

# Driven by *Passion*

"MARBLE HAS ALWAYS BEEN AND WILL ALWAYS REMAIN THE MOST DEFINITIVE DECLARATION OF LUXURY IN ANY BUILDING, YOU CAN'T MAKE A MONUMENT WITHOUT MARBLE."



DESIGN MIDDLE EAST | JANUARY – FEBRUARY 2022

**GLAZE Granite & Marble  
CEO UMESH PUNIA**  
discusses his entrepreneurial  
journey, the brand's unique  
offerings, and exciting future plans

**A** pioneer in the region's marble industry for over two and a half decades, GLAZE Granite & Marble CEO, Umesh Punia, has elevated the natural stone industry by offering a rich narrative of the timeless charm of marble, and an even richer experience to its clients hoping to transform their living spaces.

#### **Main Role....**

"My main role has always been the same, sourcing dynamic, top-quality marble from all around the world while maintaining the best prices. Natural stones can be quite deceptive for the end user, and our job is to source and stock the best options," he adds. In addition, he supervises, monitors imports, and uncovers the best value for investment on behalf of the clients using only the

best expertise, network, and resources.

#### **How it all started....**

At the onset of his entrepreneurial journey, Punia notes that the marble and granite industry did not really evolve much until 2002, or 2003. The stone market was limited to a few Italian marbles and some granites, there really wasn't much variety in what people were stocking in the

UAE. During the real estate boom in the early 2000's he witnessed a great demand which also drew in countless architects and designers from London, Singapore, Hong Kong, New York, and all over. They were looking for those special and exotic stones that were usually reserved for only the most exclusive projects around the world for the new developments in Dubai. That's when the market then began to evolve. So much continues to evolve to this day.

#### Trend tracker and trendsetter

In having kept a discerning view on what's trending in the flooring, cladding and countertop market for over twenty-six years, Punia has made marble his passion.

Discovering new and quality marble has always been more of an obsession than a livelihood. "When I started traveling to Italy in the late 90's, visiting the world's most important stone galleries, I was fascinated and excited every time I stumbled upon a new exotic stone. I would jump at the chance to learn its origin, source, chemical composition, and I eagerly studied its grain size, texture, hardness, polishing degree, so that I could add it to my own growing collection. The greatest passion in my work is adding more and more better-quality marble to our stone gallery. This passion is the biggest reason why we have the largest collection of stones in the world and not just in the Middle East."

**Owing to the UAE's visionary leadership and business-friendly reforms, Mr. Punia affirms that the UAE is the perfect place for businesses to thrive and grow. Having started from ground up, Glaze, today prides itself on having a clear vision for its global clientele and offers an everlasting experience with unparalleled level of attention to detail.**



Glaze boasts the only State of the Art stone facility and gallery in the Middle East.



Customers can walk through the stone gallery to experience the intricacies of the exact product that will end up in their floors, homes or offices.

#### Connoisseur's collection

Marble offers an incomparable luxury that holds the power to elevate the aesthetics of any room. Like a Hermes bag or a Rolex watch - it is a statement, a declaration of success, an arrival. "Marble is no less of an investment than a gemstone stone from a reputable jewellery house. You must understand, people don't buy marble as a basic necessity, people invest in marble for their home or office for future generations to marvel upon." A well-known connoisseur will certainly not settle for cheap ceramic flooring. He or she looks for splendour and magnificence spilling out of each corner in the room, including the flooring. Marble does just that. It adds grandeur and opulence. This is why marble has stood the test of time and its beauty will never diminish.

#### State-of-the-art stone gallery

Over the years, Punia has been one of the frontrunners in changing the way marble and other natural stones are sold in the UAE. Years ago, marble was kept in open dusty yards, like any ordinary construction or masonry stones. GLAZE conceptualised marble from a totally different perspective.

When i saw the way marble was displayed and showcased in the >>>

With over 400 unique options available, **Glaze** provides customers with the most expansive range of natural stones.

top galleries in Europe, I was mesmerized and inspired. Moreover, this attitude translated into all aspects of the business, not only hand picking the best stones from every corner of the world, but also the way we showcased and displayed these materials in our stone gallery, with exceptional training provided to our sales team. We feel proud that today the quality of natural stone in the UAE, not only in our gallery but in that of some of our competitors as well, is far ahead of other GCC countries and the Middle East as a whole. Initially, people were surprised that we were trying to sell stone as a luxury product, and my answer has always been the same - why not? You spend millions to buy quality cars, furnishings, or artwork for your home, why not on the floor which you use much more than your

Rare and exotic stones like **Amazonite** are only available at **Glaze** through their exclusive agreements with top quarries around the world.



Ferrari? Understanding the value of these stones radically changed the way the marble business and its trade takes place in the UAE. I consider this as my biggest accomplishment and contribution to the industry.”

### ‘Experiential gallery’ conceptualised for customers

The Glaze gallery is not just a beautiful building and a clean space. It’s an experience. Whether it’s the layman, or a specifier for an architectural studio, sitting in an office, you can’t really grasp the intricacies of a natural stone. When any designer, homeowner, or contractor walks into the Glaze gallery, they see and appreciate what makes every stone unique. All stones may be beautiful in their own right, but to select the exactly perfect shade that fits with the design concept of a space is a difficult task. “Our clients always remark that it would have been a mistake to not walk through the gallery, as nature’s designs are simply irresistible. For us, it was so important to create the right ambience and environment where people can appreciate our greatest passion.”

### Unique offerings creating a business niche

Glaze has collaborations with top brands like Neolith, Caesarstone, Coante, ARIOSTEA, KoZo, and GEOLUXE. It also possesses exclusive agreements with top quarries in Italy, Spain, Turkey, Greece and Brazil. This allows a continuous flow of material and exclusive access to the very best collections. Glaze’s huge inventory, the greatest in the Middle East allows the team to deliver immediately for projects of any scale.

### What’s next

Glaze’s willingness to conceptualise marble from a totally different perspective has been the driving force for growth. The management is looking forward to the new stone gallery opening in Abu Dhabi, in ICAD Mussafah. This will build avenues to adding new natural stones, as well as engineered stones to the collection from different parts of the world. “After more than two decades in the industry, we can really guarantee that we are sourcing the best selections for our clients from every corner of the world in our state-of-the-art facilities”, he added. •

