

Specifying the Correct Natural Stone for your Project

The term natural stone is a broad one covering a multitude of different types of stone which look very different and have different properties. Perhaps the most important thing to consider when thinking about using natural stone in a project is which type of stone to choose.

Where is it to be installed?

The first thing to think about is the position of the installation – is it outdoors? In which case a granite or harder limestone such as the Jura Beige or Blue might be more appropriate than a marble that could potentially erode more quickly, depending on its exposure to weather and pollution. A related consideration is the setting – if the project is an external one in Bath, then Bath Stone is probably the only type of stone that you will be allowed to use, whilst in parts of central London, Portland Stone may be required for architectural purposes, in other areas, or for monuments or artwork there may be more freedom to choose.

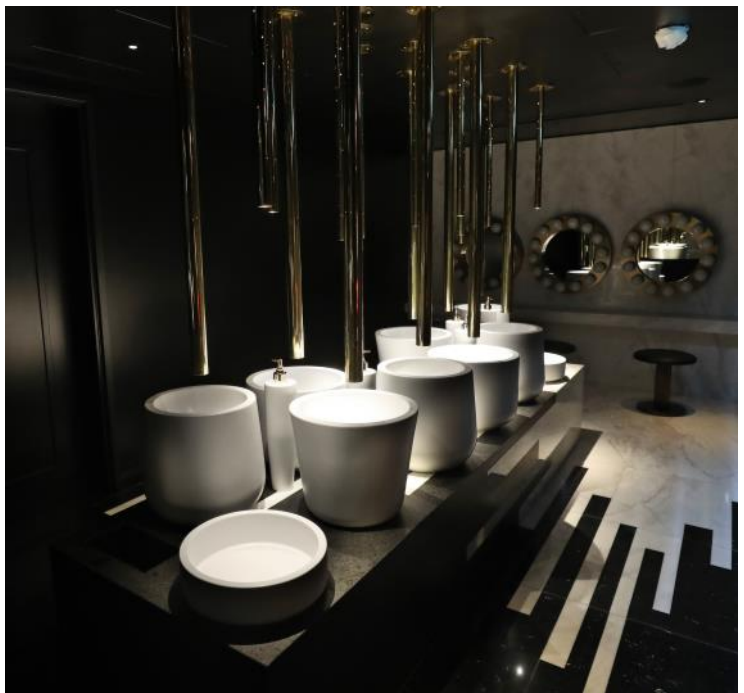


Sasha Holzer Portland Stone Panels on the Façade of 30 Broadwick Street

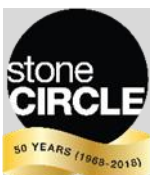
What is the potential for wear?

If it is to be installed indoors what is the potential wear and tear? Will it be on the floor or used as a worktop, what will the cleaning regime be and is it likely to have food, wine or chemicals spilled on it on a daily basis?

If it is for use as a work surface, then granite would be the obvious choice as this is extremely hard-wearing. Marble can be, and is, used for kitchen counter tops but it is more likely to be stained and etched by the acid in food, so more care is needed to prevent spillages and clean them up promptly. The future owner must also appreciate and like the fact that the counter top will wear and develop a patina, rather than staying pristine. It is for this reason that marble and the softer limestones are more often used in bathrooms and as internal floor tiles in areas where there is less traffic with granite and harder limestones in areas of heavy traffic or exposure to chemicals. Staircases and fireplaces are also often produced in marble or limestone, although granite is a good alternative where load bearing considerations are not a problem.



Marble, Granite & Sintered Stone in Hotel Washroom



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Pools and spas often use marble or limestone, although care needs to be taken if they are used in locations that come into contact with water where too much chlorine or salt in the water could damage the stone over time.

Focal piece?

The next consideration can be the look – does the client want a showstopper as a focal piece for the room? Heavily veined marbles and granites, or if budget permits, quartzite or onyx come in a stunning variety of patterns and colours which are can have a wow factor. Book matching, where two slabs from the same block are used side by side so that the veins meet and mirror each other, is in vogue and can be used to striking effect.

Or backdrop?

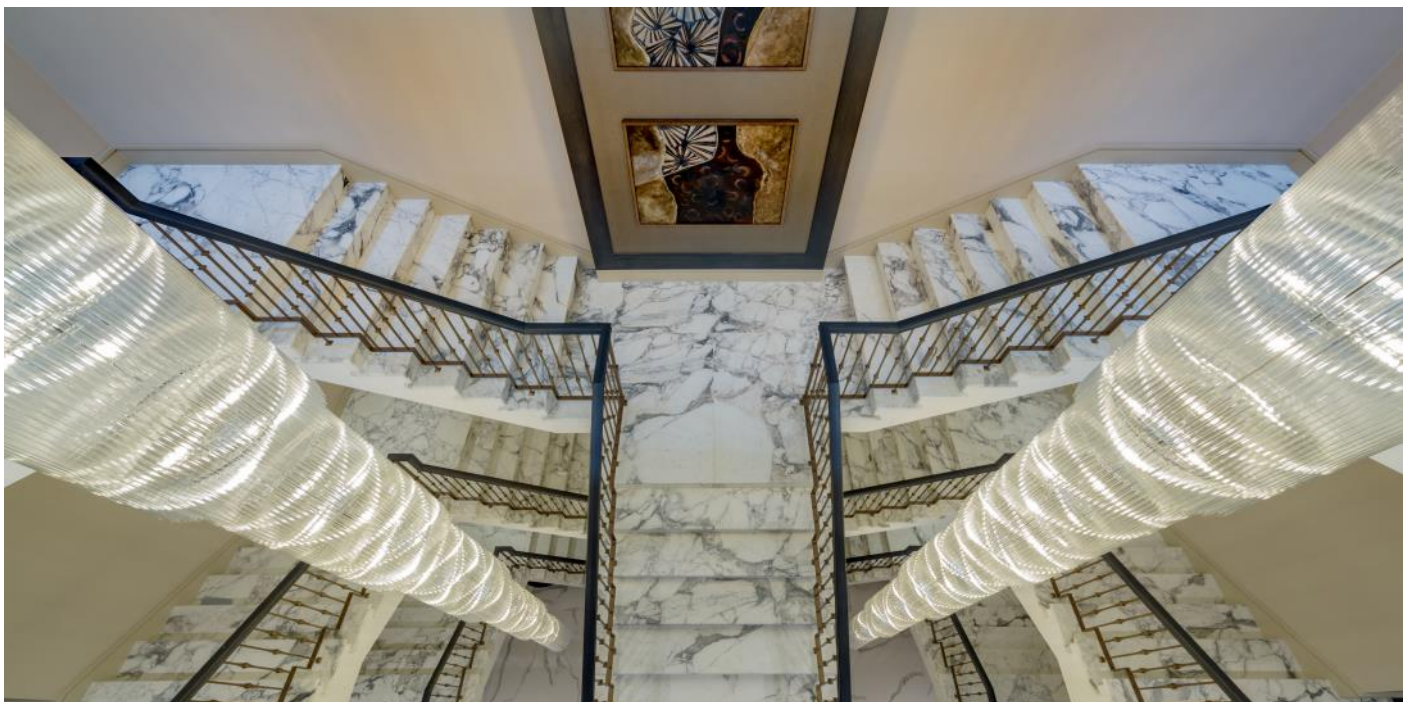
Or is something more subtle called for to give a beautiful backdrop to the main attraction? In this case limestones with small fossil inclusions, 'quieter' marbles with less contrast in the veining, and subtly-speckled granites may be more suitable.



Sandblasted Grigio Perla Limestone Tiles Pool Surround



Thassos Marble Plinths in Natural History Museum



Calacatta Marble Staircase in Residential Apartment Building



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Choosing the right stonemason

One of the major considerations for a natural stone installation is the stonemason that will fabricate the stone and install it. A good stonemason will be able to advise on choosing the right type of stone for the project and suggest alternatives that will fit the brief and budget. They will source stone from reputable quarries where the work force is employed ethically and the quality is right.

A modern stonemasonry factory should use a mix of the latest CNC equipped machines for cutting and carving, combined with hand finishing where necessary for the project. Waterjet cutters are also essential for producing inlaid work precisely and at a reasonable cost.



CNC Equipped Stone Cutting Machinery

Advantages of proximity

Dealing with a UK stonemasonry company can help avoid misunderstandings, and gives proximity to market, cutting down on the transport costs of the finished items. It also gives certainty with regard to the finished price as the stonemason will be quoting and invoicing in sterling, unlike foreign counterparts who will almost always use either US dollars or euros.

Natural stone is a variable material and it is always recommended that you inspect the stone that will be used before it is cut to ensure that you are happy with the colour and the look of the veining. This is made easier by the use of a UK stonemason allowing you to avoid the need to make a foreign trip.

In most cases the stonemason will also install the fabricated stone, although if you are employing a stone contractor, they may do the installation and contract out the fabrication to a stonemasonry factory.

For specification advice on your project, please contact stoneCIRCLE using the details above.



Installing "Stone Drawing" by Susanna Heron in St John's College, Oxford (image © Susanna Heron 2019)



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