



SALIMA FILALI
créatrice de décors



USER GUIDE ZELLIGE SALIMA FILALI



DEFINITION & MANUFACTURING

Zellige is a Moroccan mosaic that has existed since the 10th century. It is made from natural clay extracted in the Fes region of Morocco. The clay is first hand-molded, then naturally dried and fired twice in a traditional kiln.

The first firing hardens the «biscuit», resulting in a raw zellige tile, and the second firing fixes the glaze onto the biscuits.

Once the tiles are glazed, the maalems (master artisans) manually cut the glazed pieces using exceptional technical expertise. The uniqueness of zellige lies mainly in the cutting of the pieces into multiple shapes with beveled edges.

These beveled edges allow for very thin joints of 1 to 2 mm.

Due to its traditional handmade process, zellige is characterized by various natural variations. These differences in tone, gloss, size, thickness, flatness, transparency, and glaze depth make it a unique and authentic product.

All these small irregularities are what create the perfection of zellige through its imperfection.

The variety of shapes and colors, along with its artisanal production, allows for customized and made-to-measure designs.

Please note that the following characteristics are not defects but are what define authentic zellige tiles:

- » Variations in color from tile to tile and from one order to another
- » Slight size variations of approximately ± 1.5 mm
- » Slightly irregular edges
- » Presence of epoxy resin used to fix tiles onto mounted panels
- » Slight thickness variations of approximately ± 1.5 mm

GLAZED ZELLIGES AND RAW ZELLIGES

The firing and glazing process creates the distinctive tones of zellige and results in a solid, durable, non-porous material with a very low water absorption rate.

Glazed zellige is easier to maintain than raw zellige, which has the same characteristics as unglazed terracotta—such as tomettes.

TOLERANCES IN DIMENSIONS AND COLOR

Due to the artisanal nature of our products, dimensions are approximate and may vary by ± 1.5 mm.

The number of panels per square meter is approximate and varies depending on the model.

Color variation between batches is one of the natural characteristics of zellige.



PRE-ASSEMBLED RIGID PANELS

The rigid pre-assembled panels are precisely made in the workshop according to your order. They simplify installation of small-format zellige and complex patterns.

They are lightweight, sturdy, easy to trim, and have a thickness of 12–14 mm. They fit together like puzzle pieces and measure approximately 30 × 30 cm. Size may vary depending on the model and project to optimize material use.

This pre-assembly system allows for easier and faster installation.

USES OF ZELLIGE

Zellige is made from fired clay, which makes it very resistant. For centuries in the Middle East and Maghreb, it has been used on walls and floors, lasting without damage.

Our zellige designs are suitable for indoor and outdoor spaces. Some are for walls only; others can also be used on floors — this is specified below and for each model.

Applications include: interior walls, homes, restaurants, hotels, showers, spas, as well as outdoor spaces such as gardens and fountains.

FLOOR APPLICATION

Zellige can be used on floors in private spaces.

Because it is handmade, the customer accepts certain irregularities in flatness.

Some models feature chiseled zellige, which must not be used on floors, as the chiseling makes the glaze more fragile to traffic and impact.

For non-chiseled models, floor installation is possible following recommendations:

- » Tiles must be carefully installed without voids beneath
- » Impacts may chip glaze corners
- » Over time, zellige floors develop a natural patina

Not recommended for heavy-traffic commercial spaces or public outdoor areas. The customer is responsible for proper use.

OUTDOOR USE

Zellige is suitable for outdoor use under certain conditions:

- » Proper installation
- » No exposure to freezing

In regions with frost risk, even with precautions, we do not recommend zellige.

Zellige must not be installed in areas (interior or exterior) exposed to prolonged freezing temperatures.

Salima Filali cannot be held responsible for damage caused by freeze-thaw cycles.



Zellige is an enamelled ceramic and is not sensitive to sun or UV. Durability depends on substrate quality, installation, and proper sealing. Freeze-thaw resistance depends entirely on watertight joints and preventing water infiltration.

APPLICATION IN WET AREAS

Zellige can be installed on shower walls and floors, steam rooms, and saunas.

Use in fully submerged spaces (pools, fountains, basins) is possible but remains the client's responsibility and requires expert waterproofing.

Salima Filali cannot be held responsible for damage in immersed installations.

Tiles and joints do not provide total waterproofing—substrates must be waterproofed before installation.

For shower floors:

- » A slope must be created to avoid standing water
- » Zellige floors are naturally non-slip due to their small irregular pieces
- » Slip rating is not standardized; therefore recommended for private, not public spaces

INSTALLATION

1. Prepare the surface—clean, level, and properly set
2. Determine layout and mark surface; organize panels before cutting
3. Dry-fit and verify alignment before cutting
4. Apply appropriate adhesive—a flexible ceramic tile adhesive on both wall and panel
5. Install like standard tiles; cut with tile cutter or wet saw; place edge-to-edge without spacers
6. Grouting*: apply very liquid grout with a rubber spatula to fill joints between pieces; match grout color to existing panel joints
7. Clean excess grout immediately with a damp sponge
8. Installer is responsible for proper installation. Damage from improper methods is not covered (e.g., unlevel substrate, lack of sealing, incorrect adhesive or mortar type).
9. Raw zellige should be treated with a surface finish to protect and extend durability, and maintained annually—similar to cement tiles and terracotta.



GROUTING

Zellige pieces are beveled, meaning joints are created in the bevel between tiles, allowing 1–2 mm joints.

Panels are pre-grouted in the workshop; only joints between panels need to be completed on-site.

Match the grout color to the existing pre-assembled joints.

Always test products on a discreet area before use.

WATERPROOFING

For surfaces in direct contact with water (pools, showers, fountains, countertops):

As with all enamelled ceramic tiles, the surface itself is not fully waterproof. Moisture may pass through joints or installation irregularities.

Only proper waterproofing of the substrate ensures long-term performance.

CLEANING & MAINTENANCE

Glazed zellige requires very little maintenance — it is highly resistant and not affected by cleaning products.

Raw or chiseled zellige is porous and must be protected or maintained like natural stone.

For daily cleaning:

- » Use a natural pH-balanced cleaner diluted in water

Avoid:

- » Abrasive pads
- » Bleach, ammonia, paint thinner
- » Scrubbing with rough materials

Always test cleaning products beforehand.

Raw zellige behaves like natural stone or marble:

- » Clean only with neutral pH soap
- » Avoid descalers
- » Avoid highly pigmented products (e.g., hair dye) which may stain light tiles

Cooking Areas

Clean spills quickly—oil may darken raw or chiseled unglazed zellige. Glazed zellige is unaffected by oils.



FAQS

Are all zellige models suitable for all surfaces?

No. Some are for walls only; some are unsuitable for floors. Contact us for model recommendations.

Does diagonal installation require more material?

Yes, diagonal layouts generally require more material. Consult your installer or contact us.

Can zellige be used around a fireplace?

Yes. Zellige is fired at very high temperatures and can be safely installed around fireplaces.

Can I use zellige in my shower?

Yes. Refer to « Application in wet areas. »

Can zellige be used outdoors?

Yes, under certain conditions. See « Outdoor use. »

Best cleaning method?

See « Cleaning and maintenance. »

Do you offer design services if I don't have an architect?

Yes. Salima Filali, an architect, can provide a quote for design services to support your project.

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This document provides informative guidance for selecting zellige decorative and surface coverings.

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