

## How a Borough Park family-owned home décor and improvement business has been rethinking interior spaces—and giving big box stores fits—for 40 years

By Jessica Jones-Gorman

Photo By Marc Estrella

Established in 1974 on a bustling section of 65th Street in Dyker Heights, Mondial Tiles, now one of Brooklyn's largest home improvement showrooms, was launched to serve as a hub for the import of kitchen and bath construction materials.

"The original store initially imported ceramic tile and marble exclusively from Italy," noted Rossana DeStefano (above), one of the business's current partners. "But over the past 40 years, we have expanded and grown to become a provider for many residential and commercial projects throughout the city."

Launched by DeStefano's father, Victor Campanile, along with other partners, Mondial became a strictly family-run operation when a number of the partners defected and Campanile's wife, Grace, took over company dealings in the showroom.

Several expansions ensued and the store grew physically as production gradually moved beyond tile import.

"About 70 percent of our work today includes products sold for residential renovations, while the other 30 is commercial work," noted DeStefano, who started in the sales department in 1980 after completing college, and was followed by her brother Sandro Campanile and sister Daniela Taflin.

"We work with quite a few designers, architects, and many contractors," DeStefano continued. "And we also do some designing ourselves. We're a small business, but we really do it all."

The majority of Mondial's product is still imported from Italy but its line has grown to include tiles from other countries like Spain. And Mondial's fabrication shop, which has been in operation for 28 years, is now a major part of the company's business appeal.

"We can fabricate any type of stone top—granite, marble limestone, quartzite—then do all of the templating, fabricating, and installing—it's a complete service," DeStefano said.

The company was also featured on *This Old House* several years ago as the sole tile supplier for the only project every completed in New York City by the show. "Due to the state of the economy, there was a lull in the home improvement business for the past couple of years, but there has been an increase in renovations recently, partly because of Hurricane Sandy, which is,



of course, bittersweet," DeStefano said. "But Brooklyn is currently a hot market, with many new projects entering the borough, so on the whole, sales of custom tile have definitely increased."

And for spring 2014, DeStefano says clients are seeking plenty of porcelain, especially custom-style tile that takes on the look of wood.

"The trends are very clean and contemporary," DeStefano explained. "We've moved away from rustic and into a very Zen-like style. Materials that replicate the look of natural stone are also very big, and clients are attracted to those products because they offer the look of stone without all of the maintenance that the material often brings."

There's also plenty of glass, ceramic, metal, and mosaics too—the majority of which Mondial purchases annually from trade shows in Bologna. Joined several years ago by partners Alex and Robert DeMeo, DeStefano says the two-family company has become a go-to source for area businesses and homeowners alike.

"Many people are amazed that we have worked together for so many years and still enjoy each other's company," DeStefano said. "But for us, this has always been a way of life. Each day of work is enjoyable and exciting; we get to help people transform their homes or businesses. I don't think it gets any better than that." In the future, DeStefano hopes the business will open a Manhattan showroom, a project she admits is still in its early stages.

"We've been considering that expansion for a while, simply because quite a bit of our clientele comes from the city," DeStefano said. "We handle a lot of renovations in Staten Island, Brooklyn, and New Jersey but with the influx of business in areas like Park Slope, Carol Gardens, and Williamsburg over the past ten years, I think it would be a big benefit to open a Manhattan showroom and expand our business to all corners of New York City." It's a move that would surely make the company's founder proud.