Imagine the colours of the Caribbean, the gentle undulation of the waves, and the fragrances and natural wonders of landscapes like none you have ever seen. Imagine, in other words, a cruise in the world’s most beautiful waters, on board an equally attractive and sophisticated cruise ship, both in terms of service and facilities.

This is the world of contract construction, a sector that encompasses hotels, restaurants and even cruise ships, which is highly attractive for suppliers from every industry, including the ceramic industry.

We are on the premises of Morandi Studio, a niche player in the ceramic processing business, based in the ceramic cluster centred around Sassuolo.

We are welcomed by Marco Morandi, who not only owns the company but also serves as its Artistic and Creative Director. And perhaps a lot more besides.

Marco Morandi – who was born
in 1952 and is Sassuolo-born and bred - rarely mixes with the rest of the district. Even the site of the company reflects this characteristic, and takes the form of an anonymous-looking hangar in a back-street of the industrial area of Muraglione. Inside the plant there are a few kilns – one of which was made to measure for firing a 2.9-metre ceramic tree that's now on display in the offices of the Municipality.
"The industry sustains the art", explains Marco Morandi, who has managed to turn his passion for art into a well-established and long-standing career in the sector. Because Marco Morandi started working with ceramic in 1972, when he produced his first works, which went on to be displayed in various galleries in Italy and abroad (Sassuolo, Modena, Bologna, Florence, but also Los Angeles, Tokyo, London, Paris, Budapest, Miami and Stockholm). These were the first steps that led him into various experiences of work and study, until he founded Morandi Studio in 1977. Work and a passion for art thus converged into a single identity, aimed at embracing the most diverse expressions of ceramic: from restorations and remodelling
ings of historic floor and wall coverings, to major partnerships with the ceramic industry – Concorde Group and Florim – for which he produced trim pieces, decorations and designs for collections.

Such is the industrial experience that enriches the artistic curriculum vitae of Marco Morandi, giving him a rare versatility and ability to cross-reference. Another major step forward came in 1993, when Marco’s wife, Cristina Fantuzzi, joined the company. She targeted the business at firms of architects in Italy and worldwide, thus setting in motion an intense and profitable partnership with the contract construction sector, with particular reference to cruise ships, which now account for 70% of the company’s turnover, which is divided equally between Italy and the international market. This branch has enabled Morandi Studio to consolidate its worldwide reputation still further, thanks to the quality of its works, which involve painstaking attention to detail at every stage of the process, thus further enriching a background that was already full of wide-ranging experience and a host of major contacts.

Contact with architects and artists from all over the world has refined Marco Morandi’s capacity to approach ceramic in a hands-on, all-embracing manner: his awareness of the high value of a material that’s as humble and ancient as it is rich and versatile has given him access to international interlocutors, who are more likely to look upon ceramic as a premium or cult material thanks to that whiff of culture that derives from its history and ongoing development.

It is undeniable, after all, that industrialisation has endowed ceramic coverings with excellent technological characteristics, in the form of large formats, slim gauges and digital reproductions of exceptionally high fidelity, all at totally competitive prices. But it is equally clear that such full-on use of technology also prompts a rediscovery of ceramic art and culture. “It’s important to have a clear understanding of the difference between decoration and art: both are very important, but they imbue the work with a different soul. One gives rise to a product, however excellent, and the other to a work of art”. Marco Morandi has never stopped pushing back the frontiers of his art, and continues to experiment with the decoration that serves it. And the results speak for themselves.
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