Design Resource

**Athangudi Tiles - Karaikudi**
Making of Decorative Floor Tiles
by
Prof. Bibhudutta Baral, B. Srikanth and
Raghavendra Chari K. M.
NID Campus, Bengaluru

Source:
http://www.dsource.in/resource/athangudi-tiles-karaikudi

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Introduction

Athangudi tiles are one of the well-known handicrafts in Karaikudi region located in Tamil Nadu. The craft has been practiced for the last 500 years. Athangudi tiles are handmade tiles which are used to decorate the interiors (floors, walls etc.) of houses. The craft is popularly known as 'Pokal' (local language) in Tamil Nadu. This living art is practiced from Vishwakarma Community.

The tile making is one of the traditional art of Karaikudi. The tiles made are very distinctive and have glossy finishing. Tiles have traditional as well as modern motifs. These handmade tiles are very beautiful and unique in their style and are painted using vivid colors. Athangudi tiles are in demand not only in domestic market but also in international market.
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Finished products are kept under sun shade to dry.
Tools and Raw Materials

Multiple tools and raw materials are required throughout the making process of the Athangudi Tiles. The tools and raw materials are purchased from Karaikudi market. The colors are made by mixing 3:1 ratio of color and cement and sand to make various designs in the Athangudi tiles.

- **Birla A1**: Quality Cement, sand and baby jelly are the basic raw material used.
- **Colors**: Red oxide, blue oxide, yellow oxide and other synthetic iron oxide colors are used.
- **Aass**: Iron designed frame used as stencils to get the required shape of the motifs.
- **Glass**: It is used to give the glossy effect to the tile
- **Spade**: Spade is used to spread the cement.
- **Pitch Bowl**: Pitch Bowl is used to mix the cement.
- **Grinding Machine**: Grinding machine helps in mixing the colors and the cement dough.
- **Water Tank**: Water tank is used for curing the tiles.

Mixture of cement, sand and baby jelly is used to make the tile.
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Yellow oxide used to attain yellow color.

Kerosene is applied on the metal frame to easily remove the finished tiles.

Tools used to mix the color and cement.
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Metal design frame used to create design.
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Metal border frame.
Red oxide used to attain yellow color.
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Making Process

The tiles are made from the mixture of cement and sand. Sand is filtered to remove impurities from it. Cement and sand and baby jelly is mixed with water and converted into dough. To make the colors for the tiles, artisan mixes measured quantity of color with sand, cement and water turning it into a thin paste. Earlier it was a manual process but now mixing machine machines are used for the same purpose. The machine mixes the materials and converts them into much finer paste. Glass slabs are cleaned and placed as a base for the tile. A metal border frame is placed over the glass slab to form the tile. Inside the border frame, the designed frame locally called as Aass, is placed to make the design. Color solution is poured in different compartment of the frame according to the design. Sometimes the color is poured directly on the glass and the artisan stirs it manually to attain a design. Once the design is made, dry mixture of sand and cement is sprinkled on the colored layer to absorb the moisture and avoid mixing of colors with each other.

The pre-prepared dough is spread on the design with the help of the spade and then leveled. Excess of cement is removed with the help of a blade. The border frame is removed and the tile is kept to dry in room temperature for overnight. Then the dried tiles are soaked in water tank and kept them in for 6 days. Later they are removed from the water tank and kept in sunlight to dry. When dried the glass frame automatically ease out. The glass slab leaves a shine and luster effect on the final product. The production of the tiles is made all throughout the year and it provides livelihood for many people. Both men and women are involved in making of the Athangudi tiles.
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Design frame is placed on the glass slab to make the design.
Excess cement mixture is removed using a blade.

Dry mixture of sand and cement is sprinkled on the design to avoid mixing of colors.

Color solutions are poured in respected compartments of the design frame.

Mixture of cement, sand and baby jelly is filled till the required thickness of the tile is obtained.

Excess cement mixture is removed using a blade.
Pressure is applied on the tile to set the cement mixture firmly.

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The bordered frame is removed from the finished frame.

The dried tiles are kept in the water tank for curing process.

Finished tiles are arranged and kept for drying at room temperature.

Source:
http://www.dsource.in/resource/athangudi-tiles-karai-kudi/making-process-0
After curing process the tiles are kept in the sunlight for drying.
Products

The products are mainly tiles, which are made in different sizes and shapes. The Athangudi tiles are used to decorate the floors of the houses to look more attractive. Geometrical and floral shapes/forms are the major designs and patterns used in Athangudi tiles. Some of the designs are (locally) known as Socate, Uttapo, Star, Kolimutakall, Vatathamary Ilango design, Papatikal (Kerala design), minalkoodi, Vavakamalam, khombabukal, Sashti-kal, Valavumkamalae, Katachokata design.

The products are mostly marketed in Tamil Nadu as well also transported to neighboring States. Training is also given to the new artisans/learners for 6 months to 1 year to learn the making of Athangudi tiles. The vivid colors used in the products give the house traditional as well an elegant look. The skilled artisans experiment with new design with modern as well as contemporary style.

The cost of the products ranges according to the size, thickness and the design of the tiles. It is the traditional looks of Athangudi tiles in geometric and floral designs, dark, earthy hues and black and white collection for borders, and the center-spread of swans or birds, which lend/give a carpet-like feel on the floor.

Source:
http://www.dsource.in/resource/athangudi-tiles-karai-kudi/products
The most commonly used motifs are geometric and floral designs/patterns.

Traditional floral design used in Athangudi tile making from centuries.

Latest designs are made to keep up with the market trend.

The most commonly used motifs are geometric and floral designs/patterns.

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One form of design is divided and made on four different tiles separately and joined together.
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**Video**

Athangudi Tiles - Tamilnadu

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