beiges to bolder shades such as greens, blues, pinks, browns, and blacks, making it extremely **versatile** in design. In contemporary design, it is a preferred choice for kitchen islands and countertops, and high-use surfaces, thanks to its high resistance to scratches, heat, and chemicals.

It feels compact and solid to the touch, while conveying **stability, security, and continuity** to the eye. From a perceptual point of view, it is a stone that communicates controlled energy: powerful but balanced. In domestic or work environments, it helps to create reliable, reassuring spaces, ideal for those seeking direct contact with natural materials without sacrificing contemporary design.

When selecting this stone, it is essential to evaluate its structure, the direction of its layers, and the presence of transparencies, elements that influence both its visual impact and its processing possibilities.

Among the most iconic varieties are Patagonia, Taj Mahal, Cristallo, Amazonite, Aquamarina, Titanium, and Azul Boquira.



Granite – solidity and functionality

Granite is an igneous rock of volcanic origin, formed by the slow cooling of magma underground. This geological process has allowed the complete crystallization of the minerals that compose it, mainly quartz, feldspars, and micas, giving it an extremely compact and resistant structure.

Characterized by a **granular texture** and **solid colours** ranging from white to black, through greys, beiges, pinks, and reds, granite is quarried in many areas of the world, including South America, India, China, the United States, Spain, and Italy. It is one of the best-performing natural materials, appreciated for its ability to withstand impact, abrasion, heat, and weathering. For this reason, it is widely used in kitchens, flooring, facades, and exteriors.

From a sensory and perceptual point of view, it conveys a feeling of **strength** and **protection**. It transmits a sense of concrete, almost “engineering” security and is particularly suitable for environments where **order, control, and functionality** are desired. Its darker, deeper colours promote concentration and emotional restraint, while lighter shades maintain a neutral and balanced approach.

Its choice is often guided by durability and functionality requirements. During the design phase, it is important to evaluate grain size and colour uniformity, aspects that influence the final aesthetics. Its high hardness requires careful processing and careful attention to detail in the design.

Among the best-known granites are Nero Assoluto, Bianco Sardo, Bianco Cristal, Sodalite Blu, and Alaska White.



Travertine – warmth and architecture

Travertine is a sedimentary limestone with a long architectural tradition, used since Roman times in iconic works. It is formed through the gradual deposition of calcium carbonate from thermal mineral waters, a natural process that generates a layered structure, sometimes marked by widespread porosity and colour variations.

Recognizable for its **warm, natural tones**, ivory, sand, hazelnut, and even shades of yellow and red travertine is mainly quarried in Italy, but also in Turkey, Iran, Tunisia, and Egypt. Its materiality makes it extremely versatile, capable of dialoguing with classic and contemporary styles, both indoors and outdoors.

From a sensory point of view, travertine conveys a feeling of **warmth** and **naturalness**. It is a stone that invites calm, sensory contact, and contemplation,



making it particularly suitable for spaces dedicated to relaxation and everyday life. It is softer to the touch than other stones, while visually it recalls natural landscapes and historical architecture (travertine was widely used in ancient times, for example to build the Colosseum in Rome).

During the design phase, it is essential to evaluate the **cut, grouting, and finish**, elements that profoundly affect the aesthetics and behaviour of the material. Flat or cross-cut stone produces very different visual effects, either more linear or more textured. From a technical point of view, its natural porosity requires appropriate treatment depending on the environment in which it is used, especially in damp or outdoor contexts.

Among the most commonly used travertines are Travertino Romano Classico, Navona, Silver, Noce, Titanium, and Travertino Bianco.

Onyx – light and scenography

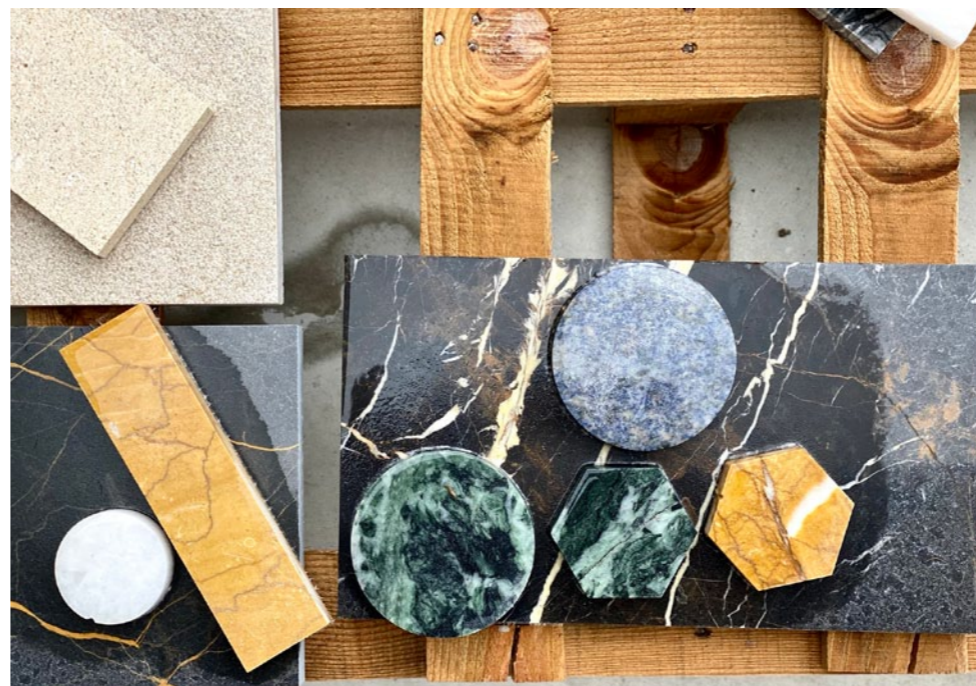
Onyx is a natural stone of great charm, appreciated for its high **translucency**, which allows it to interact with light in a unique way. From a mineralogical point of view, it is a variety of chalcedony, characterized by a compact microcrystalline structure and layered colours ranging from milky white to honey, to shades of green, pink, and amber. It is mainly quarried in India, Mexico, Iran, Turkey, Brazil, Uruguay, and Madagascar.

Unlike other natural stones, onyx expresses its full potential through **backlighting**, transforming surfaces and furnishings into scenic elements. Used mainly for decorative walls, furnishings, and high-impact surfaces, onyx has a strong **emotional value**. Its fluid veins and clouding and delicate or intense colours create **relaxing, enveloping, and almost contemplative atmospheres**. From a psychological point of view, the light filtered through onyx helps to create environments that promote calm, introspection, and well-being.



The choice of onyx requires careful consideration of **light, function, and context of application**. Thickness, backlighting system, and support structure are key design aspects, as is an awareness of its greater delicacy compared to other stones, which makes it suitable for use mainly in protected or decorative contexts. From an aesthetic point of view, onyx is an iconic and narrative choice, capable of transforming a surface into a true protagonist of the project.

Among the best-known varieties are White, Green, Amber, Honey, Pink, and Ivory Onyx.

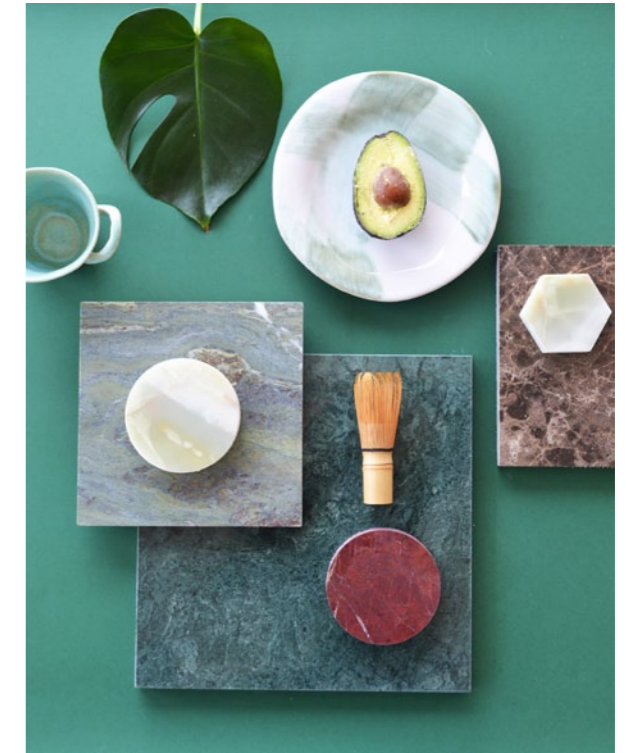


Natural stone and sensory perception

One of the most significant aspects of natural stone, as we have seen, is its **sensory dimension**. Unlike artificial materials, natural stone engages the senses of touch, sight, and emotional perception. The variation in veining, the depth of the surface, the response to light, and the temperature to the touch all contribute to creating an authentic and never repetitive experience.

Numerous studies show that the use of natural materials in living spaces promotes stress reduction and a greater connection with the environment. In this sense, natural stone is a key element of **biophilic design** because it does not imitate nature but is an integral part of it.

The **role of finishes** is central to this aspect, as the surface changes the perception, as well as the aesthetics (texture and light reflection) of natural stone. Finishes are obtained by processing the surface of the stone using special mechanical processes or chemical treatments.



A polished surface enhances the colour depth and veining of the stone, amplifying its brightness and conveying a feeling of elegance and preciousness. On the contrary, matte finishes such as honed, satin, or brushed make the stone more textured and soft to the touch, promoting a natural and relaxing perception. More structured finishes, such as flamed or bush-hammered, accentuate the three-dimensionality of the surface and reinforce the link with the natural element, making them ideal for outdoor environments or architectural projects.

The choice of finish is therefore not only aesthetic, but also influences the way in which the stone is experienced on a daily basis, interacting with the light, function, and atmosphere of the space.





Durability and design culture

In an era dominated by ephemeral materials and short-lived trends, natural stone represents a conscious and against the current choice. It is a **durable, repairable, reusable** material that ages gracefully and acquires value over time.

Designing with natural stone means embracing a design culture that looks to the long term, creating environments that do not follow fashions but stand the test of time. It is an ethical choice, as well as an aesthetic one, which enhances the material, reduces the need for frequent replacements, and promotes a deeper and more responsible relationship with the living space.

Marble, quartzite, granite, travertine, and onyx are not simply different materials, but **design languages** with specific characteristics, sensations, and potential. Knowing them means knowing how to design spaces that speak of nature, time,

and well-being, creating architecture and interiors capable of inspiring today and lasting tomorrow.

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