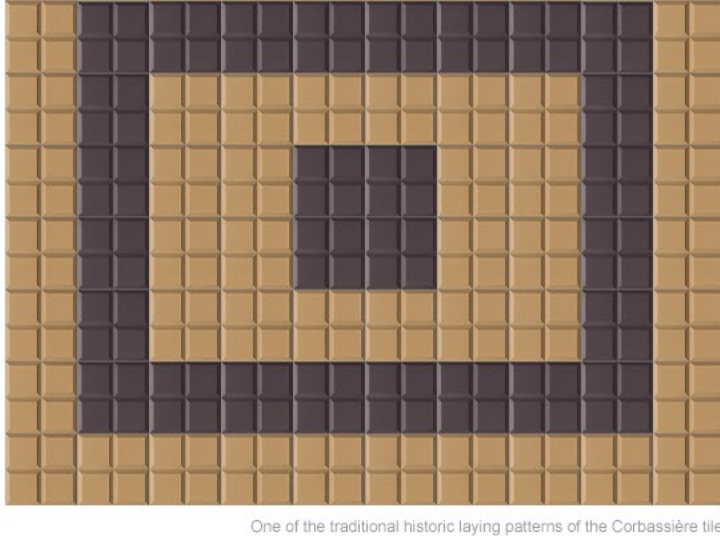


FLOOR TILES

THE CORBASSIÈRE – ROBUST MINIMALISM



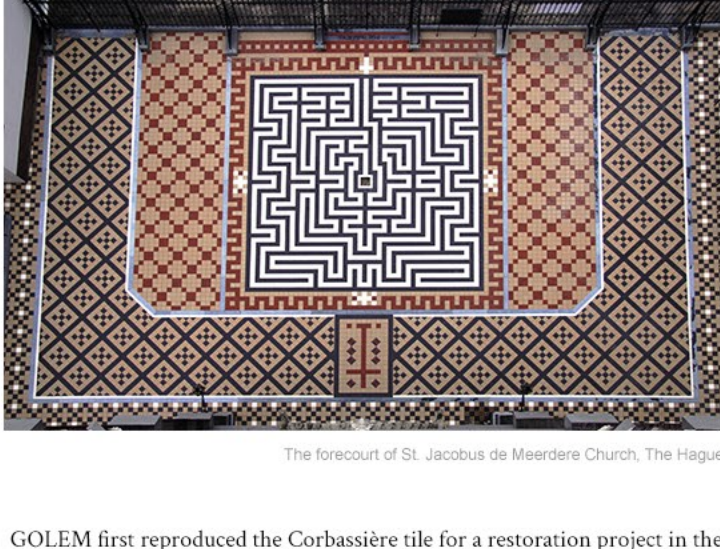
One of the traditional historic laying patterns of the Corbassière tile.

You've almost certainly seen this tile before—though perhaps without noticing it. Unassuming yet iconic, it can be found in courtyards, passageways, and industrial premises alike. Its relief pattern imitates traditional natural stone paving and has one primary purpose: durability. This makes the tile—known in French as the Corbassière—a quintessential product of the late nineteenth century, an era in which the historicist fascination with past styles collided with the rapid technological advances of industrialisation. References to earlier architectural periods were in vogue and influenced the design of even the most everyday objects. The appearance of traditional craftsmanship conveyed quality and prestige, while the product itself was expected to be efficient and economical to manufacture.



A Paris courtyard with newly manufactured Corbassière tiles by GOLEM

Although the Corbassière tile resembles historic small-format stone paving when laid, its pressed manufacturing process made it far more efficient to produce and considerably quicker and easier to install than conventional cobblestones. At the same time, it retained all the advantages of natural stone paving: it is durable, modular, and slip-resistant. As a result, the tile found its way into a remarkable variety of settings, from elegant townhouses and railway stations to church buildings.



The forecourt of St. Jacobus de Meerdere Church, The Hague

GOLEM first reproduced the Corbassière tile for a restoration project in the Netherlands. In The Hague, the historic original formed the paving of the forecourt of St. Jacobus de Meerdere Church, where it was laid in an elaborate polychrome ornamental design incorporating a floor labyrinth.

Like the church itself, the forecourt was designed by architect Pierre Cuypers and completed in 1880.

The Neo-Gothic church was restored between 2001 and 2010 by Braaksma & Roos Architects, who also carefully reconstructed the forecourt. The original paving can only be documented up to 1959; later photographs show simple monochrome paving slabs instead. Very few of the original tiles have survived and were used as the basis for reproducing the historic design.



Original tile by Utzschneider

The maker's mark on the surviving tiles reveals that they were originally manufactured by Utzschneider, although the same design can also be found in the catalogues of other manufacturers of the period. The original tiles are black, white, and warm beige. However, the colour scheme of the entire forecourt had to be reconstructed by the architects, as the historic photographs provide only limited evidence of the original colours.

Today, we can produce the Corbassière tile in our full range of colours.

Whether used as an authentic addition to a historic pavement or as a contemporary reinterpretation, the Corbassière continues to unite historic design with the demands of modern architecture.

Perhaps the next time you encounter it, you won't simply pass it by – but will see it with new eyes.



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