Add to My Gallery | Create an Album
View PDF

Victorian Tiles

The British tile industry was central to the industrial developments, innovative design processes and the eclectic range of styles in the Victorian period. Tile manufacture became a large scale industrial process from the 1830s with Samuel Wright's patented new encaustic inlaid process and, in 1840, Richard Prosser's patented method of clay dust-pressed tiles. The dust-pressed method could produce as many as 1,800 6 inch tiles each day on a single press. With this process, the tiles required less drying time and were less subject to warping. Another important development was the utilization of patterns, often with makers' marks, to the reverse, providing a key for the tile to bond with the mortar when applying to a wall. The enormous variety of printed designs, ranging from the Neo-Rococo of the 1830s through Historicism, Aesthetic to Art Nouveau at the end of the nineteenth century, could then be applied to these blanks. Ceramic printing in the Victorian period expanded dramatically with the introduction of two color designs in the 1830s, single prints with polychrome colors painted in and multi-colored printing from the 1840s. These processes meant that large volumes of tiles of consistent size and quality could now be quickly produced which enabled their use in grand architectural projects through to the widespread use in Victorian homes. One of the most popular uses of printed tiles was in conjunction with fireplaces. The arrival of running water in the 1870s also led to tiled bathrooms and furniture of the period was often designed to feature tile panels.